ENGAGING IN THE PATH OF CULTURAL HUMILITY THROUGH RESPONSE ART: AN ART-BASED SELF-INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT

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Marilyne St-Pierre

It has become an ethical responsibility for art therapists to examine one's own cultural values and biases and learn about the client's worldview, in order to provide equitable services to culturally diverse clientele. Assuming the responsibility to develop cultural sensitivity is essential, yet a few guidelines or methods exist to assist art therapists or other health practitioners to actively engage in this process. This research, using an arts-based heuristic approach, addresses the researcher's own journey in utilizing a response art procedure to explore her felt responses to cross-cultural experiences, and how it may assist her to gain cultural awareness and knowledge. Outcomes build upon other practitioners' personal work and findings, with the intention of growing knowledge in the field of art therapy toward social justice. Ultimately, this research presents the value of engaging in the path of cultural humility through a process of critical self-examination, and the potential of integrating creative, intuitive and imaginative components within it.

Keywords: Cross-cultural art-therapy, Heuristic research, Cultural humility, Response Art

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Introduction

This research paper is intended to contextualize my art-based heuristic inquiry aiming to explore how engaging in post-session response art can support the development of cultural humility, emphasizing on self-awareness and knowledge. As a white middle-class woman working as an art therapist intern with women and youth from Native Nations, it is an essential part of my personal and professional development to examine my cultural worldview and biases, and to gain awareness of cultural complexities at play in my practice. The ability to address cross-cultural differences in clinical practice in search for cultural humility should be considered as an integral part of art therapy responsive practice (Hays, 2016; Hocoy, 2002; Kapitan, 2015; Sue, 1998, 2006; tet Maat, 2011) to prevent cultural issues from interfering with the therapeutic alliance and effectiveness. Therapists should strive for cultural humility rather than cultural competency, as it encourages the engagement in a lifelong self-reflection and self-critique process (Hays, 2016; Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). Despite this ethical responsibility, few guidelines or practical methods exist to assist art therapists to actively engage in this process.

Response art-making can serve as a self-processing procedure to enhance the understanding of complex countertransferential issues at play (Drapeau, 2015, Fish, 2008, 2012; Lavery, 1994; Miller, 2007; Wadeson, 2003). Concerning cross-cultural relationship, art therapists have successfully used similar methods to address emotional responses to cultural differences (Brigatti, 2006; Coseo, 1997; Har-Gil, 2010). However, none of them has positioned the lived experience of using post-session response art as the central phenomenon for self-inquiry in their study. My intention is to explore this phenomenon through this self-inquiry.

Inspired by my interest for the natural world and the meaning it holds for the cultural groups I am working with, this study integrated natural elements as primary media for response art-making. While feeling attracted by natural elements, I consider them to be out of my comfort zone when working with them as art media. Interestingly, such ambivalent feelings can metaphorically reflect those that I have experienced in working with culturally different clients (i.e., internal tension between attraction and resistance). This observation informed me about the relevance and potential of using natural elements in my study. Nonetheless, the choice was made with an awareness that it may be misinterpreted as a stereotyped association between Native peoples and nature. The rational is primarily rooted

in personal and symbolic meaning it holds for me in the context of this self-inquiry, with a sensitivity to issues related to the appropriation of cultural symbols and Native land.

Indeed, integrating elements of nature in my response art-making may play a role in developing cultural awareness and knowledge. As noted by Wadeson (2003), response art from clients' themes and symbols can bring art therapists to be more attuned with their feelings. Central to most Native traditional worldviews and beliefs is the sense of connection and interrelationships with the natural world. In this perspective, human beings carry an "ethical responsibility" toward natural elements and all life, identical to the one carried with other human beings (Ross, 2014, p. 30). The interrelation that human beings share with Mother Earth transcends cultural differences thereby can add a symbolic dimension to the study. Moreover, Berger and McLeod (2006) explained that "an encounter with nature can address universal truth and act as a bridge between people, [and natural element can be incorporated] as a nonhuman medium that can help people bestow meaning and help guide them through change" (Berger & McLeod, 2006, p. 87). Therefore, creatively interacting with natural elements, and addressing them as ally in the process of response art may be well suited to assist me to actively engage in the path of cultural humility.

By holding as an inspiration my own experiences of working with Native peoples during my practicum, and involving myself directly as the researcher-as-participant, I will explore how can an art-based heuristic inquiry deepen the understanding of using response art process to foster cultural awareness and knowledge.

Literature Review

Cross-Cultural Art Therapy: Issues in Client-Therapist Interactions

Recent studies on cross-cultural therapy emphasize that creating a therapeutic alliance with clients from cultural backgrounds that differ from the therapist's requires to be sensitive to the cultural differences and dynamics that can bias the therapist–client relationship. Hays (2016) explained that cross-cultural impact on the client-therapist interaction goes beyond traditional transference-countertransference responses, arguing that "the emotional reactions of clients to therapists, and vice versa, often reflect differences and power imbalances in the real world" (p. 118). If cultural differences and bias are left unchecked, unawareness may interfere with the client-therapist relationship, thereby with the effectiveness and appropriateness of therapy (Hays, 2016; Hocoy, 2002; Kapitan, 2015; Sue, 1998, 2006; tet Maat, 2011).

Cross-Cultural Art Therapy with Aboriginal Peoples in Canada

Canadian Aboriginal (or Native) peoples, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, vary widely across territories, cultural traditions and their respective historical experiences. Art therapists working with Aboriginal populations must understand the long-standing history and still ongoing forms of violence and oppression inflicted by colonialism, laws and government policies, media, residential school, contemporary racial biases (e.g., stereotypes, cultural appropriation and pan-indianism), and their consequences on well-being. These consequences include an intergenerational legacy of "physical and sexual abuse, historic trauma, loss of language and culture, and disintegration of family and community" (Archibald, Dewar, Reid, & Stevens, 2010, p.15). Although the cultural diversity, richness and realities of First Nations, Inuit and Métis cannot be reduced to this portrait, it indicates that culturally different art therapists may be called to work with these populations to address related health challenges. Assuming the responsibility to develop cultural sensitivity is essential to provide equitable mental health opportunities for clients from Native ethnicity, cultural heritages or origins, and reduce the risks of unintentionally be complicit of the dominant narrative that carry colonial attitude of "solving the *Indian* problem" (Regan, 2010). A self-examining work is necessary, especially as descendant of european settlers working with Native populations.

Given the context of an emotionally charged history of cultural repression, "there is a general suspicion of the non-Native population by Native Americans, consequently, any therapeutic orientation or approach will be recognized as an intrusion" (Dufrene & Coleman, 1994b, p. 192). Therefore, a lack of cultural awareness or knowledge may lead art therapists to overlook colonial distrust issues at work during the psychotherapy process (Hocoy, 2002), or perpetuate power imbalances (Hays, 2016) and oppression against clients from ethnic minority (Helms, 1984).

"Unsettling the settler within". Paulette Regan (2010) suggested that non-Native Canadian have the responsibility to unsettle themselves to "name and then transform the settler – the colonizer who lurks within –", by turning the mirror back upon themselves and examine "how settler history, myth, and identity have shaped and continue to shape our attitudes in highly problematic ways" (p. 11). She discussed the need for non-Natives to undergo a decolonizing process through "self-reflective truth telling". From her own process, Regan (2010) stated that it involves a willingness to examine our "dual positions as colonizer-perpetuators and colonizer-allies" and stay in areas of discomfort that may evoke disturbing emotions, yet provoke transformative learning (p. 28). Regan (2010) identified this

process as being essential to avoid perpetuating a colonial relationship with Native peoples and truly participate in the transformative possibilities of reconciliation.

In Search of Culturally Humble Art Therapist

Cultural complexities. Literature from the field of art therapy highlights the responsibility art therapists have to understand one's own cultural values and biases, and to explore clients' worldview when working with culturally different clients (Brigatti, 2006; Coseo, 1997; Goldman, 1994; Har-Gil, 2010; Hocoy, 2002; Kapitan, 2015; McNiff & Barlow, 2009; ter Maat, 2011). Hence, it is essential to consider the *cultural complexities* at play. Cultural complexity refers to the overlapping nature of "different cultural influences that shape the beliefs and behaviours of dominant and minority groups" (Hays, 2016, p. 10). Hays (2016) identified nine key factors and minority groups. They are: age and generational influences, developmental and other disability, religion and spiritual orientation, ethnic and racial identity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, indigenous heritage, national origin, and gender. Other factors to consider also include geographic region, degree of acculturation and historical experience with the dominant culture (Hocoy, 2002). The concept highlights the within-culture diversity of any given group and the "overlapping, multidimensional nature of identity" (also referred to as *intersectionality*) (Hays, 2016, p.10). Understanding this concept can help art therapists working with Native peoples to avoid generalizations or more particularly *pan-indianism,* which is "the erroneous assumption that all Aboriginal cultures and traditions are essentially the same" (Ross, 2014, p. 265). It is crucial to develop an awareness of many cultural factors, such as: geographical and regional idiosyncrasies and nuances among communities, affecting values, beliefs, customs and traditions; Native languages use or non-use, urban versus rural environments, and reservation versus non-reservation status (Dufrene & Coleman, 1994b, p. 191). Given the cross-cultural differences that can potentially influence the client-therapist relationship, developing cultural sensitivity in practice is paramount to effectively work with other cultural groups.

Cultural competency or humility. Sue (2006) identified three domains of core multicultural competencies (MCCs), including: awareness/beliefs, knowledge, and skills. Awareness refers to the therapist's "sensitivity to her or his personal values and biases and how these may influence perceptions of the client, client's problem, and the counselling relationship" (Sue, 2006, p. 238). Knowledge refers to the therapist's understanding of the client's culture, worldview and expectations for the counselling relationship (Sue, 2006).

Finally, skills are the therapist's "ability to intervene in a manner that is culturally sensitive and relevant" (Sue, 2006, p. 238).

The American Art Therapy Association's (AATA) stated that multicultural and diversity competency is essential to ethical and effective art therapy practice. Covering MCCs discussed by Sue (2006), the AATA's Code of Ethics (2011) defines multicultural and diversity competencies as involving "a three-stage developmental sequence of awareness, knowledge, and skills [which] implies a specific and measurable set of deliberate actions and results that increase the ability to serve diverse populations" (pp. 1-2). Acquiring these competencies requires an honest commitment and continuous effort to internalizing them into personal and professional realms (ter Maat, 2011). Therefore, striving for cultural humility rather than cultural competency seems more appropriate (Hays, 2016; Hook & Watkins, 2015; Hook, Davis, Owen, Worhting & Utsey, 2013; Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). Whereas the later have traditionally focused on building knowledge of multicultural content areas, cultural humility requires practitioners to engage in a lifelong self-reflection and self-critique process (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). The path of cultural humility is also coherent with Regan's (2010) recommendation to engage in a personal decolonizing process through "self-reflective truth telling".

Hook and Watkins (2015) defined intrapersonal and interpersonal components of a culturally humble stance, as follow:

> "Intrapersonally, cultural humility involves a willingness and openness to reflect on one's own self as an embedded cultural being, having an awareness of personal limitations in understanding the cultural background and viewpoints of others; interpersonally, cultural humility involves an Other-oriented stance (or openness to the other) with regard to aspects of an individual's or group's cultural background and identity" (p. 661).

Being open to and developing awareness about our own possible "cultural inhumility" would be a critical first step for positive contact with culturally different client (Hook & Watkins, 2015). Hook et al.(2013) concluded in their pilot study that clients' perceptions of cultural humility in their therapist were positively associated with both working alliance with the therapist and perceived improvement in therapy.

Although the literature on cross-cultural therapy emphasizes the responsibility of practitionners to examine their own values and biases, and to learn about one's client's culture, few guidelines or practical methods exist to assist art therapists to actively pursuing this process. Hays (2016) suggested that "therapists working in cross-cultural context should

engage in their own ongoing cultural self-assessment through personal work (introspection, self-questioning, reading research) and interpersonal learning (community activities, relationship, and other experiential learning)" (p. 297). For the scope of this study, I will use the term "cross-cultural experiences" to include both what Hays's describe as personal work and interpersonal learning opportunities. For art therapists—and possibly other practitionners—art-making may be useful and needed to uncover conscious and unconscious attitudes, beliefs and assumptions (i.e., "cultural blindspots") that may be elicited during such cross-cultural experiences. According to Rubin (as cited in Har-Gil, 2010), "art therapists, building on psychoanalytic theory, have long held that art has the capacity to uncover unconscious conflicts and bring them into vivid awareness" (p. 71).

Cultural Humility: The Role of Response Art

Response art is defined as the intentional use of making art by the art therapist during or post-session "to contain difficult material, express and examine their experiences, and communicate their experiences with others" (Fish, 2012, p. 138). It can be engaged for the therapist's own self-care and personal growth, and is most effectively used with a clear intention (Fish, 2007). Fish (as cited in Honce, 2014), defined an intention by that which expresses "what one hopes to explore, accomplish, or learn from the image making experience" (p. 22). While spontaneous artwork created in response to a session may provide insight and recognition of unconscious processes, more methodical work can function as a reflective process by offering a mean to investigate their deeper meanings (Wadeson, 2003).

The role and utilization of post-session response art as a mean of exploring complex countertransferential reactions has been discussed within the art therapy literature (Drapeau, 2014; Fish, 2008, 2012; Lavery, 1994; Miller, 2007; Wadeson, 2003). Wadeson (2003) reported that utilizing clients' themes, symbols, and styles can bring art therapists more attuned with their feelings (Wadeson, 2003). The studies reviewed that explored such approach, included replicating clients' images (Deaver & Shiflett, 2009), spontaneous creation of an image to represent a client (Deaver & Shiflett, 2012; Miller, 2007) or more steady representational work to process "culture shock" encountered with client (Lavery, 1994), all highlighted that response art provided a concrete record of art therapists' feelings and reactions to client. Hence, post-session response art-making can serve as a self-processing procedure in order to facilitate understanding of complex countertransferential issues at play.

Art therapists have developed similar procedures to address emotional responses to cultural differences and complexities more specifically (Brigatti, 2006; Coseo, 1997; Har-Gil, 2010). Coseo (1997) stated that she developed a greater sensitivity and a more empathic understanding of African American clients' reality she worked with, through undertaking a creative self-exploration and analysis of "culturally charged reactions" that emerged during sessions. Post-session response art-making, journaling and more in-depth reflective investigation helped her to confront and process conscious and unconscious values, beliefs and misconceptions about her client's cultural background. As art therapist interns, Brigatti (2006) and Har-Gil (2010) used an art-based heuristic approach to undertake the first step toward developing multicultural and diversity awareness and humility. Along with or following direct cross-cultural clinical experience, they engaged in a rigorous process of critical self-examination of one's cultural values, and how those values may influence their relationship with clients from different cultural background. Both reported that the creative process facilitated self-reflection and a heightened awareness of their own culture (Brigatti, 2006; Har-Gil, 2010).

These studies concluded that using creative exploration was a useful processing tool toward self-discovery, as it helped to contain, work through and understand reactions to culture that may influence professional practice. However, none of them have positioned the experience of using post-session response art as the central phenomenon for self-inquiry.

Methodology

Art-Based Heuristic Self-Inquiry as Research Design

The purpose of this study is to examine how response art can assist an art therapy intern to gain cultural awareness and knowledge, which are essential for the development of cultural humility. Given the personal nature of the research question and the intimate self-examination necessary to uncover one's personal worldview and biases, an art-based heuristic methodology seemed well suited to deepen my understanding of this phenomenon. The methodology can offer guidance to look at and learn about the experience of using response art for that purpose. Moustakas' (1990) heuristic model of inquiry served as a guiding structure in which artistic processes constitute the primary mode of collecting data.

Heuristic Methodology. This qualitative inquiry is based on *tacit knowledge* which Moustakas (1990a) identified as "the deep structure that contains the unique perceptions, feelings, intuitions, beliefs, and judgments housed in the internal frame of reference of a person that governs behaviour and determines how we interpret experience" (p. 32). This

knowledge of self is not available to an individual's present conscious awareness, but assumed to be accessible when attention is focused inward on feeling responses in relation to the outward situation experienced. In essence, the heuristic researcher must have a personal experience with the theme or question being studied and include him/herself in the study by continuously asking the question: "What is my experience of the phenomenon?" (Bloomgarden & Netzer, 1998, p. 52). This inquiry method is exploratory, open-ended with only the initial question as a guide (Sela-Smith, p. 58). While Moustakas (1990) encourages the inclusion of co-participants, Sela-Smith's (2002) "heuristic self-search inquiry" emphasizes on self-reflection and the "internal subjective experience of the *I-who-feels*" of the researcher as one subject for study (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 59). In this study, the researcher is the only participant. In order to gain knowledge about the experience of a euro-Canadian art therapist intern using response art to facilitate cultural awareness and knowledge, I must delve inward and explore my internal experience with the phenomenon. Through analysing my own interaction and experience with art media, art-making and art pieces produced during response art to explore "culturally charged reactions" (Coseo, 1997), I will attempt to discover the meaning of the studied phenomenon and enrich my understanding of it (Moustakas, 1990).

Art-based research. Artistic expression was integrated in this heuristic journey as a core way of knowing (Allen, 1995). McNiff (2011) defined art-based research as "involving the researcher in some form of direct art-making as a primary mode of systemic inquiry", rather than just describing their observations (p. 385). The core premise of using art as a method of psychological inquiry is that artistic expression can "further understanding and resolve difficulties in ways not accessible to spoken language" (McNiff, 2011, p. 389). Given the unconscious nature of cultural material to be explored in the study, artistic inquiry was considered as an asset and was incorporated to Moustakas' model of heuristic research.

Phases of Arts-Based Heuristic Inquiry: My Personal Journey

Moustakas' model of heuristic research. My arts-based self-inquiry followed Moustakas' (1990) six-phase method as a structure to this study with emphasis on Sela-Smith's *I-who-feels*. The model is grounded in the use of the researcher's creative process to work with the data through periods of initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, examination and, finally, a creative synthesis. These phases of internally focused experiences require the researcher to "surrender to the feeling state of the subjective 'I' ", and release control and rigorous planning of the steps to allow the inquiry to unfold

naturally (Sela-Smith, p. 2002, p. 63). Therefore, I let the process determine the phases rather than be ruled by strict procedures.

Initial engagement. The heuristic inquiry begins with a topic, theme, question or problem connected to self-understanding that is rooted in tacit knowledge and regards "an intense interest, a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher, one that holds important social meanings and personal, compelling implications" (Moustakas, 1990a, p. 27). It creates a sense of *un-ease* that the researcher seeks to resolve (Sela-Smith, 2002 p. 63). This phase invites the researcher to engage in self-dialogue to begin the inner search in a way that is autobiographical (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 64).

My research question is rooted in an internal tension and feelings of guilt, discomfort and confusion that aroused after I have secured practicum placements with Native populations (mainly from Cree and Inuit cultural backgrounds) in spring 2016. These unsettling feelings were discordant with the initial inner call of interest, enthusiasm and trust that motivated me to work with Native populations in the first place. I understood that I would have to delve within to uncover the root of those mixed feelings, and examine dual positions of "colonizer-perpetuator"and "colonizer-ally" that may be at play within me (Regan, 2010). Thus, my question was nourished by a desire to raise my awareness and sensitivity to my cultural values, beliefs and biases, as well as my interest in response art as an effective self-processing tool for art therapists. My engagement became also an ethical responsibility since I would be working with culturally different clients in the context of my practicum. Thus, I consider my question to be personally meaningful and professionally significant.

In the phase of initial engagement, I began to seek opportunities with the intention of familiarizing myself with Native cultures. From spring to fall 2016, I engaged in diverse cross-cultural experiences (e.g., community gatherings, discussion, reading literature), which I consider to have enriched my understanding of some cultural differences between and within Nations, counter-narrative history, ongoing issues related to colonialism and realities peoples live-in today. These initial experiences were not included as raw data for self-inquiry, though they have prepared the soil to my immersion in the process.

Immersion. An active period of immersion follows, where the researcher lives the question or topic consciously and unconsciously, everywhere in his/her inner and outer life experience, by surrendering entirely to it and seeking to grow in knowledge and understanding (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 65). According to Sela-Smith (2002), the researcher should surrender to his/her "felt experience" during immersion phase (p. 66). The data in

heuristic research lies within the researcher (Moustakas, 1990). Thus, the immersion phase of Moustakas' model in my study correspond to data collection.

Data collection Procedures. For the scope of this inquiry, the immersion phase includes cross-cultural experiences that happened within a four-months period (winter/spring 2016), during which I had therapeutic encounter with clients. I then began making art in response to something felt during cross-cultural experiences, including in clinical work. The immersion phase was characterised by collecting data from multiple sources, through art-making (i.e., visual data) and from witness journaling (i.e., verbal data) for each response art process. A detailed layout of data collection procedures follows.

Cross-cultural experiences. Referring to Hays's (2016) recommendation for therapists working in cross-cultural context, I sought opportunities to engage in my own cultural self-assessment through "personal work" and "interpersonal learning" opportunities with Native cultures, more specifically within Cree and Inuit cultures when possible (p. 297). Personal work experiences included reading culturally relevant research and myths, arts exhibition, conferences and documentaries. In addition to my regular clinical practice as an intern, engaging myself on a personal and professional level in cross-cultural interpersonal learning experiences was important to expand my perspectives of diverse individuals in more than an academic or helping exercises (AATA, 2011, sect. II. C. 3). This included participating in casual conversation, cultural activities and gatherings within the urban community, consultation with traditional healer, cultural academic conferences and actions of solidarity. I tried to remain mindful of "learning (about difference) *from* the Other, rather than learning *about* the Other" (Jones & Jenkins, 2008, p. 471). I sought interpersonal opportunities via social media on the internet, and my network in the urban community and practicum sites. Their selection was based on my availabilities and their accessibility within the determined timeframe.

Personal process notes. Following these cross-cultural experiences, I wrote personal process notes related to cultural materials or manifestations to have emerged in that experience, if any (e.g., what was my felt experience or reaction, how someone's verbal/nonverbal behaviour may be culturally related, and how my cultural background may influence my perception of it). These notes were part of my routine and requirements as an art-therapist intern, and used also for interactions happening outside clinical settings. Personal process notes were not used as raw data in this study. However, they contained information that were identified or hypothesized as culturally influenced. Some of which were explored further through my response art.

Response art ritual. I engaged in creative response related to particular cross-cultural experiences, using natural elements and following Pat B. Allen's (1995) *Intention, Attention and Witness* writing process to guide me through self-reflective journaling (i.e., witness journaling). Each creative ritual went as described below.

Art media. Media available for each session were: small size natural elements previously gathered and other natural materials in the form of pigments (e.g., walnut), glue (i.e., rabbit skin and bark mix), charcoal, clay, leather and bones. Various natural elements were found and picked from the ground during a series of intentional walks on lands that are meaningful to me. Elements gathered included: sand, seashells, roots, leaves, soil, vine branches, stones, feathers, bee hive and bark. I followed this procedure to create a framework that would influence the way I interact with these elements throughout the inquiry, considering them as participant rather than material commodities.

Response art. After reading my personal process notes from a particular cross-cultural experience, I set a culturally relevant intention for each response art, before engaging in them (e.g., "I want to deepen the understanding of my felt reaction to... "). Then, I proceed by intuitively selecting from any of the above materials and created an art piece, while keeping my attention throughout the process (Allen, 1995). The art-making experience itself determined its length, but last between 15 and 45 minutes. Depending upon what was emerging, the response art took form of a tridimensional artwork, sound/music, or movement. Once the piece felt resolved, I engaged in a witness journaling process inspired by Allen (1995).

Witness journaling. At the end of each response art (RA), Allen's (1995) witness process was used to self-reflect on the creative experience and the art piece produced. This was done by taking a moment to contemplate the art piece in front of me and then engage in free form writing and dialogue in a journal, for approximately 10 minutes. Free form writing seemed relevant to avoid limiting my reflection to manifestations of culture that were already consciously identified in my personal process notes. As much as possible, I tried not to censor immediate responses in order to get more unconscious material, such as personal biases. First, I usually wrote down free words associations to describe the art piece, followed by a description of the experience of making them. Thereafter, I engaged in dialogue with the art piece, also permitting ideas, thoughts, feelings, and images to unfold and be expressed intuitively. Dialogues may deepen and supplement other reflections of the experience (Moustakas, 1990b; McNiff, 2008). Finally, I made connection between the response art process and the initial intention (Allen, 1995). Given the open-ended and

intuitive nature of heuristic self-inquiry, I allowed my mind to wander, and trust the process of later analysis to bring culturally relevant themes to surface. The art piece was then photographed and stored in a digital form to ease the data analysis process in a later phase.

By letting the data collection procedure to unfold naturally within the immersion, I felt a sense of completion after the 11th art piece (spring 2017). All art pieces were entirely made of natural elements, with the exception of a transparent plastic string. They most recurrently contain vegetal forms (tree branch, bark, seeds, leaves) assembled together into small to moderate-size sculptures or mobile (30cm³, or less). One art response took a short musical form and was audio-recorded.

Incubation and illumination. In this phase, the researcher retreats from conscious focus on the question and allows his/her inner tacit knowledge and intuition to sort through, review and reorganize the information provided during immersion, "in new ways of thinking, being, seeing, and understanding, to create meaning and to form an answer to the question" (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 67). It is described as a period of "silent nourishment" when additional input is stopped until a moment of illumination brings new understanding of the phenomena (Moustakas, 1990a, p. 29). The illumination occurs naturally "when there is a breakthrough into conscious awareness of wholes and clustered wholes that form into themes inherent in the question" (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 67).

Despite my intention to let the immersion phase to unfold organically and move through resistance and external life constrains, there were periods when my attention was less focused on my research question. My immersion phase alternated with periods of incubation due to academic and personal responsibilities, or challenges that required time and energy. Therefore, over the course of four months, there were periods during which I immersed myself with the question by engaging in response art-making, and other that were more "silent", as Har-Gil (2010) also noted in her process. Although not producing artworks, I remained mindful of cultural differences, felt reactions and potential biases in the context of clinical work and other cross-cultural experiences.

The end of the immersion phase was marked by the 11th art piece produced and the end of my internship, after which I felt the need to take a step back from the research process. From spring until fall 2017, I let the heuristic experience unfold naturally. No redaction, nor any direct engagement with the art pieces was done during this period. However, the art pieces remained at sight on my bedroom walls and the heuristic process seemingly continued to operate in parallel. An illuminating insight woke me up in the middle of a night of fall

2017; I felt a novel energy motivating me to re-engage with the art pieces from a different perspective and enter the next phase of my self-inquiry.

Explication. This is the period where the researcher examines distinctive qualities and themes of the phenomenon that emerged from the previous phase (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 68). Through focusing, self-searching, indwelling and self-disclosure, the researcher aims to gain new meanings, new understanding and new worldview about the phenomenon.

Explication phase started five months after finishing the last artistic response within the immersion phase (fall 2017). The distancing effect over time enhanced clarity on the research process as a whole. At the beginning of the explication phase, I dived back in my experience with response art by reviewing witness journaling data and re-engaging with the 11 art pieces produced with a renewed sense of presence and perception. I proceeded with further reflection and discovery of meanings from the collected data through multiple in-dwellings of analysis. This phase corresponds to data analysis of my study, which will be described in this next section.

Data Analysis Procedures. In summary, the visual and verbal raw data collected includes: (1) 11 art pieces produced (including a tape-recorded audio RA); and (2) witness journaling for each RA ritual (free word associations, description of my art-making experience and dialogue with the art pieces).

Data analysis consisted in a qualitative thematic method using an inductive process of hand-coding the raw data, in order to identify, code and analyze themes and recurrences in the 11 art pieces and journal records (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once all raw data were gathered, I reviewed them while asking the research question: How can response art assist an art therapy intern to gain cultural awareness and knowledge?

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest six phases of thematic analysis of data, which are: (1) familiarizing oneself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report (p. 87). These seemed well-suited to assist with the heuristic process of organizing and synthesizing data through indwelling blocks of inquiry, therefore was integrated as the explication phase of my study (see *Data Analysis & Findings* for details).

Creative synthesis. The final phase takes form to integrate the essence of what has been investigated (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 68). Once the researcher is familiar with the data, the themes, and the meanings of the experience, he/she reveals to the outer world the "story" of his/her experience in form of creative expression. As such, this research paper is the main aspect of my creative synthesis. From the raw data, I have selected and integrated in this

research paper some response art rituals and photography of art pieces produced which exemplify the phenomenon investigated (Moustakas, 1990b, p. 14). The communication of my findings and insights through the "self-reflective truth telling" writing process of this paper was challenging (Regan, 2010) and a way to record the transformative journey that represents my heuristic experience. The depth in which the self-inquiry led me and the uncomfortable and dissonant nature of what emerged from the personal data was challenging. It brought me in vulnerable spaces often punctuated with resistance, during which I had to take breaks from writing and time off for self-care. It was a process that required self-compassion, trust and patience, in regard to the rhythm and depth to which I felt ready to acknowledge unconscious biases as part of myself, to integrate them and disclose to the world uncomfortable personal materials. Writing about my experience concisely involved a process of slowly integrating my findings into my conscious awareness, by making a non-judgmental space for them within me, by keeping them alive and metaphorically playing with them (e.g., giving visual shapes to organise them, extract the essence from them). In that sense the creative synthesis embodies and contains key elements of the transformative journey that represents my heuristic experience.

By extension, the stylistic form, vocabulary and concepts used in this paper are biased by cultural context in which this paper is written (i.e., western-oriented psychology and academic standards and values that I internalized). Reading and revising my text over time was an additional source of information for self-examination (e.g., pre and post data analysis).

Ethical Considerations and Potential Methodological Biases

Ethical considerations to be examined include being mindful of my multiple roles in this self-inquiry, because the boundaries between my personal, student and researcher's role were challenged. Although I reflected upon and responded artistically to materials that have emerged from interpersonal experiences with clients or other individuals, my goal was to draw data from my personal lens and experience. Therefore, no clinical notes from clients or personal materials from other individuals were included in the study. Considerations were made about the risk of cultural appropriation and misinterpretation in exploring and interacting with information that are culturally different than mine. Similarly, addressing my reaction to cultural differences and writing about it holds risk of unintentionally making generalisation and cultural encapsulation about Native populations, which may lead to pan-indianism and stereotypes. Another ethical consideration was to remain attuned with my

intention when engaging in interpersonal experiences, and avoid falling in self-serving interactions for the purpose of the research. Also related to my multiple roles in the study, lay the importance for me to engage in self-care beside the frame of my research process, in order to help processing difficult feelings to surface and maintain life equilibrium. For this reason, I acknowledged my need to take a step back from my inquiry for a few months.

Potential biases. Having multiple roles and being the only researcher, participant, art therapist intern and artist at the same time of the project makes the tasks of data collection, analysis and verification of findings highly subjective. Every choice made added a layer of subjectivity. As examples, the choice of the research topic, designated ethnic groups, research question and cross-cultural experiences are biased to various degree, as they may be consciously or unconsciously informed by personal values. It is the purpose of this inquiry to identify personal biases in relation to culture. That being said, by not being mindful enough or wanting to avoid discomfort, I may have overlooked certain personal biases and cultural blindspots along the way. Personal resistances to self-inquiry are not unusual in a heuristic investigation (Sela-Smith, 2002). Also, implied in this study are the assumptions that the creative process has the potential to help access unconscious cultural biases and that heuristic methodology would help me to gain insights about my research question. Moreover, I cannot fully isolate the contribution of response art from other experiences taking place in parallel in my life at the time of this research (e.g., challenges in personal life, stress of study, other cross-cultural experiences), and their influence on my experience and nature of insights. Given the subjectivity of the self-inquiry, this is not an exhaustive list of potential bias.

Data Analysis and Findings

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phases of thematic theme analysis to guide my indwelling process allowed me to reduce the amount of information and cluster them in themes. The procedure was conducted for each RA ritual individually, and across the series of 11 RA produced over multiple blocks of in-dwellings to capture the essence of the phenomena as a whole. Themes were selected from recurring data collected in the 11 art pieces created (visual data) and witness journaling (verbal data), and their relevance to the research question (i.e., How can response art assist an art therapy intern to gain cultural awareness and knowledge?).

Five culturally related themes were identified: *vulnerability & powerlessness*, *resistance & rejection*, *power imbalance*, *resonance & attraction*, and *reconcile & restore*

balance. I will first summarize general components of RA, then present the observations and insights that emerged from analysing my lived experience, divided by theme.

General Components of Response Art

Creative process was at the centre of my self-inquiry to understand the experience of using RA to explore my felt reaction to culture. Therefore, I conducted data analysis with attention to my interaction and experience within four crucial components of my RA rituals: art media, art-making process, art pieces produced and witness journaling (description, word associations and dialogue) (Allan, 1995; Fish, 2007). I looked for patterns in the formal elements and content of the art pieces and journal entries, while keeping in mind culturally relevant information (e.g., stereotype, assumption).

Identified Themes

For each theme I will describe my experience with RA, elaborating on how its components assisted me to explore my reaction to culture, and what insights of unconscious cultural biases I gained from the process. Each theme is illustrated with the photographed image of one art piece as well as examples exerted from my experience with RA that represent it. Due to length limitations of this paper, only five images and the RA they represent were selected out of 11 in total to be analysed in this section (see images from other RAs in Annexe 1). Though, all RA rituals were equally analysed during data analysis phase. I refer to them in the text as RA1 to RA11, according to the chronological order they were produced.

Theme 1: Vulnerability & powerlessness. If this theme emerged from the first RA ritual, it was present then after throughout the series (i.e., in seven of 11 RA). It refers to a constellation of recurring feelings of helplessness, guilt, fragility, shame, inadequacy**,** sadness, disconnection, loss, emptiness and victimhood. Such feelings were felt or expressed within different components of my experiences with RA, and more predominantly related to cultural dimensions of familial or cultural heritage, gender and womanhood.

Felt experience with art media/art piece. These feelings often emerged in association with a caring and empathetic attitude toward the art media. The recurrent choice of small size and/or fragile natural elements (e.g., leaves, vines, bee hive) required careful and slow manipulation when assembling them together. In these moments, I felt my interaction with the media as a metaphor to the therapeutic relationship, enhancing my sensitivity and attention to the Other's unique particularities or "identity".

The predominance of fine lines, disconnected elements, empty spaces and transparency in the art pieces often evoked for me a sense of fragility and vulnerability. Such visual rendering is present in most art pieces produced, regardless of the initial emotional reaction I intended to explore at the beginning of a particular RA. The vulnerability perceived in the quality of certain media or art pieces resonated with vulnerable parts "hidden" in me, and their manipulation allowed me to stay present with it throughout the creative process. These experiences unabled me to symbolically touch, feel and express this inner vulnerability.

Figure 1. In-between the silence...

The art piece titled "In-between the silence..." (Figure 1, RA6) represents an artistic response in which I intended to deepen the understanding of overwhelming feelings aroused during a conversation on cultural heritage's differences within and between Native Nations. Though I felt a sense of vulnerability during the situation, it is my experience with RA that assisted me to clarify my felt reaction and its potential source. The choice of small size and thin media vertically assembled in clusters along an invisible line evoked to me a sense of fragility, disconnected pieces and voids. By amplification, the empty spaces in the art piece reminded me of spaces of my "not knowing" and my "invisible" limitations as a non-Native and an art therapy intern. These associations reflected back to me voids of knowledge about my own heritage, and the limits of my worldview, preventing me from perceiving "what is" beyond it and fully understand the Other's worldview and reality. Linking these personal associations with my intention, reminding me that "I cannot save" or experiencing emotions related to feeling that "I don't know anything" or that "I don’t deeply understand" the Other, was a vulnerable space to be. Indeed, it raised feelings of powerlessness and inadequacy as it unsettled misconceived and biased beliefs around my "professional ability, competency or

performance" (i.e., fantasy of the "All-knowing" expert or saviour) (Watkins & Schulman, 2008).

Verbal expression of feelings. Word associations used to describe the art pieces and narratives from the art piece's voice during dialogues in witness journaling recurrently expressed a sense of disconnection, loss and emptiness. While they resonate with feelings expressed by Native peoples that I worked with in clinical context as an intern, I suspected a more personal attribute to them. Witnessing the depth to which these associations affected me internally, I realized they were possibly unconscious parts of myself being verbally projected onto art pieces.

My understanding deepened when I analysed dialogues and noticed a recurring pattern of a "carer-wounded" relational dynamic within the "two voices" interactions. These interactions were caracterised by one voice embodying my position (the "I", or conscious Self), and another voice impersonating the art piece's with whom I imaginatively dialogued. When an asymmetrical dynamic is present in dialogues (RA1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 10), the art pieces' voice most generally embodied the vulnerable, wounded or victim Other (e.g., expressing feeling sad, loss of power or familial roots, stuck, asks for help), while my voice (the "I" engaging with the art piece) held the position of a "benevolent" carer wanting to help, save or protect, and being empathetic to the Other's vulnerability. When reviewing dialogues, I wondered if this voice in position of vulnerability could be related to how I perceive the Other, myself, or both. First, it raised my awareness of the danger of attributing to the Other a negative stereotype of victimhood (and consequent prejudice), while reinforcing a potentially biased form of humanitarism in my attitude and beliefs (see sect. *Theme 2: Power imbalance* for details). Second, the voice of the art piece in dialogues can be seen as a projection of unconscious parts of myself who feel helpless, guilty, ashamed, and want to be acknowledged.

Insights on cultural biases. I gained clarity when I made links between these feelings and the cultural dimensions they were repeatedly associated with across data. That is my own sense of disconnection within cultural dimensions of gender, womanhood, family and cultural heritage. This indicated an entanglement of unresolved personal issues intersecting with cultural dimensions, which seems to illuminate my felt reaction in particular cross-cultural experiences. As an example, a sense of disconnection or loss of family heritage expressed as a source of vulnerability in another individual seems to resonate with my own sense of disconnection with my familial and cultural heritage' roots (RA6, 8). RA provided me with an opportunity to connect with and self-reflect on such areas of vulnerability that tend to hide

below the surface of my conscious awareness, by allowing me to safely feel uncomfortable feelings they raise, project them through creative expression and witness them by being present with the art pieces.

Theme 2: Power imbalance. Relational dynamics are metaphorically present in every RA process and witness journaling, in the intersubjective space between the art media, or the art piece and I. The manner I engaged and interacted with art media (art-making) or the art piece (dialogue) in certain RA, informed me of power imbalance (RA 1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). More specifically, this theme captures manifestations of dominance metaphorically at play within my attitude, behaviours and feelings.

Interaction with art media. Data analysis shed light on my tendency to engage in the creative process and interact with media with assumptions and expectations of what I want to create, a persistence of gestures, and a felt need to control media and final products (difficulty to let go expectations) regardless of art media's proprieties. These manner of interacting with media indicated me a tendency to engage with the Other with an attitude of "all-knowing" and assumptions, rather than being fully receptive and responsive to "what is" present in the Other.

Moreover, my attention and behaviours during art-making were often engaged with a desire "to fix" together, or "to alter" natural elements. Actions of enrolling (RA1), burning (RA10), or breaking (RA7, 10, 11) matter in particular RA rituals reflect this. Interestingly, while such actions metaphorically embody a position of dominance, they emerged with a subtle increase of energy level or "thrill". It is as if I felt empowered from experiencing power over the Other (art media) in the context of these RA.

Interaction with the art piece. As mentioned in the previous theme, the two voices expressed in dialogues recurrently took the form of "dual positions" interactions; evoking a relational dynamic in which I "project" the Other's voice in the role of "victim", and position myself as "saviour". Such pattern is observable in *how* and *what* type of questions I asked to the art piece (e.g., closed ended, directive, emphasising on problem) and its answers. As an example, in some dialogues I unconsciously played out a paternalistic attitude and once even dismissed what the art piece said. These observations convey an asymmetry of power, victimization or biased assumptions of dependency, and negative stereotyping in my perception.

Verbal content of dialogues. Art pieces' voice in some dialogues directly informed me of a tendency for power imbalance. It named cultural values to which I tend to be blind:

"materialistic view of nature as commodity to consume" (RA4), "appropriation and eager to know" (RA7), independency rather than interdependency (RA1). Other messages indicated my tendency to assume that "I know" and reminded me of prejudice it entails: "You think you know...you assume, but you don't [...] if you don't accept this, it risks keeping you in the midst of superficial understanding and assumption about yourself and others, and blind to the truth" (RA6). It felt as if a voice rising from a deep inner wisdom was communicating important lessons of truth to my conscious self, so I can understand my reaction to culture.

Figure 2. Bonded shape shifter.

The first art piece created, titled "Bonded shape shifter", symbolically embodies and conveys visible traces of power imbalance (Figure 2, RA1). My intention was to deepen the understanding of my reaction in response to a young Cree woman's story in therapeutic setting. During the creative process, I felt an internal tension through the act of enrolling strings around a piece of wood to "repair broken parts", while feeling that "I am imposing force over" another being. The wood became the body of a bird I was preventing from flying. Feelings of guilt and sadness emerged from the process, yet I continued to execute the gesture in a slow manner as if it was the right thing to do. The dissonance between my feelings and behaviours in this experience reflected the presence of conflicting opposing forces internally, and their influence on my relationship with the Other. Dialogue with the art piece later revealed the assumptions that the Other is "asking to be saved or fixed", while I held a narrative that conveys value of independency. The creative exploration stimulated reflection on fantasies of saving, wanting to help yet by the same act risking to impose power over the Other. Aspects of my felt reaction in this cross-cultural situation can be related to a tension between helping and harming, which is a fundamental ethical issue related to my role as an art therapist intern.

***Insights on cultural biases*.** This theme raised insights on how aspects of my attitude and relational behaviours may subtly convey oppressive forces, in which a part of me is unconsciously driven by personal satisfaction to dominate or have control over an Other.

It reflects an unconscious tendency to engage in comparative perception of self in relation to others, judging from presumed superiority and inferiority. Such relational dynamic of hierarchy and inequality was revealed particularly in dialogues in which cultural dimension of gender, age, or socio-economic status were at play. I was able to admit my paternalistic feelings toward young women from perceived impoverished socio-economic status. These biases are likely to be rooted in the socio-cultural context I was raised in (individualistic paradigm of selfhood), and my perceived position within it as a middle-class white woman.

Bringing these cultural biases to my conscious awareness as pieces of truth raised intense discomfort, shame and a strong impulse to reject them back in the shadow because they unsettle "socially acceptable" or "idealised" self-images. They are dissonant with values of equity, social justice and freedom I usually identify myself with. The comparative perception and paternalistic traits in my attitude hide stereotyped image of Native peoples and implicit assumption that the Other needs to be saved. Thereby, the settler's attitude and tendency to channel caring impulses into "solving the *Indian* problem" became more visible (Regan, 2010, p. 46). While it doesn't dismiss honest humanistic intention to help the Other within the limits of my professional abilities, my experience with RA indicates a form of victimization that I seemingly learned, internalised and risks interfering in my therapeutic relationships.

Identification of "dual positions/forces" in dialogues revealed some truth about the "colonial self" hidden within and its "fantasies": "Fantasies of colonial superiority, intelligence, disciplined work ethic, logical thought, resourcefulness, and scientific thinking elevate the colonial self and justify control over other's resources" (Walkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 69). Such tendency can bias my perception (e.g., perception of the other as "victim" or subordinate, and my position taking form of "saviour" or dominant) while feeling empowered by it (e.g., adding value to myself through it). The presence of this "all knowing" self and his assumptions reminded me of the danger of slipping in "cultural inhumility" (Hook & Watkins, 2015), misunderstanding and misappropriation**.** If left unchecked, this "colonial self" within may unintentionally perpetuate power imbalance and oppression through my attitude and actions with the Other, and cause prejudice in my cross-cultural interaction.

Theme 3: Resistance & rejection. This theme emerged from the second RA and reappeared periodically across the series of 11 RA rituals (RA2, 3, 4, 5, 11). It captures forms of resistance experienced during particular creative processes, such as: feelings preoccupied, frustration, blockage, tension, un-easiness or urge to end RA, lowered energy level, lessened motivation or commitment to work through difficulties (felt boredom, self-doubt). Across data, these internal experiences were often related to art media proprieties (unfamiliar and resistive), and reflected through my attitude and manner of interacting with them during art-making, or with the art pieces in dialogues. Moreover, forms of resistance and rejection recurrently emerged when exploring cultural dimensions related to religious orientation, moral and socio-political ideologies. As an example, when contemplating the bee hive used in an art piece created to explore my reaction to dominant system's ideologies and policies imposed on Native peoples (RA2), I associated the pyramidal shape and empty holes to current Canadian governance's structure. I described it as a "soulless structure that leads to collective fragility". Such association conveys a form of cynism and hostility, which reflected some truth about my perception of the dominant culture and what is my experience of it.

Figure 3. A 'hole' new united world.

The art piece titled "A 'hole' new united world" (Figure 3, RA 5) is an artistic response in which I intended to deepen my understanding of an internal tension experienced earlier that day when attending a discussion on reconciliation with an Elder. This felt reaction surprised me because it was dissonant with the usual values and stance I ordinarily hold about reconciliation. From the beginning and throughout the creative process, I felt blockages and resistance, with a lack of motivation to fully engage. I had difficulty to choose natural media and for the first time felt the urge to use different, familiar ones. Moreover, I felt disengaged and somehow uninterested to receive what the art piece had to express during the dialogue. In

result, it was short and the narrative took an evasive tangent (remained on quite a superficial level). Making the link between my intention and my experience of resistance in this particular RA, helped me observing a dissonance between my values and attitude, and gaining clarity on a source of tension. Valuing the Other's cultural perspective and ideologies, yet struggling to go beyond my own perspective or resisting to invest the energy required to fully engage and take action according to my values: a dissonance seemingly rooted in a disbelief.

Insights on cultural biases. Identified patterns of resistance and rejection raised to my awareness a tendency to hold on a critical attitude and mentally rejecting ideologies from system of domination and institutions that reinforce them, in domains such as socio-economics, politics (RA2, 11), and organised religions (RA3). These were not new to my awareness, but rather reaffirmed personal values of social justice, equity and liberation. Residual tension seemingly remained unprocessed, and I wondered what truth could be hidden behind this resistance. In these particular contexts, my disbelief toward dominant culture's values makes me feel rebellious internally while at the same time benefiting from a privileged position within it is a source of internal tension and guilt. On one hand feeling angry and hostility toward a system perpetuating oppression, on the other hand being complicit of it. This dissonance between values (social justice, equity, liberation) and behaviours (disengaged, inaction) creates ambiguous feelings that further raise discomfort and block my actions. By extension, acknowledging my position of "passive bystander" also raised discomfort in pursuing this self-inquiry; I then perceived the time spent self-reflecting and writing this paper as an individualistic "white-thing-to-do", and a distraction from more concrete act of solidarity. In essence, this theme raises moral and ethical dilemma that confronts me in my work with culturally different populations.

Furthermore, it became clearer that trying to dissociate myself from aspects of dominant westernised ways of living I was raised in hides a resistance to accept them as parts of my own heritage. This prevents me from examining how their internalization (as unconscious parts of myself) may influence my worldview, attitude and behaviours. Such resistance and rejection may explain my tendency to feel an attraction toward aspects of Native cultures and counter-cultures ideologies and values.

Theme 4: Resonance & attraction. This theme refers to an increased sense of resonance or attraction that I felt or expressed within RA rituals (RA3, 4, 7, 9). It captures recurrent feelings of gratitude, deep sense of respect, heart-centered, wholeness, as well as an

increased engagement in the process, energy level, or comfort. In certain RA, it felt as if I was re-immersing myself or amplifying the emotional response I had previously experienced during cross-cultural interaction and now sought to explore. This theme recurrently emerged in association to cultural dimensions or topics within spirituality, traditional ways of knowing and healing, resiliency, womanhood and with Elders.

Felt experience during art-making. In comparison to other RA rituals, there is a shift in my experience and interactions within art-making processes in which I noted such felt resonance or attraction. There was a coherence between my feelings and my attitude during these particular creative processes: feeling overly more open and "receptive to what is present" during art-making (e.g., to natural elements' proprieties) and to the unknown (e.g., ability to let go, sense of relief and trust in the process), deeply connected with my heart, honoured, at peace with myself and energised. These were reflected in word associations used to describe my experience during art-making, or the art pieces.

Dialogues. The manner of interacting with art pieces evoked forms of reciprocal exchanges in which I resonated with the Other and positioned myself as equal, or with an attitude of "not knowing" and receptivity. Such interaction reflected a balanced or inverted power dynamic between the two voices, in comparison to ones identified in the theme "power imbalance". Also, some narratives convey a level of humility and empowering messages (RA4, 7, 9).

Figure 4. Raising the wisdom that awakens essential senses of existence.

The art piece titled "Raising the wisdom that awakens essential senses of existence" (Figure 4, RA4) is an artistic response in which I intended to deepen my understanding of felt experience during a public talk by an Elder on Cree ways of knowing. During the creative process I sang along, burned some incense and felt overly opened and engaged in the

experience. Also, I integrated natural elements that hold symbolic meaning within some Native traditions (e.g., feathers, sage). I opened the dialogue with the art piece by asking "How can I learn from you?", as if I positioned myself as a learner ready to receive teachings from a mentor, or a wise guidance. While my attitude was felt as heart-centered, receptive and "in resonance with" the Other's way, it contains stereotypical associations and attempts to identify to the Other's culture. This RA contributed to raise self-reflection on a tension between felt attraction to the Other's ways and unintentional misuse or misappropriation of the Other's ways, and how it may subtly play within me and affect my perception of the Other, and situation.

Insights on cultural biases. This theme contrasts with ones previously described as it relates to feelings of attraction and resonance toward cultural factors, rather than discomfort or resistance. Examining them offered an equally important self-reflective opportunity. I realized that while a felt attraction or resonance makes me feel deeply connected with parts of myself and the Other in a seemingly balanced and honest way, it hides biases. I realized that I tend to seek comfort in other cultures' beliefs system that provides meaningto my life, in order to fulfill needs that are not being met by my personal experience within the dominant culture I was raised in (e.g., Catholic religion, value competition for power between and within genders). This theme reaffirmed my tendency to feel attracted by Native traditional forms of spirituality, healing and notion of womanhood. If I am not mindful within cross-cultural relational contexts, I may privilege exploration of these identified cultural dimensions that fit with my interests, or to fulfill personal curiosity or need, while consciously or unconsciously reduce attention to others.

This theme can be seen as the opposite polarity of the theme "resistance & rejection". In response to resisting, rejecting or denying aspects of my cultural background judged as dissonant with my current needs (felt as a void to be filled), I may have tendency to seek identification to Native cultural values/beliefs. This can further lead to idealization and holding on a stereotyped romantic misperception of the Other that is fixed in nostalgia of a past, or a fantasy. All of which can bias my perception of the Other and distort the integrity of personal and therapeutic relationships. By acknowledging these parts of myself and needs, I can take responsibility and try to fulfill them in my personal life and reduce the risk it interferes in cross-cultural interactions.

Theme 5: Reconcile & restore balance. This last theme emerged from data analysis as a central one around which the other ones seem to be organised, and holding parts of my

experience with RA as a meaningful whole. It captures the co-existence of polarities or contrasting elements within RA processes, and the presence of a deeper self-organizing force seeking to reconcile and restore balance between them. It felt as a wise, "unifying" inner guidance revealing itself through symbolism and dialogues. This theme may not seem as directly related to culture or as polarised as the others (e.g., power over/powerlessness, attraction/ rejection). It rather holds a transpersonal meaning.

Interaction with art media. Through the act of transforming matter, most RA rituals symbolically evoked a will to reconcile and restore balance either within components of art-making, art pieces produced, or art media used. My interaction with art media during the making always involved assembling different natural elements together; sometimes intentionally breaking and re-organising them in a whole new form (RA7, 11), or having a concrete experience with the concept of equilibrium and its fragility when manipulating media (RA11). In accordance to my intentions, I symbolically explored tension within duality of creation/destruction, (RA7, 10, 11), help/harm (RA1), disconnection/reconnection, passivity/action and hostility/peace (RA11). This reminded me that polarities co-exist within a larger and deeper self-organising whole, and that life involve a constant process of unsettling-restoring balance.

Formal qualities of art media/art piece. Formal qualities of sculptural pieces produced recurrently evokes co-existence of balanced "opposites". Most of them integrate juxtapositions of contrasting elements (e.g., wood and feathers), often assembled in an interconnected way and holding together in a fragile yet balanced manner. Moreover, they are recurrently rendered in abstract symmetrical forms (i.e., triangle, circle, vertical lines, vesica piscis). I perceived in these qualities an invitation to see the cohesive whole that prevails beyond opposite elements; helping me to shift my perception of polarities, from opposites to complementary.

Dialogue narrative. The art pieces' voice within many dialogues expressed insightful message challenging my attitude, feelings or beliefs, thereby helping me to identify biased way of perceiving the Other (RA4, 7). In one RA, it invited me to acknowledge my personal limitations and assumptions, to "understand something with my heart" (not only intellectually), and "the necessity for humility and welcoming vulnerability" (RA7). Also, the position embodied by in the Other's voice sometimes seemed sufficient to modify my feelings or attitude in the moment (RA5, 9, 10, 11). It is as if the Other reminded me to re-balance my perception, or way of being and interacting with the Other.

Figure 5. Standing in equilibrium.

My intention in the last RA titled "Standing in equilibrium", was to deepen the understanding of anger felt in response to water and land protection events happening at the time (Figure 5, RA11). I engaged in art-making by breaking elements and assembling them in a sculptural form; what I broke became the base for holding other parts together in balance. I went through cycles of tension and reliefs during the creative process. My engagement in breaking woods was calming, yet I felt some frustration, impatience and lower motivation to commit in more complex sequence of actions (such as following my intuition in getting water from a nearby river to put in a shell). Also, the dialogue with natural elements elicited messages reflecting mixed feelings. When asking them how they feel, the water said: "fragile and threatened with imbalance [...] there is no point in being angry, the wind makes me move and it's alright that way". The cedar woods surrounding the water and holding it in equilibrium answered feeling "patient, attentive and confident [...] together we are strong; we stand with the support of what has been destroyed". The dialogue's narrative contrasted with the initial reaction of anger I sought to understand in this RA, by expressing a "re-balancing" perspective on the issue. Examining the contrasting narrative between the two voices more closely stimulated self-reflection on how it may play within me. Returning to my intention, I gained understanding that part of my anger is rooted in a tension between a desire for constructive actions and a passive attitude and inaction, that is mixed with feeling powerlessness.

Insights on cultural biases. In essence, this theme shed light on an inner call to reconcile and restore balance between co-existing parts of myself (i.e., polarised forces of power over, vulnerability/powerlessness, resonance/attraction, resistance/rejection) that tend to create internal tension and ambiguous feelings, in order to integrate them into a renewed sense of self. Uncovering this theme and feeling the presence of an "unifying" inner guidance raised feelings of trust and relief. I realized that polarised positions/forces identified in

previous themes are co-existing within, in the centre of which can be experienced a balanced sense of self, or true self. Positioning myself in the center helped me de-identify from polarised positions/forces distorting my perception, while acknowledging them as parts of myself.

This theme reflects both the struggle and potential to recognize and integrate aspects of my cultural background, and reconcile polarised positions in my worldview. Perhaps identified tensions are partly rooted in a transformative and identity-based conflict in this period of my life (e.g., transition student-professional, adjustment to insights gained in this work). It reminded me that life involves a constant process of unsettling and restoring balance. Also, I perceived a call to stop combating internal forces at play within and learn to be present with them toward inner reconciliation and alliance. It became obvious to me that working toward reconciliation within the context of my own cultural complexities internally is an crucial step toward reconciliation with others. These insights not only seem to bring me closer to the essence of the studied phenomena but also to capture the greater transformative potential of my heuristic experience.

Discussion

Throughout this heuristic journey, the objective was to answer the question: "How response art can assist an art therapy intern to gain cultural awareness and knowledge?". Implied in this question is the assumption that RA would assist me to examine my cultural worldview, values and biases (thereby gaining cultural awareness and knowledge). Insights gained from analysing my experience with RA and identifying themes, illuminated pathways of answers to this central question (see sect. *Data analysis & Findings* for details). In this section, I will discuss the essence of what RA assisted me to uncover, and how it assisted me within the frame on my self-inquiry.

Gaining Insights on Cultural Biases

Findings suggest that making art in response to cross-cultural experiences and identifying themes raised insights on my limitations, values, beliefs and biases. While cross-cultural experiences themselves helped me acknowledge my "whiteness" and felt reactions (by facing cultural differences), engaging in the experience of RA created a space to examine them more closely, and form meaning. Insights gained can be summarized as follow.

In essence, I learned about my socio-cultural position within different cultural dimensions and what it means to me (what is my experience of it? what I identify myself with?). I identified a tendency to feel particular vulnerability and powerlessness within

cultural dimensions of gender (womanhood), family and cultural heritage (see *Vulnerability & powerlessness*). Also, I realized how I may unknowingly perpetuate power imbalance and oppression in my relationships through my attitude or behaviours (see *Power imbalance*). Moreover, I witnessed my tendency to unconsciously reject, resist or deny aspects of my inherited socio-culturally privileged position within dominant culture (see *Resistance & rejection*), while feeling sources of resonance within alternative systems of beliefs and values (including ones from Native cultures) (see *Resonance & attraction*). Finally, I recognised the need to reconcile these identified polarised parts interacting within and acting out unconsciously as bias, to restore inner balance (see *Reconcile & restore balance).*

By bringing these psychodynamics and cultural biases to my conscious awareness, I can more easily defuse personal issues from the complexity of my felt reaction stirred up in cross-cultural contexts, and form meaning around them. I gained awareness of how Native peoples' stories, realities and ways I encountered affected me internally. It is by examining how certain internal responses (feelings, resistance, thoughts) were more recurrently intersecting with certain cultural dimensions within my cross-cultural experiences, that I learned how differences/similarities perceived in the Other intersect with my own narrative (e.g., values/beliefs conditioned by cultural background and personal history). Thereby, I gained understanding of how cultural complexity plays within myself, and how it tends to shape my perception (of myself, others and situation), and the quality of my presence (attitude, behaviours) with others. I can now work on remaining open and sensitive to the Other's own cultural influences that may shape his/her beliefs and behaviours (Hays, 2016, p. 10), therefore reducing the likelihood of cultural generalisation, assumption, or stereotyping. In result, I feel better equipped to address cultural issues with future clients.

To understand the meaning of my experience with RA, I will discuss processes known in the field of art therapy, and how they assisted me in my study more specifically.

Taking an Honest Look in the Mirror through Response Art

Immersion in the creative process operated as a catalyser for critical self-examination and self-reflection. RA rituals created space of openings and closures, that suspended in time my felt reactions to culture by assisting me to express, explore and contain them (Fish, 2007).

Setting an intention. Fish (2007) stated that "Used with intention, the process of making the image, as well as the finished product, may lead the therapist to deeper awareness" (p. 17). Setting a clear and specific intention helped focus my experience within

the creative process and witness journaling. It assisted me to reconnect with particular felt reaction—sometimes amplifying it—with the intent to deepen my understanding of it.

Response art as a vehicle for self-reflection. Each RA ritual opened a metaphoric space in which the art media and art piece became an object of projection and reflection, thereby informing me of internal material (thoughts, feelings, experiences, beliefs, values) and potentially learning from it.

The procedure unabled externalization of otherwise unconscious internalized feelings, beliefs, or assumptions about my own culture and the culture of others. Examining *what* and *how* I expressed myself creatively (i.e., content and form), revealed information that my conscious mind had overlooked, or reaffirmed others I was more familiar with. To quote Allen (1995), "Art is a way of knowing" (p. 3). In my experience, the most significative components of RA in term of their potential to reveal unconscious cultural material (values, beliefs, worldview) were the manner of interaction with art media/art piece, dialogues' narrative and free word associations, that which I will discuss here.

The way I interacted with art media during the making and with art piece during dialogues, reflected back information on the quality of my presence (attitude, behaviours), resistances and biases. Dialogues with the art piece were particularly significant creative forms of projection in which the interaction between "two voices" (art piece and I) helped me identify power imbalance in the dynamic. The voices' narrative embodied personal meaning (e.g., judgement, assumptions, idea), which held culturally relevant significance. These helped me identify otherwise hidden parts of myself (i.e., wise guidance, settler-perpetrator, carer, wounded, learner), and how they tend to be manifested in my attitude and behaviours. According to McNiff (2004), the way we treat and try to understand an image can reflect how we treat other people, the attempt to dialogue with an image parallels gaining insight on the therapeutic relationship.

Moreover, what I expressed through word associations used to describe art pieces and narratives from dialogues mirrored back to my conscious awareness information (feelings, beliefs, values, stereotype, judgements, and assumptions) on how I perceive myself, the Other, or situation. It is as if an honest conversation was taking place between my "shadow" (unconscious aspects) and "I" (conscious Self) via RA. It reflected culturally biased inner dialogues in which "the image mediates between the ego and the unconscious" (Freud, in Fish 2007, p. 316).

Examining *what* I experienced and *how* I interacted with art media and art pieces within art-making and witness journaling (i.e., content and form of expression) were

doorways to self-reflect on deeper sources of projection (why I believe what I believe?, why I behave how I behave?). By taking a step back to observe and amplifying data contained in art pieces and my experience with their making, the procedures of witness journaling and data analysis facilitated critical self-examination over time. The reflective distance helped me gain clarity on sources of felt reaction to culture (e.g., unresolved personal issues), my attitude (e.g., cultural values, judgement, stereotypes), and discrepancies between some of my beliefs, attitude or behaviours. This self-reflective process deepened my self-understanding and helped form meaning around internal responses I experienced in cross-cultural contexts.

Spending a moment to engage in witness journaling after art-making was an essential component of my experience. It elicited verbal expression of unconscious material through free word associations and dialogues, which were most significant sources of information to uncover cultural biases, as mentioned above. Also, by recording my lived experience with RA, the procedure provided an additional opportunity for self-examination over time, and form meaning when reviewing them during data analysis.

Findings suggest that exploring my reactions to culture through art-making with the integrated use of witness journaling assisted me to gain awareness on unconscious cultural material, through the mirroring effect, reflective distance and amplification. It reaffirms the effectiveness of intentional use of RA as a self-reflective tool (Fish, 2007, 2012). From my understanding, creating visible forms to otherwise invisible inner experiences, and exploring them through further self-reflection can help uncovering cultural blindspots (Har-Gil, 2010).

Hence, it is important to nuance that insights on biases did not necessarily emerged from a direct experience with RA or witness journaling themselves. Rather, they were identified by comparing data across the whole series of 11 RA rituals and products through multiple in-dwellings and by stepping away from them for periods of time. This suggest that cultural self-awareness was gained from an extensive engagement with the artistic procedures over time. According to Hervey (as cited in Fish, 2007) in "artistic inquiry", the "creative process may be partially unconscious, allowing patterns and meanings to emerge in their own time and surprisingly serendipitous ways" (p. 49). My experience reaffirmed that the creative and heuristic processes are non-linear and need time to unfold organically, which reminded me the importance of trusting the process.

Containment. Taking time to be present with my inner experience (feelings, resistances, sensations) in order to examine them more closely was another key aspect of my self-inquiry. RA acted as a safe container in which I allowed myself to feel unsettling feelings

and invite them to be expressed creatively instead of resisting or dismissing them. Natural elements' physical proprieties and art pieces acted as a container for creative expression of my emotions (Hinz, 2009, p. 33). They held the experiences for me. In return, the emotional distancing enabled their examination with an increased clarity. The distance between the art media, art-making process or art piece created and I, helped me to observe my inner experiences from different perspectives (Self-Other). This made it easier to identify and name feelings, and hidden parts of myself (e.g., attitude, values, beliefs).

The heuristic research offered broader levels of containment to explore my feelings, allowing me to remain anchored and focused on the research's purpose that which elevated me beyond discomfort and resistance, and communicate them in this paper. It was particularly the case with the theme "power imbalance" for which I felt resistance to accept insights as part of myself and a strong impulse to reject them back in the shadow, due to feelings of shame and inadequacy they raised. Instead of escaping or denying their existence (e.g., by rationalizing away inner conflict), my experience with RA within the heuristic frame supported a process of presence. I was able to face resistances, work through feelings of shame, guilt, inadequacy and identify hidden parts of myself (e.g., attitude, cultural values, beliefs) or inner sources conflicts (e.g., between attitudes, beliefs and behaviours). The heuristic inquiry held the series of experiences and insights gained with RA as a cohesive and meaningful whole. I believe that this self-inquiry facilitated my ability to hold challenging inner experience within, by being present with myself with self-compassion. This may positively influence my ability to safely hold space for others.

From Self-Examination to Transformation

Turning the mirror back upon myself and my cultural background, and taking an honest look within was a challenging yet transformative journey. Most challenging aspects of this journey was to admit insights as pieces of truth, and transcend unsettling feelings (fear, doubt, inadequacy, shame, guilt) and resistance they raised, in order to communicating them in this paper. It required adjusting my sense of self in order to integrate insights on cultural biases that I carry unknowingly as descent of settlers in a socio-cultural position of power and privilege. A process of "unsettling the settler-perpetrator within" (Reagan, 2010). I tried as much as possible to keep in mind that as uncomfortable as they may be, reactions, feelings or thoughts must not be resisted, despised or avoided, because I knew they contained the key to their own dissolution (Wilber, 2001, p. 97). The heuristic methodology supported this; I

learned to approach these uncomfortable materials as an opportunity to learn, transmute them and grow.

The theme "reconcile & restore balance" embodies self-transformation: it is the seed and the fruit of my heuristic research process**.** It brought me back full circle to my initial engagement; illuminating the intuitive inner call that inspired me to engage in this self-inquiry with new awareness, and can now communicate the meaning in this paper. It is as if I needed to learn something from the whole experience. Findings suggest that I grew an understanding of the internal tension felt in response to working with Native populations which inspired this self-inquiry. In essence, my heuristic process reflects my quest to unsettling myself and re-balancing my sense of self to find, or try to find, my true essence in the center. Fish (2007) stated that, "Our inner issues call out for mirrors in our lives and our work. Response art offers an opportunity for personal growth, as does our work as art therapists" (p. 321).

By undertaking this personal work and interpersonal learning experiences (Hays, 2016) with the intention to challenge my self-understanding and critically examine my worldview, values and socio-cultural colonial position, I learned to move beyond personal discomfort and rise up to a higher moral and ethical responsibility toward social justice. Taking action toward changing my stance "from passive bystanding to active witnessing" (Watkins & Schulman, 2008, p. 76), and learning how to walk as a "settler-ally" (Regan, 2010). As an outcome, my engagement in this self-inquiry raised my attention and sensitivity to personal values and biases in other spheres of my life (e.g., discussion with friends, readings, observation in public, media). Culturally related issues and "gained" insights were generally more present in the field of my awareness on a daily basis, especially during immersion and explanation phases. Though, I learned that I cannot assume cultural awareness to be gained. In my experience, it requires a sustained attention and mindful presence to reduce risk that biases unknowingly interfere in my relationships and perpetuate colonial practice. I consider this work as a step forward in my personal and decolonizing journey. McCaslin and Breton (2008) (as cited in Regan, 2010) stated that, "The decolonizing work begins here with naming dynamics, so that I can engage in lifelong work of breaking their hold" (p. 27).

Insights on Cultural Humility

Going through critical self-examination and communicating insights on cultural biases in this paper was humbling. A shift happened in my experience when I acknowledged

my assumptions and the depth of my "not knowing" about myself and the Other (see *Vulnerability & powerlessness*). I realized that I don't know myself as well as I assumed, and don't (and cannot fully) know the Other as well as I assumed or would like. Admitting the presence of "cultural inhumility" as a truth opened an intrapersonal space to examine my "limitations in understanding the cultural background and viewpoints of others" (Hook & Watkins, 2015, p.661). I learned to position and reveal myself as learner in the "unfamiliar space of not knowing" (Jones & Jenkins, 2008) and what it means to engage with the Other from this perspective. A space in which I felt vulnerable to be. From this position, I cannot claim to have gained cultural knowledge within the context of this self-inquiry. Rather, I gained an awareness about my "not knowing" and learned to face it with humility.

The self-inquiry led me to question the very essence of cultural humility, and what it means to be a culturally humble art therapist. From my felt experience, it is a way of being and approaching the Other (art media, art piece, client) from the heart with an openness, sensitivity and a sense of transpersonal responsibility that requires sustained attention. My internal experience with the studied phenomenon taught me how easily information on cultural biases can leave the field of awareness and fall back in the shadow. Similarly to creative and heuristic processes, cross-cultural learning seems to be a non-linear process of deepening exploration that cannot be forced, nor acquired. It required myself attention and time to let the whole process unfold organically, at the rhythm of which I felt ready to uncover new insights, layers by layers, and move beyond felt resistances and discomfort. A process involving a constant unsettling and rebalancing of Self. As noted by ter Maat (2011), cultural awareness and knowledge require an honest commitment and continuous effort to internalizing them into personal and professional realms. Therefore, I can reiterate the validity of engaging in cross-cultural relationships with a perspective of "cultural humility" rather than "cultural competency" as it encourages to engage in a lifelong self-reflection and self-critique process (Hays, 2016; Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). Through this self-inquiry, my understanding of a culturally humble stance moved from being an intellectual conceptualisation to a felt understanding of its meaning, and its significance in the field of art therapy.

Limitations, Validity and Reliability

As a qualitative, arts-based heuristic inquiry, the purpose of my study was to describe my experience and built knowledge. Validity in heuristic inquiry is "derived from rigorous,

exhaustive self-searching" (Moustakas, 1990, p.32). It can be enhanced by repeatedly returning to the original data to "check depictions of the experience for accuracy and sufficient meaning" (Kapitan, 2010, p. 148). Findings were gradually revealed to me over prolonged engagement with data and multiple in-dwellings over time. Their communication was limited by length constrains of this paper, and how much personal meaning I wanted to share due to its personal nature. Because this research was conducted with only one participant-as-researcher (myself), the results are highly subjective and cannot be generalized.

The purpose was not to develop a formula applicable to a specific ethnic group, nor a methodology that everyone can apply to facilitate cultural awareness or knowledge. Rather, naming and refining my understanding of the utility of response art to explore cultural dimensions and biases can support its effective use and help us teach it to others (Fish, 2007, p. 320). Like I found inspiration in others' work, it is my hope that my inquiry inspires health practitioners working with culturally different individuals (or anybody) to develop and implement their own procedure for self-critique examination.

In terms of reliability, my outcomes are consistent with ones from authors that used similar creative method to explore their own reaction to culture. Though, they are specific to my own subjectivity at this moment of my life and to contextual factors involved in this self-inquiry (e.g., ethnic group and cross-cultural experiences selected, art media used, challenges in personal life). Additional limitations are the low level of my experience as researcher and time-consuming nature of data collection and analysis. In regards to all these factors, this study would be difficult to replicate.

Future Implications and Recommendations

In this inquiry, I developed and used post-session RA procedures as a self-reflective tool along work with culturally different clients. However, I did not assess how insights were integrated in personal and professional realms or relationships, nor their influence on therapeutic outcomes with clients. These could be explored in further research.

Video recording the experience of using RA with a culturally-oriented intention may yield insights on cultural biases, by providing additional information on personal material (such as attitude, behaviours). Video recording is a valuable self-reflective and learning tool within art-therapy clinical training that could be applied to review response art process.

Integrating peer conversation or consultation with resource person into data analysis procedures was recommended by previous authors and I reiterate here that it would be helpful to manage the researcher's subjectivity and deepen understanding of data (Brigatti, 2006;

Har-Gil, 2010). Also, this could be an asset to support the emotional challenges involved in self-critique examination, facilitating emotional processing and ease the integration of insights.

Using response art with the intention to explore culturally related experiences would be a valuable self-reflective tool to integrate within the context of internship/professional supervision and peer groups. This would stimulate and support discussion around cross-cultural issues and biases, while facilitating the integration of art-making as personal work in our practice as students, mentors or clinicians within the field of art-therapy. It is also a call to practitioners working in the field of art therapy to reflect on the larger socio-cultural context in which the approach is embedded into, and critically examine how it may convey biases, be complicit to colonial practice and perpetuate social oppression unknowingly. I align my recommendations with ones from other practitioners, emphasizing on the importance of conducting further critical research and discussion on the socio-cultural positioning of art therapy within the larger field of mainstream North American health care services, and its influence on our practices.

Conclusion

This arts-based heuristic inquiry shed light on the essence of an experience with response art used to facilitate cultural awareness and knowledge. During this experience, I deepened my understanding of how response art can assist an art therapist intern to externalize, examine and contain reaction stirred up in cross-cultural contexts, and gain culturally relevant insights from it**.** Artistically responding to felt experiences in this context created an intrapersonal holding space in which an internal dialogue can unfold, and culturally influenced forces at play within the unconscious (e.g., values, beliefs, judgements) can be witnessed from a safe distance. It is a learning process in which I deepened my ability to be receptive and present with various parts of myself, including unsettling ones. My experience and interaction with art media and art piece during art-making and imaginal dialogues were particularly meaningful to raise my awareness on the quality of my presence with the Other and on how my attitude, verbal/nonverbal behaviours may be culturally biased by assumptions, values, beliefs, or else. The procedures assisted me to self-reflect on certain tendencies and how they may affect my therapeutic relationship with culturally different clients, such as perpetuating asymmetrical power dynamic and oppression. Rendering visible forms to otherwise invisible culturally shaped ways of being, feeling, thinking and perceiving, facilitated my ability to uncover cultural blindspots. Engaging in response art

within arts-based heuristic context was a learning experience which supported cultural awareness and self-understanding on my cultural background, limitations and biases. This self-inquiry reaffirmed validity of creative process to uncover unconscious material and its potential for culturally-oriented self-reflection. To quote Fish (2007), "Art is a response, an exploration, and a way of going deeper" (p.42).

My subjective experience with response art reaffirmed its effectiveness as a meaningful self-processing and self-reflective tool for art-therapists (Fish, 2007, 2008, 2012). Using it as a complementary tool along cross-cultural experiences (personal work and interpersonal learning) holds potential to assist art therapists working with culturally different clients. As Fish (2007) stated, "Response art is the art therapist's personal work" (p. 321). Also, it is a form of active listening (Fish, 2008) that can facilitate the "self-reflective truth telling" (Regan, 2010), even when exploring deep unsettling spaces within.

My experience with RA to gain cultural awareness and knowledge resonates with the concept of "cultural humility" rather than "competency" as a way to approach cross-cultural therapeutic relationships. From my understanding, the later refers to a more static concept that risk encapsulating oneself or the Other, and seems unrealistic and unethical with consideration to impermanent, changing nature of everything. If response art (or artistic inquiry) can support the development of cultural humility, the later is not a destination to be achieved. Cultural humility involves a life-long process of learning and integrating insights into one's sense of self and way of being in relation to the Other, moment by moment. Its potential lay in attentiveness, critical self-examination, openness and self-adjustment (constant process of unsettling and re-balancing) over time. Perhaps, I learned to embrace the uncomfortable tension that comes with the "realization that [I] can never fully know the Other, nor should [I] aspire to do so", as Regan claims (2010, p.26). I can now continue learning to work with others from this stance, as a "vulnerable 'not knower' "(Regan, 2010, p. 28). It requires questioning my position within my cultural complexity, the socio-cultural context I live in, and repositioning myself as human within the larger fabric of natural life forms. A path in which I must walk continually with self-compassion, and a sense of social and ethical responsibility in spite of discomfort. The way to walk the path is unique to everyone's subjective truth.

Being culturally humble for me at the moment involves admitting the depth of my "not knowing" about myself and the Other, and that I cannot claim understanding all the complexity of what my self-inquiry aimed to explore. There are more questions and openings that emerge from it, than answers. This heuristic research represents a catalyser of insights,

sewing seeds for further self-reflection. Therefore, my conclusions don't bring clear or definite answers, nor solutions. If the process presented in this research is highly subjective, my hope is that it will awaken the heart of readers to engage in their own path of cultural humility, whether it is through response art-making or other ways they feel more aligned with.

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Annexe 1

Figures from other RAs

Figure 6. *Empty promises* (RA2).

Figure 7. *Loosing matter* (RA7).

Figure 8. *Fragmented anger* (RA8).

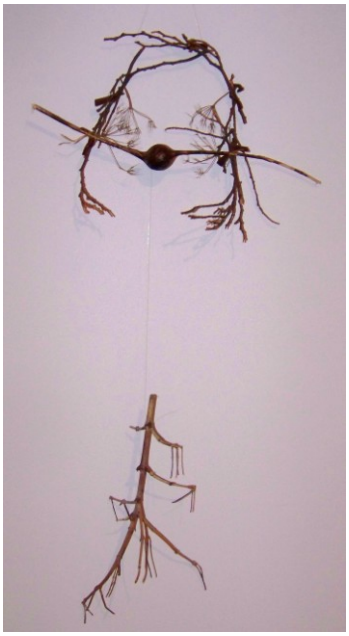

Figure 9. *Remembering the seeds and the roots* (RA9)

Figure 10. *Revive the burning heart* (RA10).