Sites of Learning:

Rural Artist Residencies in the East, West, and North of Canada/Turtle Island

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art Education

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts (Art Education) at

Concordia University,

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

March 2023

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

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Entitled: Sites of Learning: Rural Artist Residencies in the East, West, and North of Canada/Turtle Island

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Master of Arts (Art Education)

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ABSTRACT

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Meaghan Bissett

As spaces for professional development and creative incubation, artist residencies represent important steppingstones in artists' careers. Often overlooked are those established in rural areas, which serve as sites for community gathering, sharing, and learning. Rural communities also face distinct challenges, such as mass urban migration, imminent climate change, and waning support for rural education studies. The purpose of this thesis is to identify what practices are underway at three rural Canadian artist residencies, by examining educational infrastructures, environments, and attitudes. Using case study and autoethnographic methods (written and visual journaling, field notes, interviews) these practices are explored from the perspectives of visiting artists-in-residence, local residents, and residency staff. The results illustrate innovative strategies that seek to empower, connect, and grow artist residencies as places of public pedagogy, contextualised by their rural locales. Described using six themes, they depict learning at rural artist residencies as: (a) embedded in social context, (b) situated in relation to the land, (c) occurring at an intersection of industries, (d) involving informal learning relationships, (e) requiring a hunger for knowledge, and (f) rooted in issues of access. This study suggests that the resulting infrastructural, environmental, and attitudinal practices can be mobilized to sustain and/or revitalize rural communities through dynamic networks, socially engaged programs, and arts advocacy.

Keywords: artist residencies, community art education, public pedagogy, rural arts

Acknowledgements

My deepest gratitude to the people who made this research, and for whom this research is made: Ian, Elyssia, and Dan, the three of you welcomed me with open arms and shared your visions for a bright future – one that involves creativity and the arts as foundational to a healthy life. To the many people who happened to be in the grocery stores, at the bar, on film sets, in the studios, and streets of these charming towns, thank you for engaging me and sharing in this experience. To those who I interviewed and made art with: Sakura, Rachael, Martha, Jules, Gord, Leslie, thank you for generously sharing your stories with me. Your words have brought this thesis to life. To the friends who accompanied, fed, housed, and cared for me through illness and injury, including Doug and Keri, Emma, Lewis and Shizuka, John from Dawson and Marjorie, Heather and her family: your friendship made this wild adventure not only possible, but exceptional.

Grateful and *inspired* are words that come to mind when I think of working with my supervisor Dr. Anita Sinner and committee member Dr. Lorrie Blair. Thank you for encouraging me to dream big after two years of remote learning. Travelling across the country to meet people in person really was worth it! To my friends and family, who have sat through many consultations and pep talks, I am forever marked by your love. Mum and Dad: your love kept the plan *and me* from falling apart. Jay and Tom, your thrill-seeking and people-loving ways inspire me to go farther and dig deeper. To Selina and Felicia, whose support knows no bounds, thank you. To Dorian, who dove headfirst into this adventure with me: thank you for your art, your thoughts, and your love. Lastly, I'd like to thank Concordia's Art Education community for enabling my ideas to bloom.

Land Acknowledgment

This thesis is written from the comforts of my home in Montreal/Mooniyang/ Tiohtiá:ke, an island that sits at the confluence of the St. Lawrence River to the south, the Rivière des Prairies to the north, Lake Saint-Louis to the southwest, and Lac des Deux Montagnes to the west. I live and work from the second floor of an apartment that was built around 1907 for the textile factory workers of the Plateau-Mile End. Most days, I leave my apartment to walk on the forested paths of parc Mont Royal, which curve up the mountain and provide a peaceful break from my desk. Montreal is located on the traditional and unceded lands of the Kanien'kehà:ka Nation, where people have hunted, harvested, gathered, and resisted since time immemorial. As one small part of the story of this place, my position is one of exceptional safety and opportunity.

More than this, I have had the great privilege of travelling by car, plane, and boat to rural places that are on traditional, treaty, and/or unceded land, to grapple with issues and challenges that far surpass my knowledge and experience. Canada, also known as Turtle Island, which refers to the continent of North America (Robinson, 2018), is home to diverse peoples from First Nations, Inuit, Métis, settler and immigrant heritage. The communities featured in this study will frequently be referred to by both their government official and Indigenous territorial names, in recognition of the historical, cultural, and political contexts of these areas. They are Canning/Sipekne'katik, Nova Scotia; Wells/Dënéndeh, British Columbia; and Dawson/Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Yukon. As Rich, Hall and Nelson (2021) state, the resilience of rural places is largely intertwined with and dependent on relationships with Indigenous peoples, and to this end, as a researcher, I commit to engaging in discussions of the history and ongoing impact of colonization on Indigenous peoples. Resources such as the Truth and Reconciliation Report Calls

to Action[1] and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Call to Action[2] have been foundational to working sensitively in rural areas and were consulted throughout this research journey.

Acknowledging the land and waters is one important action amongst many that support truthful reconciling. In addition to traveling across these lands, I have also had the great honour of encountering Indigenous artists, educators, and activists whose work is vital to celebrating and honouring Indigenous resistance in Canada/Turtle Island. I thank those who have lived and created here before me: niá:wen, wela'lioq, mahsi'

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[1] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Truth and reconciliation commission of Canada: Calls to action.
[2] National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). Calls to Action | MMIWG.

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CHAPTER 1

The story of how I came to this research project stems from my own experiences as an artist in residence, and from the impact that many others have had on my artmaking and education over the years. The question of how learning takes place at rural artist residencies does so only because of the many possible answers and implications in faraway places. The likelihood of travelling to rural and remote areas in search of these answers was slim in the aftershock of the pandemic. I had to ask myself: why travel to Eastern, Western, and Northern Canada/Turtle Island? As an artist and educator, I have known the worth of face-to-face interactions and embodied experiences, particularly after so many months of social and physical isolation. I felt compelled to live the questions myself, both because and in spite of the risks.

To describe how I arrived at this point, sitting at my desk in the early autumn mornings of central Montreal, I look back to the many times I found myself in faraway places. As a young adult, I made my first big step out of the city and onto the cut blocks of Northern British Columba (Dakel Keyoh/Lheidli T'enneh/Dënéndeh) as a tree planter. For four years I laboured over lands that were managed by the forestry industry, earning enough to put me through art school. A few years later, after graduation, I attended my first artist residency in a small fishing village in northern Iceland. While there, I became immersed in the lore and pace of remote life, inspiring me to take up artmaking with locally sourced materials such as wool, lichen, and volcanic stone. Resourcing these materials meant interacting with the people who lived there and learning their techniques and stories.

A few years ago, I carried forward this mentality of learning to make art while engaging in community when I moved to the Pontiac, a rural region in Western Québec. In the evenings I stoked the woodstove and painted landscapes; during the day I worked for the elementary and

high schools as an outdoor educator and ski instructor. Programs of this kind were rare in the area, as there was little public infrastructure for physical activity and next to no funding for equipment. When the pandemic reached that corner of the world, the schools closed, and I was out of work. Unable to return to my apartment in Montreal/Tiohtià:ke, I moved to an empty family cabin in the boreal forests of south-eastern Ontario. Without running water or internet connection, I developed a routine of artmaking. It was there and then that I decided to go back to school. To fund my education, I took on a temporary position as an enumerator for Statistics Canada, which brought me to the Arctic coast of the Northwest Territories (Inuvialuit/Gwich'in/Inuit Settlement). I will never forget looking out the window of a Twin Otter airplane, the endless summer sun pouring over the glacial waters and rugged tundra. During the evenings, I learned how to bead and embroider at a skill-sharing circle, and witnessed the craftsmanship and care behind sealskin sewing and leatherwork – Inuvialuit crafts that are born from the beauty and respectful use of the land.

As I reflect on the evolution of the last few years, I am struck by the fluctuating movements between urban and rural, illness and health, isolation and community. Keeping up an art practice, it would seem, has been the steady ground beneath my feet, even when I am on the move. Artmaking has also been the primary way in which I have connected with others, discovered what is important to me, and learned from the land. Now that I am nearing the completion of my degree, I look back with profound gratitude for the opportunities I have had, and those that have welcomed me into their communities.

As a community art educator, I have identified an absence of studies referencing rural art education within academic literature (Duxbury & Campbell, 2009; Shifferd, 2005; Singh, 2006). How is it that across this vast and diverse land, there is little to no qualitative research into how

art education impacts rural and remote towns? Using case study and autoethnographic methods, I seek to address this gap in the literature by drawing from online public sources, my own written and visual journals and field experiences, and conversational interviews with artists, residency coordinators, and community members. By travelling to conduct research on-site, I have been able to identify the nuanced realities particular to each community and form genuine encounters with people whom I see as artists and arts workers within my extended network. These communities and encounters are shaped by the powers of the land, where language, lore, and tradition are born.

This thesis is one small step in the direction of acknowledging how artist residencies can sustain or enrich rural communities by way of good environmental, infrastructural, and attitudinal practices. To do so, I have taken up theories of public pedagogy and informal learning. Through interviews and field observations I have described how these theories apply to three rural artist residencies in the East, West, and North of Canada/Turtle Island. As such, this thesis represents one big step in my trajectory as an artist/researcher/teacher/citizen. Certainly, this research is informed by my own story, which is why an autoethnographic methodology is fitting. It is not, however, only for and about myself; it is for and about the many people and places that ostensibly exist in the margins, where so many of our innovations, resources, technologies, and boundaries are being tested.

I have observed that rural places, contrary to stereotypes of homogeneity, staunchly conservative politics, and uneducated peoples, are places of diverse histories and populations. They are places for ground-breaking research, agricultural practices on which we all depend, land stewardship, colossal resource extraction, and so much more. They are where some of the most immediate and disruptive signs of climate change are being felt. Rural inhabitants are, for a

start, scholars, schoolers, fisherman and children, immigrants, artists, adventurers and more. Rurality, in essence, far surpasses stereotypes. This is especially true when considering that there are rural projects that draw visitors and residents from across the world.

Arts institutions, and artist residency programs in particular, are of great appeal to anyone wishing to mobilize their art practice. This is one major reason why they are quickly becoming commonplace, at times even necessary for emerging artists' careers (Vargas de Freitas Matias, 2016; Velasco, 2008; Ptak, 2011; Radbourne et al., 2010). What then does a rural or remote residency offer a visiting artist? And what knowledge or skills might these visiting artists bring into the towns that host them? Might these rural and remote artist residencies be central to the sustenance of arts and culture, as places of skill sharing, knowledge sharing, and exposure?

Given my experiences in recent years, I know the answer to be *yes, absolutely!* But the question of how to sustain these vital centres of learning and sharing still lingers. I therefore intend for this thesis to address and explore the educational infrastructures, environments, and attitudes at three rural artist residencies as places of public pedagogy, in search of answers for how and why they matter.

The scope of this project far surpassed what I expected. The central question of how artist residencies function as community art education spaces, and whom they serve, ignited a series of profound queries on the relationships between industry work and arts work, settler-colonialism, arts tourism, and land stewardship that exceed my knowledge and experience. For this reason, I used autoethnography as an inquiry space to register the stories of people with whom I spoke, in support of the words they used to communicate broadly about our shared experiences of being an artist in residence.

Thesis Outline

This thesis includes a literature review on rural community art education and artist residencies (Chapter 2). These topics are linked to theories of postmodernism, situated knowledges, social constructivism, and informal learning, with all concepts contributing to current understandings of public pedagogy. Following in Chapter 3 are three case studies of artist residencies that I visited in the Spring of 2022: the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts (Canning/Sipekne'katik, Nova Scotia); Island Mountain Arts (Wells/Dënéndeh, British Columbia); and the Klondike Institute for Arts and Culture (Dawson/Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Yukon). In Chapter 4: Methodology, I describe how I took up autoethnographic research methods to collect data, using field notes, visual journals, and interviews. These methods continue in the analysis section, where I outline the steps taken to rigorously organize and analyze the data, eventually leading to the creation of themes. These themes are expounded in Chapter 5: Findings, where I express and interpret what the data revealed, and the educational significance of this thesis. In Chapter 6 I conclude by suggesting the various ways in which the data can be used, the groups for whom it might be of interest, and where this study opens for continued, future inquiry.

The purpose of this study is to identify what practices are underway for educational infrastructures, environments, and attitudes at rural artist residencies. These practices are explored from the perspectives of visiting artists, permanent local residents, and residency arts workers. The goal of unpacking these practices is to illustrate innovative strategies that seek to empower, connect, and grow artist residencies. By considering the generative capacities of public pedagogy, we can better understand the transformative potential of the arts as integral to rural sustenance or development.

Primary Questions

The questions at the core of my research include: How do artist residencies operate as places of public pedagogy? What practices nourish educational infrastructures, environments, and attitudes at rural Canadian artist residencies? An initial search of related existing scholarship led me to a pioneering publication from Creative City Network of Canada (2009), from which the following supplementary questions were inspired:

1) What are the opportunities for and barriers to learning at rural artist residencies?

2) Are there environmental or infrastructural conditions necessary for enabling meaningful exchanges of knowledge and skills?

3) How does social context, including the histories of the land, regional economy, politics, and social climate of a place impact peoples' attitudes regarding knowledge and skill sharing?

4) What community outreach initiatives are arts institutions using to bolster community connections and remain relevant to local issues and needs?

As I sunk deeper into the research process, the questions were honed and refined to better reflect the issues at hand, demonstrating my increased understanding of the topic (Creswell, 2016). I developed the following template for conversational interviews, from which participants were able to select the questions most relevant to their experiences and to their interests:

1) What are the opportunities for and barriers to learning opportunities at rural artist residencies?

   a. Have you interacted with the residency by attending events, participating in workshops, encountering artists-in-residence?

   b. Are there any techniques or skills that you have learned through the residency?

   c. Are there any techniques or skills that you have taught through the residency?

   d. What new understandings of art have you gleaned because of this?

2) Are there environmental or infrastructural conditions necessary for enabling meaningful exchanges of knowledge and/or skills?

    a. What kinds of public supports are critical for fostering an arts-active community?

    b. What facilities are available to you through the residency?

    c. Are you someone who learns best on your own, or with a mentor? How about in a group?

3) How does community context, including the histories of the land, economics, politics, and social climate impact your experience of art? What is your attitude towards learning and sharing skills and techniques in art?

    a. Does the artist residency serve as a platform for community building?

    b. How has the artist residency influenced this community's identity?

    c. How might living rurally impact your experience of artmaking?

    d. How does being in this location, this landscape, benefit or challenge the artist residency?

    e. What is your response to visiting artists who are interested in local art-making traditions?

CHAPTER 2

Part 1: Theoretical Framework

In this section, I survey, evaluate, and compare the concepts of postmodernism, situated knowledges, social constructivism, and informal learning as these domains pertain to public pedagogy. Foregrounding this thesis with a discussion of the theoretical concepts that best inform my research helps to situate my questions, methods, and findings.

Postmodernism

Within the vast scholarship on postmodernism, there are central claims that are relevant when researching how and why learning happens at artist residencies in rural communities. These claims, such as the assertion that knowledge is a product of the conditions of the day (be it race, class, gender and group affiliations) have been articulated by individuals such as Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Giroux, and Freire. The consequences of these conditions are social structures, namely, "hierarchies, power and control by individuals, and the multiple meanings of language" (Creswell, 2016, p. 27). The project of postmodernism is to uncover these structures as grand narratives, deconstruct their meaning, and make space for counterpoised perspectives in a contemporary age.

This thesis constitutes a broad-stroke, preliminary overview of the literature on rural arts, art education, and rural revitalization. Many disciplines and topics were touched on in brief, and suggestions for future research will be discussed in Chapter 6: Conclusion. That said, there are grand narratives about urban/rural divides and the state of rural art and education that are important to address (and at times, debunk) at every stage of this research. Many assumptions are made about the differences between people living in urban versus rural areas, such as assumptions about opportunities, levels of education, political standings, health, and lifestyles.

These assumptions are based on unhelpful stereotypes that marginalize and alienate people. While it is apparent that some social and economic issues faced by those living in the countryside are fundamentally different from those in the city, immigration, access to the internet and the regularity of travel emerged in this study as factors that undermine some of the assumed differences between urban and rural experiences. The issue of an urban/rural divide, particularly how it concerns the accessibility of education and the arts, became an important consideration while collecting data. At each site, there were different experiences of rurality. These experiences (shared by participants as opinions and stories during interviews) are subjective, contextual, and oppose the rationalization of universal stereotypes. As postmodernism would have it, the diversity and differences expressed in this thesis give texture to our understanding of contemporary rural life, and our ethical responsibility toward togetherness (Tesar, Gibbons, Arndt & Hood, 2021).

Social Constructivism

Postmodern discourse has duly been critiqued for a lack of coherence, comprehensibility, and accountability (Deleon, 2005). If everyone is always experiencing things differently, then on what grounds do we relate? How do we plan or program for public audiences? The subjectivity and variation of experiences, especially within education, need not be seen as divisive. Rather, as social constructivists (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978) would have it, several perspectives of a situation help to achieve a holistic understanding of the matter at hand. Considering subjective experiences in relation to one another as equal contributions to the study of a phenomenon aligns with the framework of social constructivism. Often, social constructivists will mediate their findings through the social and historical contexts of each case (Creswell, 2016, p. 301). In other words, subjective meanings are not simply imprinted on

individuals but are formed through interactions with others, hence *social construction* (Creswell, p. 25).

Informed by Vygotsky's approach to social constructivism, I planned conversational interviews with people from different demographics and made field notes from three different locations. In this way, I considered knowledge as socially negotiated and generated through cooperation. Additionally, by adopting social conventions (for example, working with a flexible and casual expectation of timeliness, referred to as 'mountain time,' or participating in social norms that draw people into conversation, like having a pint at the bar) I participated in localized forms of culture sharing that led to positive interactions and exchange.

Situated Knowledges

Juxtaposed to the relativist idea that socialization is what shapes an individual's subjective experiences and beliefs, situated knowledges proposes an embodied and particularized objectivity. The difference between infinite possible subjectivities and personalized objectivities is accountability, an important distinction in social science discourse. As feminist scientist Donna Haraway writes (1988), all Western cultural narratives about objectivity are dominant ideologies in disguise, whereas feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge – or the limitations and responsibilities that come with holding a belief.

Haraway underscored the elaborate and complex specificity of situated knowledge, where each individual has beliefs that are formed from years of unique lived experience, calling for a loving, caring effort that people might make to "learn how to see faithfully from another's point of view" (Haraway, p. 583). Putting theory to practice, I arrived at each site with both the baggage and boost of my own experiences as an artist, educator, and researcher. With each interaction, I developed another layer of experience and therefore understanding. Each layer

added to the complexity of my knowledge and beliefs, which were at times different from the beliefs that I had previously held. I was confronted with my own internalized stereotypes and stigmas that, through on-site interaction, became exposed and undone. For example, I had previously held the belief that resource extraction workers were complicit in the destruction of a 'natural landscape,' directly contributing to the climate crisis. After a long conversation on an airplane with a young miner who was travelling back home to Quebec, I grew to understand more about the actual process of mining, how it affected the landscape, and how he thought critically about his responsibilities as a citizen in a time of climate change. Why had I assumed that this miner was complacent, and not just another worker trying to make ends meet for his family? What made this person's choice of work any less morally sound than that of an artist? Becoming self-aware and accountable to my beliefs in tension with others and communicating with each other in the hopes of deeper understanding is an example of the embodiment of situated knowledge. Accountability in communities of difference makes space for the tension of difference, and the straddling of multiple truths.

Informal Learning

Arts education is understood as learning that occurs in, through, and about the arts (in all its forms), within a variety of formal and informal learning environments (Ijdens, 2016; Upitis, 2011, as cited in Kukkonen, 2021). In this sense, arts "education," "outreach" and/or "engagement" are synonymous (Kukkonen, 2021, p. 49). When we think of art education, often a classroom stocked with poster paints and coloured paper comes to mind. In these classrooms, a teacher will instruct their students on principles and elements of design, colour theory, and proper material handling. There are, however, a great variety of ways that people can learn about art and how to practice creativity. Classroom settings are but one and are based on traditional or

formal learning models. Formal education involves a teacher who has thought about what they want to convey to the learners (student/audience) whose job it is to assimilate the facts, ideas, or skills being imparted (Davies, 2017).

Informal learning, however, occurs in diverse sites and modalities that at first glance, might not be considered pedagogical. At informal and public sites, learning takes on a "subtler, embodied mode, moving away from the cognitive 'rigor'" commonly associated with formal educational experiences" (Sandlin, O'Malley & Burdick, 2011, xxiii). Informal learning situations, which do not involve a formal teacher-student dynamic, offer examples for how people might learn at artist residencies. Picture sipping on a glass of wine at an exhibition opening, while discussing an artist's earlier works in contrast with their current body. Might new insights into their process, concepts, and meanings be revealed in conversation? The casual interactions that happen at the refreshments table of an exhibition launch, or at workshops, roundtable discussions, studio critiques, and participatory events, are all examples of informal learning opportunities whereby the learners decide what lessons to take away, how to relate them to someone else, and how to use them in the future (Davies, p. 3).

Being receptive to mentoring, feedback, critique from peers, or participating in a community of practice are mechanisms of informal learning that occur organically outside of educational institutions. In these exchanges, without the expectation to retain information, there can be a non-hierarchical sharing of knowledge and skill. Other examples of this include mentorship and apprenticeship, which emerged as examples of educative relationships at the residencies, discussed in Chapter 4.

Informal learning happens through experience and by practicing 'reflective observation' (revisiting memories to learn from them). Davies writes that "learning by doing involves using

experience effectively to improve future performance. This entails a willingness to do things again while attempting a good outcome (satisfactory result) and avoiding a bad outcome" (p. 2). For Davies, bad outcomes are injurious, break things, or emotionally hurt people; they are not necessarily mistakes or colouring outside of the lines.

Estimates suggest that approximately 70-90 percent of adult learning takes place informally, or outside of traditional education systems (Cerasoli et al., 2018). For youth, informal learning is significant in communities of practice where there are frequent opportunities to get involved in social activities (Paradise & Rogoff, 2009). Informal learning also occurs independently, without necessarily involving other people. Both my own studio practice and those that I observed at the residencies involved independent material exploration and technical experimentation. Reading self-selected books and navigating online support tools such as instructional videos and documentaries was particularly helpful for my learning when I was an artist in residence.

A similar independent approach to learning was described by Leslie, a resident of Dawson City who taught herself to be a jeweller: *I mostly read things in books, asking how do you do that, and then I just started playing with it. And I'm still doing that. For example I got to the point where I wanted to start using gems in my work. So I just jumped in and I started doing it. I had a few catastrophic failures at first. But I congratulate myself for being bold enough to just keep going. But that's what creativity takes, if you're not willing to fail then you're ever going to learn anything. Beating yourself up or putting yourself down for not doing something properly is completely futile. You have to just analyze why something failed, and ask 'what did I do wrong, what could I do differently next time that I'd be more satisfied with'?*

All three of the artist residencies featured in this study provide educational programs that stage both informal and formal learning. For this thesis, I paid mind to both, by taking note of the dance classes, harp and cello school, soapmaking 101 workshops, fabric printmaking, pathfinding, advanced ceramics, and all manner of related learning opportunities.

Public Pedagogy

Public pedagogy was first introduced to the education research community through the work of Carmen Luke (1996) and other feminist researchers in the mid-1990's, and was subsequently canonized by Henry Giroux in the late 1990s. As a concept, it refers to various processes, forms, and sites of education and learning that occur beyond the realm of formal educational institutions (Sandlin, O'Malley & Burdick, 2011). Henry Giroux (2004), for example, describes his interest in public pedagogy as being concerned with "the diverse ways in which culture functions as a contested sphere over the production, distribution and regulation of power and how and where it operates both symbolically and institutionally as an educational force" (p. 62). As we shall see in Chapter 5: Findings, power relations in rural communities are divided between industries (such as tourism, mining, and culture), which directly impacts how educational institutions like artist residencies operate.

Gert Biesta (2012) clarified the concept of public pedagogy as specific to active educational interventions happening within the public domain, asking what kind of educational work could "reclaim or reinvigorate the public sphere?" (p. 683). His answer is a conception of public pedagogy that can be understood as "an educational intervention enacted in the interest of the public quality of spaces and places and the public quality of human togetherness" (p. 684). For Biesta, the 'public quality' of pedagogy exists in actions of 'human togetherness,' which have the capacity to contribute to both 'becoming public' and the 'becoming of the public.'

Outreach programmers, funding bodies, and artists at rural artist residencies should all be interested and invested in who constitutes their targeted 'public.'

The qualification of 'public' is important to this study as it emphasizes the need for educational actions that are situated and representative of the community. Later in this Chapter, I will discuss how educational programming at artist residencies can contribute to rural revitalization. From one perspective, 'rural revitalization' might be synonymous with gentrification. In this case, rural gentrification is understood as changes in socio-economic composition, emphasis on cultural or national heritage or aesthetic aspects of both built and natural environments, the emergence of new institutions and subsequent closure of old ones, and changes in property value. These impacts are intrinsically linked to the migration of middle- or upper-class citizens, pushing out socially, culturally, or economically disadvantaged populations (Guimond & Simard, 2010). One possible action that distinguishes revitalization from gentrification is ongoing consultation with the public. Therefore, grounding educational and artistic program development in the issues and interests of the public, in its entirety, represents an important step towards 'togetherness'.

Expanding on this, the public quality of pedagogy must be thought of as localized. Following Savage's (2013) assertion that different publics exist in multiple and intersecting iterations, each public carries distinct pedagogical forms and potentials. Reflecting on my Eastern, Western, and Northern travels that lead to this research confirms that this is true; community to community, public needs are different, and therefore public spaces are different. For example, some are welcoming to international artists, and some are not. This raises questions about the difference between 'public space' and 'community space', and how the arts can bridge the two.

Furthering this, Biesta draws on Hannah Arendt's insistence on plurality as democracy expression when stating that educational work can support the public quality of common spaces where strangeness and difference are not assimilated, but conserved. In this way, public pedagogy opens up possibilities for human togetherness without erasing political or individual identity (Biesta, 2012). This is especially important given the colonialist, humanist origins of public pedagogy scholarship (Sandlin, O'Malley & Burdick, 2020, see Summary). Biesta (2012) suggests enacting a concern for publicness by creating interruptions that keep opportunities for *becoming public* open, rather than "teaching individuals what they should be" or "demanding from them that they learn" (p. 685).

> Sandlin, Burdick, and Rich (2017) advance the role of the public pedagogue as:
>
> Not speaking to, for, or on behalf of a real or imagined public, not attempting to facilitate a particular outcome of learning, but rather enacting the role of interrupter . . . with the aim of enacting political and cultural questions through the very acts of public interaction and human togetherness themselves. (p. 833)

By visiting sites of public pedagogy away from my own location in an urban centre (Montreal), I aim to question through interaction and togetherness, much in the way described here. This aligns with my approach to community art education, which considers, consults, and engages a localized public.

In this thesis, public pedagogy does not only happen in moments of knowledge transmission or transfer, but when meanings are interactively created between artists, artworks, and audiences which are shaped by the spaces in which we *reside* (Ellsworth, 2005). Contesting Western colonial legacies, future research could consider public pedagogy as extended beyond human ways of knowing. Specifically, future studies could attend to the pedagogical potentials of sites that reject binaries of human/nonhuman, self/other, and Left/Right, extending our understanding of 'public' beyond Biesta's 'human togetherness'. This would invite not only the

plurality of human beings, but of nonhuman beings co-habiting the natural world (Walter & Earl, 2017). At the interstices where everyday life, artmaking, and the natural world meet, rural artist residencies should be considered as community institutions where knowledge is co-created in a more-than-human public sphere.

Part 2: Literature Review

In Part 2 of this chapter, I begin to review the English language literature[3] on artist residencies and rurality by contrasting various definitions and implications, starting with the keywords and primary questions of this study. In my search, I draw from artists, arts professionals, community educators, as well as academics to juxtapose several interpretations of 'impact,' 'community,' and 'the arts.' Reviewing the literature from various viewpoints, including my own, expounds on the concepts of postmodernism, social constructivism, situated knowledge and informal learning.

Canadian Rurality

The specification of 'rural Canadian' serves to narrow the scope of this thesis for three reasons. First, to address a pressing need for more research into the arts in rural areas (Dunphy, 2009; Duxbury & Campbell, 2009; Foundation for Rural Living, 2004). Second, to ensure that the data is relevant to my personal and professional position as a Canadian-settler. Lastly, to practice interviews and immersion on-site, thereby encouraging reflexive and sensitive research.

There are different valid definitions of what constitutes rurality. For instance, some say that "'rural' is a geographical concept, a location with boundaries on a map" (Beshiri, 2005, p. 4). Others suggest that rurality is a "social representation, a community of interest, a culture and way of life" (du Plessis et al., 2001, p. 4). In recent years, "cities are invading nearby rural areas making it more and more difficult to make a clear distinction between urban and rural" (Duxbury & Campbell, 2011, p. 112). Indeed, *rurality* is more complex than statistical definitions alone,

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[3]The scope of this study limits the review to English language literature. Studies on the subject of rural artist residencies in Canada should aim to report in English and/or French, with thoughtful consideration for all languages indigenous to the area.

and as Corbett (2014) contends, geography is a socially constructed space where cultural practices make them rural.

Technically, population density and distance from urban centers are calculated when designating rural regions. Population density and distance to density are especially important as they are considered factors in policy recommendations, therefore determining the level of government services and funding. Between 2016-2021, Canada's rural population increased, +1.3% in Nova Scotia, + 0.5% in British Columbia, +3.4% in Yukon, and though most Canadians/Treaty people live in urban areas, in 2021 Statistics Canada counted 6,601,982 rural dwellers (Statistics Canada, 2022). Changing population densities means that rural/urban boundaries are shifting.

Figure 1. Rural and Urban Areas in Canada, 2021. Statistics Canada.
https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-x/2021002/98-200-x2021002-eng.cfm
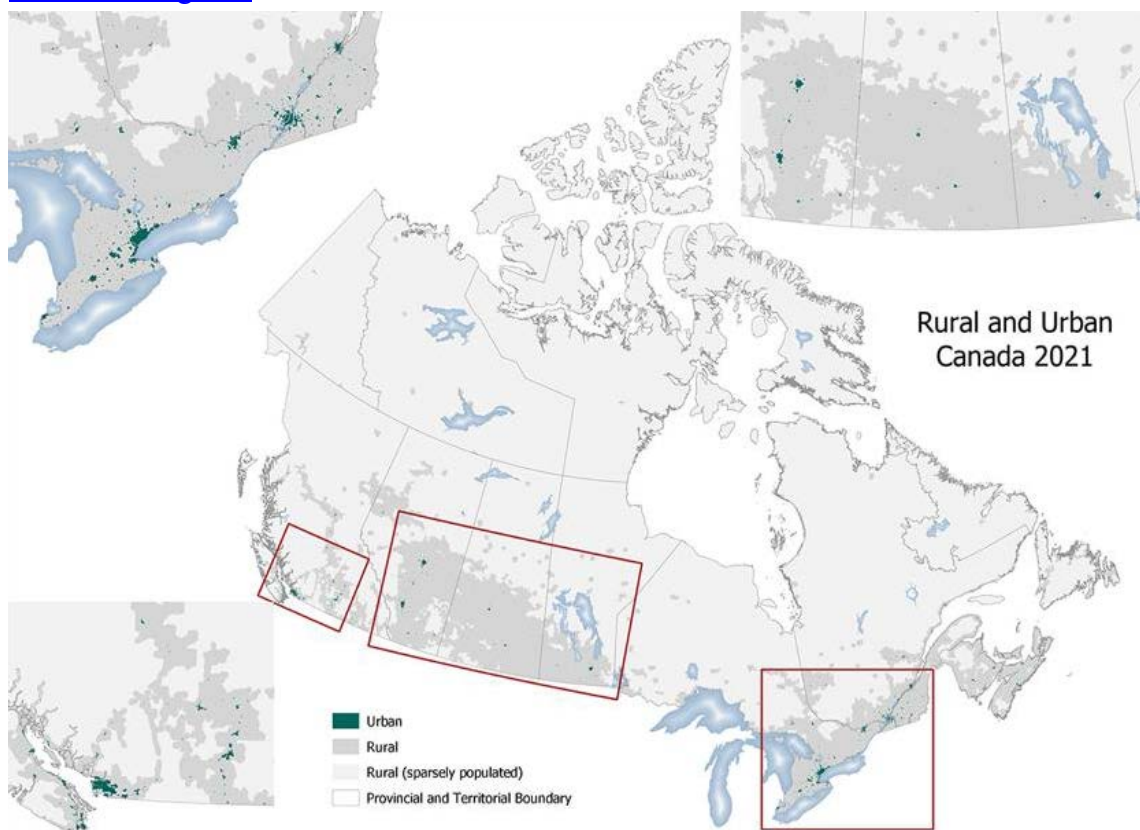
In 2010, Statistics Canada replaced the term 'urban area' with 'population centre'. By this definition, a population centre has at least 1,000 inhabitants and a population density of 400 persons or more per square kilometre, making all territory lying outside population centres to be rural. Taken together, population centres and rural areas cover all of Canada. According to the Canadian Population Centre and Rural Area Classification of 2016, there were 30 large urban population centres (population of 100,000 or more), 57 medium population centres (population between 30,000 and 99,999) and 918 small population centres (population between 1,000 and 29,999). Defying binary classification, Statistics Canada says that in reality, the ostensible urban/rural opposites operate more along a continuum (Statistics Canada, 2017). In contemporary Canada/Turtle Island, the simple city-country geographical and statistical divide can be complicated by considering frequent movements of both people, resources, and information.

This rural-urban continuum was reflected in my field experiences, as each of the three rural locations were situated at different distances to urban centres. For example, the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts (Canning/Sipekne'katik) is located ten minutes by car to the nearest small town, and an hour from Halifax/Kjipuktuk. Artists could easily leave town and drive into the city for opportunities to exhibit their work, visit galleries or theatres, or attend a post-secondary arts program. Conversely, urban dwellers could access the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts (the Centre) for a theatre production or weekend workshop. The Centre appears to both strengthen local opportunities that empower rural arts, while forging urban partnerships.

In conversation with Jules at the Sunset Theatre in Wells/Dënéndeh, British Columbia, she spoke to how the rural experience informed program development: *I think one of the things that was important to [the founder of the theatre] is that so many artists feel they have to go to*

urban centres in order to have successful careers, especially in theatre. So to be able to have a space where artists can actually create and perform work in their own rural community, and to be able to build on the theatre companies around the region is a really big part of the work that she wants to do... The previous artistic director was constantly hiring folks from Toronto because there was no local infrastructure for theatre artists[4].

I witnessed an especially vibrant arts community in Dawson City/Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, which sees high attendance rates to frequently programmed festivals and consistent turnover of artists-in-residence. This could be in part because the town sits farther towards remote on the rural-urban continuum, with limited access to urban centres. Travelling to the nearest city, Whitehorse/Kwanlin Dün takes approximately eight hours by car, or an hour and a half by plane. This remoteness requires an independent and self-sufficient arts community that is less dependent on urban partnerships and opportunities. More information on the rural context of each site will be presented in Chapter 2: Case Studies.

The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (2021) recently released report which states that municipalities, small towns, hamlets, villages, and islands as well as northern, remote, and Indigenous communities from coast to coast to coast are united by rural issues related to distance and access to amenities (Rich, Hall & Nelson, 2021). Despite these issues, "rural communities are places of employment, food production, energy generation, resource extraction, environmental stewardship, cultural production, leisure, and perhaps more importantly, rural communities are home to millions of people across the country" (Rich, Hall & Nelson, p. 7).

Distinguishing rural from remote helps to understand differences between available resources and lifestyle. Consider the following rumination on the distinction between rural and

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[4] Excerpts from interviews are italicized, to indicate that these words were shared in conversation. More discussion on the interview process can be found in Chapter 4: Methodology.

remote discussed in conversation with Elyssia from Island Mountain Arts, Wells: *A place is rural when it has an industry or natural resources, such as agriculture, tourism, mining, or forestry. A place is remote when there is no industry keeping or bringing people there, and still, people recognize the importance of that place. It's possible too to include accessibility based on geographic location. For instance, Wells is rural because it is nearby a city with an airport (One hour away from Quesnel) and is accessible by road year-round. A place like Old Crow is only accessible by plane and could therefore be considered remote.*

In the same way that territories cannot be defined by borders on a map, so too can definitions of rurality be considered flexibly. In acknowledgement of the historical and ongoing complexities of community, municipal, and regional boundaries in Canada/Turtle Island, it is important to note that many rural areas are located on either unceded or treaty lands. What is considered 'rural' has potentially different meanings for those who are living rurally. As such, by recognizing government official alongside territorial/traditional placenames, we can create space for concurrent understandings of location, placehood, and community. With public pedagogy and qualitative research practices in mind, we can begin to think of toponymy as having the potential to enrich our working definitions of 'public' and 'rural'. These concepts arise from the fluid borders that exist between environments, histories, and sense of place, thereby having an important role to perform in culturally sensitive learning (Heikkila, 2008).

Recognized Need

A decade ago, a study was published that offered a broad and preliminary survey of the economic revitalization efforts in rural communities through the arts and culture (Duxbury & Campbell, 2011). Since then, scholars have asserted that internationally, rural areas are in a time of transition, challenged by youth retention, limited social and economic opportunities for

residents, depleting natural resources, loss of local services, and higher costs of living (p.111)

Some rural Canadian communities are experiencing the increasingly harsh consequences of

climate change on landscapes, economies, infrastructures, and livelihoods. Further,

infrastructural deficits, including access to clean drinking water and affordable broadband, were

indicated by a number of interviewees as having intensified during the pandemic by community

residents in Wells/Dënéndeh.

 Discussed throughout this thesis is the resilience of rural communities in the face of these

concerns. From the outset, I would like to highlight the importance of collaboration "and the

capacity for rural people and organizations to actively shape their own stories of success" (Rich,

Hall, and Nelson, p.4). In my view, support for the arts, culture, and education that prioritizes

community consultation are key to sustaining and rejuvenating rural areas. In the case of artist

residencies, this implies an institutional responsibility for transparent communication, flexible

partnerships, and adaptable programming. In other words, residency models should be

continually subject to public ratification. In Chapter 5: Findings, more will be said about how

avoiding restrictions to artistic production and process, and how sensitization to changes in rural

living conditions can benefit residencies and rural communities alike.

 Artist residencies present rural communities with an opportunity for economic

mobilization through arts and culture. They also can act as a platform for voicing social,

economic, and environmental justice issues through programs and policies. Research into how

artist residencies impact communities is a necessary step towards planning for sustainable rural

futures (Lehman, 2017), as discussed by Gatelytė (2018):

> Most research in the field of artist residencies addresses the impact of residency
> programmes and artistic mobility on artistic careers. However, research on artist-
> community interaction, especially in the context of 'engaged' rural artist residencies,
> the contribution, value and potential of these institutions, is narrow and rare.

> Additionally, no research is being done to analyze the value and contributions of these residencies from the perspectives of community members. (p. 4)

Research into how rural arts opportunities are changing is needed, not only to preserve and uphold arts and culture, but to generate suggestions for policies on rural education and healthy living. This research applies a rural lens and supports the collection and analysis of rural data, to make space for critical reflection and creative solutions. Artist residencies are budding in the rural regions of the world (Badham, 2017). So too are the consequences of climate change and industrialized resource extraction projects. Studies on learning in community, such as what can happen at artist residencies, offer intimate insights for policy and planning, considering the changes and challenges that rural people face in increasingly uncertain times (Rich, Hall, and Nelson, p. 142).

Artist Residencies

The term 'artist residency' has been circulated for decades as a fluid concept, encompassing a broad spectrum of artists' activities and engagement (European Commission, 2014). Artist residencies generally "provide artists and other creative professionals with time, space and resources to work, individually or collectively, on areas of their practice that reward heightened reflection or focus" (p. 9). Several characteristics typical of artist residencies include available accommodations, artistic coaching, production support, and exhibition facilities (Casey, n.d.; European Commission, 2014; Gülsahin & Vogels, 2017). These characteristics contribute to Gatelytė's (2018) description of residencies as established and reputable institutions that are vital for creative exchange and encounter.

Artist residencies are often connected with arts festivals and other institutions, thus providing professional opportunities and public attention. They are sometimes led by arts professionals, who invite artists to research and experiment while working closely with the

community. Occasionally they accept artists based on how they seek to address a specific issue or theme. Artists-in-residence are sometimes expected to work towards producing an outcome from the artistic discipline of their choice (Gatelytė, pp. 6-7). These characteristics are adapted according to the location of the residency, the community needs, and the resources at hand. Traditionally, an artist will travel to a residency that offers the time and space for focused creativity, working 'in residence' for a determined amount of time (often between 1 month and 1 year), as is the case for the three residencies included in this study.

Scrolling through the thousands of residencies on the TransArtists and ResArtis platforms indicates a surge in opportunities for artists to travel in order to work. Many of these opportunities are variations on what I would consider a 'retreat'[5], which offers a temporary respite from the daily demands of life to enjoy an inrush of creativity. Artist retreats usually entail a brief stay in a comfortable and isolated setting with higher fees. In contrast, I consider artist residencies as structured work experiences that seek to activate artists' careers by embedding them within a community. There they will *reside,* possibly making connections with other artists or community members, and benefitting from professional development opportunities such as exhibitions, workshops, or artist talks.

Today, residencies exist in many forms and serve many functions (Badham et al., p.3). I have seen residencies that exist within larger public institutions such as public libraries, museums, and hospitals. Artist residencies can also happen virtually, which further enables international participation. Rural schools have also employed artists-in-residence to create alongside or within classrooms, strengthening supports for rural education and partnerships (Kukkonen, 2021).

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[5] Similar to 'artist retreat', the term 'artist colony' is used at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts to describe an independent studio experience, not necessarily engaged in community initiatives or outreach.

A Western History of Artist Residencies

The Western phenomenon of artists travelling to work elsewhere, thereby becoming exposed to new inspirations and enhancing productivity, is not new. Tracing the historical development of artist residencies leads to the late 19th and early 20th century when urban artists frequently migrated to the countryside. At this time, rural innkeepers were inundated with visiting artists hoping to capture on canvas the pre-modern, anti-urban idylls of their bourgeois patrons (Lübbren, 2001). This came at a time when uninhabited, picturesque landscape paintings were popular commodities amongst the elite of western European. Of the paintings that did depict rural residents, most portrayed them as peasants lounging or daydreaming instead of working (Lübbren, p. 59). Artists travelling to capture the nostalgic stereotype of rurality as a non-industrialized way of life (in the landscape as well as culture) was giving birth to a new global economy: arts tourism. Since then, artists have continued to mobilize in search of opportunities (such as artist residencies, retreats, biennales, workshops, etc.) that will allow them to carve out the time needed to be productive, and in search of inspiration.

Opportunities for travel, new inspiration, and divergence from quotidian life were what first led me to apply to artist residencies in rural Iceland, Spain, and Canada/Turtle Island. Since then, I have met many an artist who voiced a desire for time bestowed to studio exploration, as well as opportunities to forge "rich, enduring relationships, which may then become manifest in the form of new projects or collaborations that continue for many years" (Sienkiewicz-Nowacka & Sosnowska, 2011).

Critique of Contemporary Artist Residencies

Unlike the small pods of travelling painters of the early 20th century, nowadays artist residencies operate on a global scale by accepting applications from artists located around the

world (Lehman, 2017). Contemporary artist residences have been described as spaces in which artists can live and create, with time for reflection and a composed, calm, and unharried workspace, allowing for exchange across cultural, intellectual and social levels (Ptak, 2011). Key to the 'residency' concept is "the transposition of artists into a cultural context different from their own, bringing about a presence upon which the institution, the local people and the city itself could all draw" (Ptak, p. 16). Understanding the elitist legacy of artist residencies in the West sheds light on the possible pernicious consequences of seeking a rural retreat in a new or different locale.

Some residency centres cling to a romanticised idea of the artist, their inspiration, and relationship to nature (Pousette, 2011). The 'artist-genius' trope, whose solitary contemplation of nature was thought to lead us towards a deeper understanding of the meaning of things, originates in the *Critiques* of Immanuel Kant (1781, 1790) and Casper David Friedrich. Nowadays, artists use different approaches embedded in interactivity, social and political engagement and working within social networks. Pousette (date) asks, might rural 'cottages' not be the most appropriate studio situation for contemporary artists? (p. 42). From my field experiences, I can confirm that rural artist residencies do host artists who are interested and able to pursue interactive, social, and politically engaged art. Rotating international artists and greater network connection offer some explanation. Politically and socially engaged rural artists and arts workers also help deflate the myth of a 'countrified' artist, naïve to the realities of contemporary art and issues. Nowadays, artists-in-residence have diverse needs, for which a rural setting might be appropriate, as described by Pousette (2011), an arts worker in the residency sector:

> For one artist, a social networking situation might be more important than having a studio with ample light; for another, advanced computer programming might be a necessary requirement; for a third, collaboration with university researchers, while a fourth might just need time for reflection. This is not only a matter of securing

sufficient funding; it is also about how we, as an institution, choose to relate to what we are doing, how we look upon the artist's role, our objectives and the role of the residency in supporting the development of both the arts and society. (p. 58)

I have heard artists justifiably complain that their residency's studios do not meet minimum standards of cleanliness or space, and that the tools or machinery they paid for are not available. Similarly, I have met artists who sought to socially engage, but felt the residency was unable to facilitate events or act as a gatekeeper to the community which would have been instrumental for their practice. Given the diverse needs and artistic practices of contemporary artists, it is difficult for residencies, especially those with limited resources, to keep up with artists' demands.

One critique related to the issue of finding appropriate studio settings is that international artist residencies promote carbon-heavy and short-term visits while ignoring broader social and environmental concerns (Badham et al., p. 4). Nowadays, sustainability is a recurring theme or focus of rural or remote residencies, and artists are encouraged to consider this when working in relation to the land. Though, in some instances, artists have been criticized for 'flying-in and flying-out' as beneficiaries who do not respect the permanent local residents (Pryor, 2012), which could be done by considering the environmental and social effects of their stay. Turning a rare critical eye to the sustainability of international artist programs are Maja and Reuben Fowkes, curators and researchers at the intersection of art and ecology. The Fowkes wager that 'greenwashing' has become more prevalent in the art world, that most art (whether or not it addresses the theme of sustainability) is in fact not sustainable, and that the environmental consequences of travelling for festivals, biennales, conferences, and residencies are generally overlooked (Kenins, 2013). For artists looking to attend a residency, travel distances might factor into their decision. Staying local or domestic might satisfy their needs without significantly

increasing their carbon footprint. Certainly, in my own artist/researcher practice, this is food for thought. Staying local might come to mean more than staying domestic.

In relation to this, residencies have been considered as sites for "awkwardly colonial relationships" where foreign artists engage a community "under the guise of enlightening the locals" (Kenins, p. 8). Considering the histories of colonization in rural regions across Canada/Turtle Island, and the colonial legacy of educational institutions in particular, it is important for residencies (and researchers) to consider their role as cultural mediators and industry gatekeepers.

Another argument can be made that an influx of arts activities is sometimes an agent of change as communities undergo gentrification, by attracting higher income groups, and the attention of creative industries. However, as Grodach, Foster, and Murdoch (2018) note, gentrification has the potential to bring benefits to disadvantaged residents *if* it occurs without widespread displacement (p. 808). Highlighting the importance of learning local context, visiting artists should remain sensitive to the individual impact of their presence and production. Critical and sensitive participation could make space for a heightened awareness of both systemic issues, and a collective responsibility for ethical, sustainable, inclusive practices.

Contemporary Artist Residencies in Canada

In Canada there are an estimated 50 operating artist residencies[6] (Gülsahin & Vogels, 2017), each with its own mandates, facilities/resources, and reputations. Coast to coast to coast, these residencies are in geographically distinct regions which could inspire developments in artists' practical or conceptual explorations of physical place and social communities (Badham et al., p. 2). Well known Canadian residencies include the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity

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[6] Including what I have categorized as 'artist retreats'

(Banff/Minhrpa, British Columbia), the Harbourfront Centre (Toronto/Tkaronto, Ontario), Darling Foundry (Montreal/Mooniyang/Tiohtià:ke, Québec), Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec (Montreal/Mooniyang/Tiohtià:ke, Québec), and Fogo Island Arts (Fogo Island/Beothuk, Newfoundland). These residencies usually have more competitive calls for application and are considered important steppingstones for artists looking to establish a professional career.

Many Canadian artist residencies operate on a smaller scale, with fewer facilities and without the international reputation of the aforementioned institutions. They often benefit from managing community-oriented outreach initiatives, employing local arts professionals to facilitate, and offering material resources specific to the region. Usually accepting rolling applications from both emerging and established artists of all mediums and practices, examples include The Ou-telier (Cowichan Valley/Qu'wut'sun, British Columbia), AXENÉO7 (Gatineau/Anishinabeg, Quebec), and Struts Gallery (Sackville/Wolastoqiyik, New Brunswick)[7]. These residencies typically rely on public funding, grants, and artist fees. The three residencies involved in this study are considered as part of this network of mid-size establishments.

The Role of Rural Arts Activities

The literature about contemporary rural arts activities in North America/Turtle Island tends to focus on three topics: the nature of arts activities organized by and for the communities, festivals, and the impacts of touring activities (Duxbury & Campbell, p. 113). These activities are often described as holistic, non-exclusive (drawing people from many walks of life), and with the potential to motivate individual and collective capacity building (p. 114). Rural arts activities focus on empowerment through collaboration and inspiring community self-determination (Brotman, 2006; Gard Ewell, 2006). They have also been described as focusing on "art as

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[7] Listing these different examples of Canadian residencies does not serve to rank them or develop a typology.

process and citizen as participant" over "art as product and citizen as patron" (Overton, 2009, p. 18).

Recalling the importance of community consultation, one common denominator in the literature on rural arts activities is a recognition of local involvement over 'imported activities', meaning grassroots networks and events built by and for residents (Overton, 2009; O'Leary, 2006). Balancing the nourishment of local creators and ideas while providing a range of cultural opportunities from outside influences is also important (Brotman, 2007, cited in Nolte, 2007; Matarasso et al., 2004). I had a conversation with Elyssia from Island Mountain Arts, who spoke to this balancing act: *The way that our programming illuminates Wells as a place needs to be as magical for the people who live here as for those who visit. And that's one of the beauties of holding public events, of shutting down streets and putting a concert on a front patio. As much as it is commonplace, it still illuminates the public space that those who live here are used to, and makes us think 'oh, this can happen here. N* ourishing local involvement and ideas is one step that residency coordinators can take to avoid gentrification.

Rural Canadian communities are in the midst of economic, political, and cultural transitions (Duxbury & Campbell, p. 111). Artist residencies are one of many arts activities that are important features of rural development and adaptation (Skippington & Davis, 2016). Faced with many challenges, rural residencies can be places of cultural exchange (Gatelytė, p. 10), international dialogue (Varbanova, 2009; Čech, 2011) and education (Fiske, 1999; Andrews, 2016; Bowen & Kisida, 2017; Kukkonen, 2021) that are vital for community cohesion and celebration (McHenry, 2009), which are major contributing factors to withstanding economic, political, and cultural winds of change (Duxbury & Campbell, p. 112). Viewed not only as amenities to improve the quality of life, but as foundational pillars of community identity, the

arts can profoundly affect the ability for small communities not only to survive over time, but to thrive (Cuesta, Gillespie & Lillis, 2005). Adjustments to arts programs will not solve all of the complex issues faced by rural inhabitants, "but culture can play important roles in the process of community adaptation, development and, sometimes, reinvention" (Duxbury & Campbell, p. 118).

Defining 'the Arts'

This study considers arts of all disciplines and levels of professionalism, across amateur/hobby arts, emerging, and professional practices. This includes all creative expressions and skills, from craft-based decorative work such as murals or mosaics made on private property, as well as bodies of work exhibited and for sale in established galleries. Both material and non-material creative practices are recognized, according to what art was being made at each site. For example, if artists were working digitally, or in socially engaged participatory formats, these were taken to be their chosen creative forms equal to material practices such as painting, theatre, dance, sculpture, or music. Traditional crafts (for example carving, quilting, metalsmithing, basketmaking, beading) were equally regarded. As a researcher in the field of art education, I responded to what was happening on-site, at the residency, and in the community. In this way, I was able to observe with an open mind, and make space for a range of situated understandings.

Defining 'Community'

Badham et al. (2017) suggest that "the travelling artist has almost become a new breed in contemporary art today" (p. 5) meaning that itinerant artists are working site-specifically to negotiate the social, economic, political and institutional dimensions within their personal artistic methodologies (p. 4). The artist's ability to engage in 'community' practice can take various forms. 'Community' in the context of rural artist residencies can mean a group of artists and

professionals working (or, as alumni, having worked) within the residency, sharing both their physical space as well as ideas. 'Community' can also extend to include residents of the surrounding area who actively participate in residency events such as workshops or exhibitions. Furthermore, a wide range of stakeholders could be considered as part of the residency community[8], as discussed in conversation with Jules and Gord from the Sunset Theatre in Wells:

…What you just said, Gord, is really interesting because it points to how the term 'community' can mean so many different things. You can have a community of artists who are working as a small team in close contact. Then you can have your broader community that reaches out to other people who might have skills that they can bring in. You have the immediate community of people, artists or not, who are living with you and sharing the space. Maybe your community is nation-wide, or international, if you have encountered and connected with people in other places.

'Community' is a flexible term, often with different meanings and consequences for different people (even if they are in the same community). As Elyssia expressed, being in community can mean a sense of belonging through relationships of care: *I like the working definition of community as a group of people that care about each other and feel they belong together. So communities aren't necessarily geographic in nature, and with the advent of the internet, of course, they don't need to be. But when you are hosting things that you say are for your community, which one are you referring to? The geographic community? The music community in BC? In Canada? The arts community broadly in the region? In the province? And what is the hierarchy of needs - when do the needs of one community trump another? Personal*

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[8] 'Stakeholder' is a term used here to refer to public and private institutions (Vargas de Freitas Matias, 2016) usually including regional policymakers, other arts spaces, rural regeneration projects, funding bodies, and so on.

bias of who you feel the most affinity for can maybe sometimes trump the needs of communities

you should be paying more attention to.

Community can connote the sharing of space, whether or not those who occupy that

space hold similar opinions and beliefs. At once, 'community' entails a shared experience of

place or other commonalities. It also involves an acceptance of differences that realistically,

sometimes foster tensions. Being *in community* does not mean being without conflict or

difference. Publicly exhibited art projects, that is, projects that are accessible to a geographical

community, operate pedagogically by inviting community members to question dominant

narratives about communality, and how we should engage with history and public space (Qadri,

2015). In this study, the term community is loosely used to describe both geographical locations

such as towns or regions, as well as relational networks of individuals who invest in similar

organizations, activities, and efforts. In my mind, 'community' involves a sense of civic

responsibility, where caring for or engaging with others, whether they share a geographical

region or not, stimulates mutual support. Pictured below are work exchange artists from Japan

and Belgium sowing seeds for the kitchen's herb garden at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts in

Nova Scotia. Might this action qualify as working in or towards community?

Figure 2. *Artists/Exchange Workers Sowing Seeds*. Mea Bissett (2022).

CHAPTER 3

Case Studies

Three artist residencies were selected for this study based on their size (mid-size: usually

10-20 visiting artists per year[9]) and their location (each residency is located in a rural community

in the East, West, or North of Canada/Turtle Island. By representing mid-size residencies from

rural regions with three distinct regional perspectives, there is space for comparative qualities to

emerge and a cross-pollination of information about emerging residency programs and

contemporary practices underway at each site. Smaller residencies might not have had enough

active programming to address my research questions, and it might have been more difficult to

build accurate portraits and fruitful relationships at larger residencies.

The three sites were initially considered because I had connections to artists who had

previously attended and were willing to vouch for the residencies as legitimate and appropriate

for this research. For the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts and the Klondike Institute of Art and

Culture, I sent emails to program directors describing my interest in visiting for research. For

Island Mountain Arts, I first contacted an artist who had participated in the residency program a

few years ago. She put me in contact with the coordinator via email. All three sites agreed to

participate and host me as either a researcher or as an artist in residence/researcher, according to

what facilities were available and whether their residency required a formal application process.

Before travelling to the residencies, I scanned online public sources such as mission

statements, testimonials, and program descriptions. By compiling quotes and images that referred

to public programming, social engagements, and learning opportunities, I developed an

expectation of the programs and approaches at each site. I then extended my search beyond the

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[9] Because of the pandemic, the residencies were hosting fewer artists-in-residence than usual.

artist residency, by looking into other arts programs in the area, other ongoing arts businesses and projects, as well as local histories. By building a contextualized picture of the artist residencies before visiting them, I was preparing myself to integrate into the community, familiarize myself with the upcoming events, and draw on preliminary data that I could later triangulate to confirm my findings and inform the educational significance of this study. Triangulation was helpful when, for example, I spoke with community members to confirm the success of residency programming. Further discussion on triangulation and research strategies can be found in Chapter 4: Methodology.

An important feature of describing all three cases is recognizing their parameters. In qualitative case study research, this is called 'bounded' research, where the people, timeframe, and location all contextualize how the residencies are described (Creswell, 2016, p. 98). For instance, my experiences at the residencies are bounded by which artists were (or were not) present while I was there, whether there was a COVID-19 outbreak impacting the town (which was the case at all three residencies), and the fact that I was present on the off-season, shouldering Spring and Summer programs, before the sites became inundated with tourists and artists. As 'instrumental cases', my interest was in experiencing the qualities and characteristics unique to each residency, and specific to that time and place.

As a methodology, case study research uses in-depth understandings of, in this case, collective, multisite cases that are analyzed in juxtaposition to one-another ('within-case' analyses). Each case is shaped by several individuals (artists, residents, residency staff), programs, events, and activities. By employing purposeful maximal sampling (Creswell, 2016), these multiple perspectives were considered. Procedurally, the three cases were developed by conducting the preliminary research detailed above (online searches of public documents and

testimonials), and verified on site through observation, interviews, note-taking and visual journals. These data types were pooled into the data set, which are holistically analysed as a multiple methods (case study and autoethnography) study. In Chapter 5: Findings, I will discuss the themes that emerged as evidence of artist residencies as pedagogical sites.

The following section offers a description of the three artist residencies that I visited in the Spring of 2022. These descriptions draw on my preliminary searches as well as my on-site daily journal entries. As a narrative form, I used my daily journals to describe my experiences through all of my senses, referencing what I felt, heard, saw, and intuited as an artist and researcher. I pulled passages from my daily journals to help illustrate each case presented below. From this point forward, the study traces where theory applies to practice. In-person and on-site experiences and observations awaken the literature, bringing artists and their work into the conversation. To begin, each case is presented according to five categories. These categories are designed to call attention to the factors that influence the public qualities of learning at the sites, and how they differ from one another. The categories are as follows:

History and Geographical Context: How has the geographical location informed human inhabitancies in these areas? Does this context shape pedagogical possibilities?

Mission Statements: Sourced online, these statements communicate the ideals, goals, and ambitions of each residency.

Space and Surroundings: Designed to host multiple arts programs and serve various purposes, facilities are spaces occupied by the residency. This includes buildings as well as outdoor spaces, mobile features, and natural environments.

Programs, Events, and Activities: Past, present, and future opportunities facilitated by the residency.

Community Outreach Initiatives: How does the residency engage issues specific to the community?

Following these case studies, I will analyse and discuss how these residencies diverge and converge, with the goal of drawing out innovative strategies (good practices) at each site. The Ross Creek Centre for the Arts (Canning/Sipekne'katik, Nova Scotia)

Figure 3. Mea Bissett (2022)

Note. Artist and staff lodgings at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, each equipped with a wood burning stove and single bed.

Historical and Community Context

The Maritimes, or the eastern regions of Canada/Turtle Island, are known for their small towns, sub-aquatic basins that feed into the Atlantic Ocean, and histories of immigration. Early peoples in the east trace back to 10,500 years ago in Nova Scotia/Mi'kma'ki, where chipped stone artifacts and spear points have been found (McGhee, 2016). Since then, the migrations and movements of hunters, fishers, and tradesmen has marked the cultural and economic distinctiveness of the Maritimes. The following statement was sourced from the Ross Creek

Centre for the Arts website (2022) and beautifully articulates the history and geography of the

Atlantic region where the residency is situated:

> The Annapolis Valley, one of Canada's great agricultural communities, was first settled by the Mi'kMaki people, and then farmed by the Acadians from France in a great social experiment in egalitarian living that began more than 400 years ago. After the British took over the area in 1700, the village of Canning (originally called Apple Tree Landing) was founded as a shipbuilding town, with a tidal river bringing tall ships in and out and supporting the thriving farming industry. The Ross Creek Centre for the Arts is based on 178 acres of farm and forest with views of the Bay of Fundy where the world's highest tides rise and fall over 30 feet twice daily. (Our Community)

Figure 4. *Memory Map of Nova Scotia*. Mea Bissett (2022)
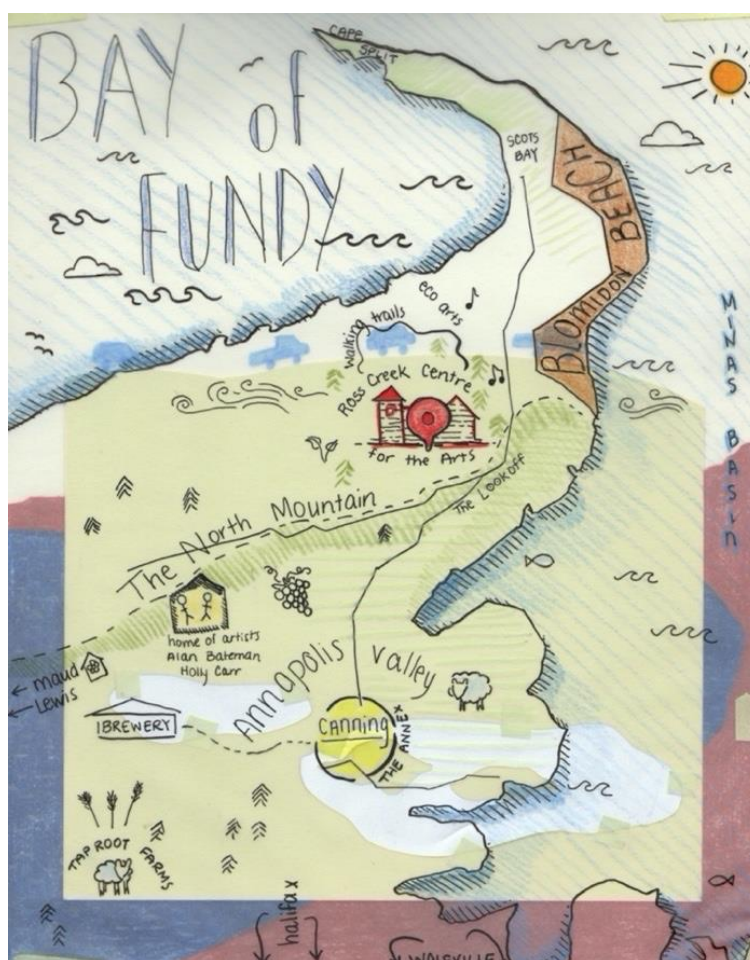
Note. At all three residencies I charted my experiences, observations, and interactions visually as 'memory maps'. I use these visual journals as evidence of how I navigated the artist residency, as it extended beyond the private studios and into public space.

Mission Statement

On the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts website (2022), the homepage provides the

following statement:

> Giving voice through the arts, the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts is a unique
> institution in Canada, bringing together the best in arts education for youth with
> community and professional artist programs. The Ross Creek Centre for the Arts is a
> research and development centre for the arts of all disciplines and cultures and is
> proud to help facilitate the development of new art from around the world in
> wonderful facilities on a spectacular farm in rural Nova Scotia.

As a non-profit organization, the centre relies on donations, earned revenue, and public

investment through grants. Their website also indicates their strong values of social equity and

accessibility, reflected in their hiring process, staff profiles, and community engagement

initiatives.

Space and Surroundings

My daily journal entries provided descriptions of the space and surroundings: *As once the*

dream of founding partners Ken and Chris, every corner of this property has been considered

and renewed. Originally a cattle barn, the Centre has been renovated to create a welcoming,

functional, and creative space. Ian Funke-McKay, the Program Director at Ross Creek, met me

with a warm welcome. He started by introducing himself, his pronouns, and relaying the story of

the Mi'kmaq Traditional Territory. He pointed to a larger-than-life painting of a figure that

welcomes all visitors to the front door, called the 'Medicine Man'. Ian's passion for this place

comes through in his careful wording and enthusiasm when describing the Centre's initiatives.

The Ross Creek Centre for the Arts is the permanent residence of the award-winning Two

Planks and a Passion theatre company. The company acts as an anchor partner, producing plays

on-site during the summer months. Their website (2022) describes how the company benefits

from being housed at the Centre, complete with an outdoor theatre:

Working within the limits that Mother Nature imposes, our productions are distinguished by the ingenuity and dedication of performers, designers, writers and directors to create works full of wonder... The company's performance venue is 178 acres of varied farmland that surrounds the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts. Forest, fields and ponds offer an endless variety of creative spaces that, in large part, influence the selection of works for development and production. (Two Planks Theatre Company)

Figure 5. *The Farm House.* Mea Bissett (2022)

Note. Pictured above is the interior of the farmhouse, where I stayed as an artist in residence. These comfortable lodgings are shared between artists and exchange workers, who gather by the fire for games or evening meals.

Programs, Events, and Activities

Throughout the year, the Centre is a place for multidisciplinary arts education and arts development that serves local and international artists. They offer summer and March break camps, adventure weekends, adult art workshops, international artist residencies, school and community programs, outreach projects, and facility rentals. The plethora of arts activities which

cater to all skill levels opposes the aforementioned criticism that rural artist residencies are not appropriate spaces for contemporary arts. Rather, they are institutions that stage professional opportunities for critical and contemporary art practices. This can happen alongside welcoming, accessible programs.

In my journal, I wrote about my first impressions of the residency programs: *So many of the features that have made my previous artist residency experience meaningful appear to be present here: friendly new faces, outdoor space to breathe and think, rooms that are equipped, communal, and/or private, encouragement of diverse practices, and signs of creative life. Since arriving only a few hours ago, I have heard about the new children's skill-building program starting tomorrow morning, the gardener prepping the soil and seeds for this year's harvest, the work-exchange programs that house international artists alongside locally-hired employees…the next few days should prove to be rich in reflections on community outreach initiatives, local issues, and how they relate to the artist residency.*

Like everywhere else, the pandemic took a toll on the Centre, which was just beginning to relaunch its public programs when I visited. There had not been a steady flow of artists in residence since 2020, back when the galleries were exhibiting back-to-back shows by artists of all mediums. While I was there, The Centre was busy enough with new staff orientations, prepping for the change of seasons, community initiatives, the building of future affiliate sites in town, and the work exchange program. I was not going to be busy meeting other artists-in-residence, but I did meet the staff and exchange workers who were happy to talk about their creative practices.

I spent two weeks on the East Coast, learning about the history of the site, the arts initiatives in the area, meeting other artists and crafts people, visiting galleries and markets, and

enjoying my time on the land. It felt important to explore the greater arts community, to talk

casually with gallery administrators and artisans in their area about their life and work in the

region. Through these conversations I came to know a more robust picture of rural life and arts in

the East, including the struggles and highlights. My appreciation for Nova Scotian arts and

culture, in particular the skillfulness and kindness of those I met, was only possible from face-to-

face interactions.

This culture of kindness was reflected in the Centre's wholehearted commitment to

creative and social empowerment, prioritizing local needs, accessibility, and creative approaches

to thinking critically about their role in the community. One example is a new partnership with

Flaxmobile, a mobile teaching and flax processing facility used for educational immersion in

sustainable textiles. There is also the option for residents of Canning/Sipekne'katik to rent a

garden plot at the Centre's newest in-town location, the Annex. This addition to the Ross Creek

Centre for the Arts is a way of bringing programs, such as community radio, music recording,

podcast space, and performances into town, addressing the challenge of accessibility for those

without transport to the farm.

During my residency I witnessed all staff members working hard to pull together

programs of quality and importance, all the while under the threat of another Covid-19 outbreak.

Most of them seem to have found employment at the Centre that intertwines with their personal

interests and lifestyle choices, demonstrating a lifelong commitment to relational work. Some of

them were practicing artists who would leave work and go straight to their studios, collectives, or

band practices, evidence of a merger between life/work.

My studio space was large and bright, overlooking a duck pond to the East, and was

tucked away at the back of the building. Perfect for buckling down on a project, but socially

isolated. As an artist who works on community-wide projects, there was not much opportunity to engage other people, but instead work independently alongside an organization that prioritizes community outreach initiatives. The Long-Term Work Exchange program might have been better suited to building participatory arts projects. This program brings on seasonal workers for 20 hours of on-site labour, in exchange for 24-hour access to studios. The artist-worker pays a fee to live in the farmhouse and have access to the kitchen. These independent/collective formats demonstrate the ways that artist residencies can adapt their programming to artists' various needs. Clear demarcation of what studio/resources/opportunities are available to artists needs to be communicated by the residencies online, for artists interested in applying, and on-site during the residency.

Other programs at the Centre include summer arts camps, teen academies, summer dance classes, youth leadership programs, gallery exhibitions, master classes, family creativity and employability programs, and one-off workshops. Seeing as the Centre is situated in one of the most fertile areas of Canada where there is year-round farming, these programs reflect the land and place, often incorporating elements of growth and sustainability into thematic planning. These land-based, place-based initiatives influence how the Centre serves the region. By way of farming and food security, gardening alongside art making, and considering creativity in food sharing and cultural practices, the Centre demonstrates how public pedagogy is enacted through situated knowledge and place-based learning.

Community Outreach Initiatives

I was struck by the Centre's dedication to providing not only arts programs, but opportunities for residents of the area to engage in meaningful ways. The prioritization of accessibility in all programs encourages cultural celebration and sharing, as well as socio-

political engagement, showing that rural arts activities are engaged with contemporary issues. The costs of attending the residency program are still significant ($625/week, $2475/month, financial aid options are available), but the Centre's vision to offer experiences that empower with emphasis on physical and social accessibility are notable in light of the exclusivity of many arts institutions. Details, such as gender-neutral bathrooms, all-ages programming, skill building for employability, and offering healthy and diverse foods are examples of such initiative, for which my journal provided more evidence: *I woke this morning as an artist in residence at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts. Light was streaming in through the windows of the farmhouse, clear blue skies overhead. I was eager for another breakfast buffet of homemade honeys and granolas from ingredients harvested on site. Beef brisket from the local butcher is sizzling in the kitchen next to the lobby, which doubles as a dining room. There is a real emphasis on food sustainability and access here, which speaks directly to the Centre's community-oriented values and the importance of place-hood. Spacious, and with a history of cattle farming, the Centre has taken up traditions of harvesting locally while paying close attention to challenges of food security faced by many in the region.* This passage details yet another example of how arts environments can support healthy living on an individual and communal basis.

Figure 6. *Morning Star Paper Quilt.* Mea Bissett (2022)
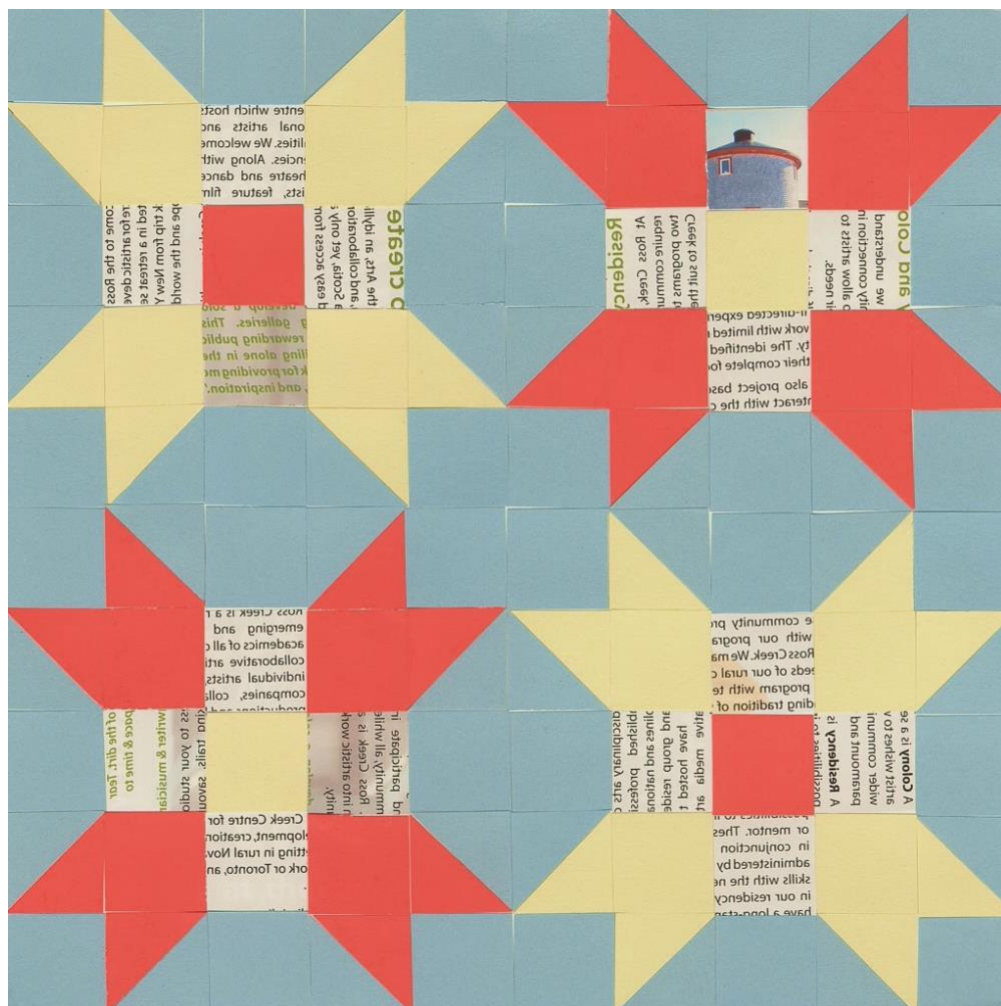
Pictured above is a paper quilt that I crafted during my residency at the Ross Creek

Centre for the Arts. I used found materials including construction paper and programming

pamphlets. This is one in a series of paper quilts (another pictured below) inspired by the Canada

Cross quilt pattern, which originated in the Annapolis Valley in the early 19th century (Huock,

1981) and resembles the Mi'kmaqi Morning Star. During my residency, I invited a visiting

artist/exchange-worker from Japan named Sakura to co-construct paper quilts in my studio. She

used a 'Duck and Ducklings' pattern, inspired by the ducks and geese swimming daily in the

pond out our window. The next morning, I discovered the plans for the new garden at the Centre,

shaped after the Mi'kmaqi Morning Star. Across mediums and histories, this pattern is important to land-based practices of quilting, artmaking, and agriculture in the region.

Figure 7. *Morning Star Paper Quilt.* Mea Bissett (2022)

Island Mountain Arts (Wells, Traditional Territory of the Lhtako Dené)
Figure 8. Mea Bissett (2022)

Note. View from the Island Mountain Arts (IMA) studio windows, overlooking Dawson Street, private residences, and 'the Bog'.

Historical and Community Context

Two 20th century events brought droves of people up from California, the Eastern provinces, and across the globe: the second wave of the Cariboo Gold Rush (in the 1930's), and the hippie movement (1969-1979). Remnants of these historical events are still felt in the community, whose economic and cultural foundations are forever informed by these impactful movements of people. Susan Safyan (2013) paints a vivid portrait of Wells and it's back to the earth legacy:

> Back to the garden... The sentiment sounds fey now, but in the late 1960's, Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock" lyrics were a clarion call to action for millions of young people, a generation enamoured with the idea of going back to the land…back to an

idealized, bucolic past, a simpler way of life they had imagined but not yet experienced. (p. 13)

This passage recalls a similar idealization of rural life expressed by the Romantics who initially popularized artist's retreats in the mid 1800's. One hundred years later, an influx of enchanted youth, most of whom were from white, middle-class upbringings (Safyan, p. 16) brought numbers back to Wells, which had suffered the classic boom-and-bust of gold mining, ending in the mine closures of 1967. The ambitions of these dreamers were challenged when they "did not find a climate in which food could readily be grown" says Safyan, who continues to say that "they may have arrived starry-eyed, but theory had to quickly give way to reality; it was a matter of survival" (p. 17).

At its gold rush peak, Wells was home to 4,500 people who worked the mines and their families (District of Wells, 'History'). "A charming mountain town with a rich history of mining, epitomizes the small northern community" (Island Mountain Arts, 'About') with a year-round population of 218 individuals (Statistics Canada, 2021), which generally doubles in summer. An estimated additional 80 people live off-grid in the bush. The closest small city is Quesnel, which is an hour drive away during good weather conditions. One hour further is Prince George, where people often go to shop or access services. Dangerous winter conditions sometimes inhibit Wellsians from leaving town. To understand the steadfast resilience of its inhabitants, consider the climate, which averages 462 cm of snow (between October and May), 425 cm of rain (all year round), and sub-zero temperatures, at 1,200 metres of elevation (Statistics Canada, 2021, 'Townfolio'). I was shocked when I arrived in May to a landscape still blanketed in deep snow, making it difficult to access walking trails and the forests I yearned to explore. Although I was able to drive to nearby attractions, I mostly stayed in Wells, and stuck to trodden paths. These

conditions help contextualize how valuable an artist residency in town can be as a community gathering space for creativity, activity, and socialization.

Intriguingly, the town of Wells has a longstanding history of artist residents. Legend has it that Fred Wells, the successful prospector after whom the town is named, exclusively admitted miners who did not drink, did not smoke, and knew how to play an instrument. To this day, 40 out of the 218 residents work in Arts and Entertainment, more than any other local industry. "The unique artistic community of Wells is nestled in a picturesque setting of mountains and lakes, providing the perfect environment for a learning holiday" (Statistics Canada, 2021, 'Townfolio'). I was able to meet a handful of creatives in town, who showed me around their home studios and spoke about their creative practices, both as hobbies and professional careers. Perhaps the arts are ubiquitous in Wells *because* of the isolation, much like the Romantics envisioned. However, as the following passage from the Island Mountain Arts Website describes, the residency is integral to the sustenance and success of arts programming and art education in Wells and beyond:

> Contrary to major urban centres in BC's south, northern BC is made up of smaller, geographically secluded communities resulting in a dispersed populous. These communities, the heartland of BC, constitute over one third of the provincial population. The reality of this heartland, in stark contrast to the abundance of urban centres, is that it is characterized by lower average incomes, lack of access to basic services, and in terms of the arts, lack of educational, professional and cultural opportunities, and lack of proportional funding for arts and culture. Moreover, non-profit arts organizations, galleries, fine arts and performance training, and other cultural institutions are farther and fewer between, meaning that opportunities for northern residents to benefit from the arts are limited. A further reality of the north is that many communities are isolated by extreme winter conditions, meaning that access to communities where programs are offered is difficult, if not impossible. The community members of Wells, and of the BC's north, both deserve and desire equal access to arts and culture as is available to urban citizens. (Who Are We)

Figure 9. *Memory Map of Wells/Dënéndeh.* Mea Bissett (2022)

This memory map depicts how I moved through the town of Wells, and what I experienced as an artist/researcher. As illustrated, there are obvious areas designated for mining, tourism, and the arts, which did not appear to have much overlap. That said, the space was shared, and the comings and goings of miners/artists/tourists were visible from across town. From my walk to the coffee shop, I could see many trucks rolling out to work in the mornings, but I never encountered someone who worked at the mines. I felt that Wells, with its distinct industries that appeared to have little interaction, had a unique 'public' quality. I asked myself: how is public pedagogy enacted when there is little interaction between those who constitute the 'public'? To what extent can the artist residency serve as an educative public space, given this perceived social division?

Mission Statement

In 1977, the Island Mountain School of Arts was launched by members of the Central Interior Arts Council, who wanted to see a retreat for artists in the Cariboo Chilcotin region (Safyan, p. 230). Since then, Island Mountain Arts (IMA), named after the Island Mountain Mine of 1933, has hosted classes in various mediums, and renovated the old Hill Meat Market building to serve as an exhibition space, gift shop, and IMA offices. In 2004, IMA started the ArtsWells Festival of All Things Art, which became a signature event known across the Cariboo. The festival has not happened since 2020, the reason for which is debated in town. Some say that it came to a halt during the pandemic, others say that the small town didn't have the infrastructure to safely host the thousands of visitors that would swarm each summer. Resource shortages such as staffing, lodgings, venues, and funding are some limitations often experienced by small arts operations in rural areas, which is where innovative strategies such as intermediary organization partnerships (Kukkonen, 2018) can be developed.

In 2002 a study was released that indicated the following needs for the northern art education and cultural sector:

- Arts education (both for children and young people as well as for emerging and professional artists) accessible to people in the north;
- Additional venues/galleries for northern artists to show or perform their work in order to develop a portfolio or audience;
- Activities to increase the knowledge and awareness of audiences in the north for both visual, literary, and performing arts.

IMA responded to this call, by prioritizing the artistic and financial well-being of artists by offering a 'learning environment' within a day's travel of most places in BC. On their

website, they state that their aim is to increase the level of appreciation for the arts and artists, and integrate arts and culture into every aspect of society (Island Mountain Arts, Vision Statement). Certainly, I witnessed an appreciation for the arts during an exhibition opening and artist talk, which attracted residents and visitors from out of town. Otherwise, the residency was quiet, in between hosting artists-in-residence and on the programming off season. My personal enjoyment, learning, and creative impulses were mostly motivated by my own efforts to make the most of my time and interactions. A less independent artist might have had a harder time feeling stimulated or supported, given that I was alone in the studio, and few other arts activities happened during my brief stay.

Space and Surroundings

IMA facilities include the Nest, where artists stay in a shared apartment space in central Wells, equipped with comfortable rooms and outdoor area; the studios, housed in the classrooms on the top floor of the public school (pictured below), the gallery, in the spacious and contemporarily renovated Hill Meat Market building. The residency has ample space for studios, exhibitions, and workshops, all within walking distance, which demonstrates how making use of affiliate sites enables creative and educative environments. Moreover, while I was visiting in the Spring, major renovations were taking place to convert the ground floor of the Nest into a wheelchair accessible space. In my journal I documented what it was like: *I'm visiting Wells in May, during the shoulder season when snow would still fall during the night. The town is quiet and still, most people stay tucked indoors and out of site. I sometimes go hours without seeing or hearing anyone out my window or on the street, and the public school is often empty. On days where there are only a handful of kids present (the school has 18 children total, K-12), they bus into Quesnel, the closest neighbouring town about 80 km away. Seeing as the artist in residence*

studios are housed on the top floor of the school, where the classrooms lay empty, I often work in

silence. For a small town, Island Mountain Arts has access to an impressive array of arts venues,

which might account for the success of large-scale arts festivals such as the previous festival,

'ArtsWells'.

Figure 10. *Mountain River.* Mea Bissett (2022)

Note. Pictured above is the Mountain River, which runs through the centre of Wells. Looking
closely, a few houses are visible next to the river.

It took a few days to adjust to the soundlessness of Spring in Wells, but once I did, I

attuned to the delicate acoustics of the forest surrounding town, how the subtle changes in

weather affected my mood, the comforting chatter at the coffee shop, and the pleasure of

stepping outside for a good long think. Face-to-face interactions became more treasured, the kind

gestures of strangers were taken as signs of belonging and respect. As an artist, the quiet

atmosphere and slower pace of mountain life was conducive to self-directed learning and longer

studio hours. With limited social interactions, I was compelled to seek out learning opportunities by meeting with residents who were equally keen to meet with me. Quite different from the communal atmosphere of the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, the IMA spaces and surroundings offered a different kind of learning environment – one that might best suit the kind of independent and adventurous spirits so often called into the mountains.

Programs, Events, and Activities

Programs at IMA include the harp and cello school, festivals, and one-off workshops for children and adults. Workshops from this last summer include soapmaking, medicinal plant walks, birdwatching, and printmaking. IMA also hosts events such as concerts and performances, gallery exhibitions, artist talks, the Northern Exposure Conference, and a new festival series that opened this summer, called the 'Seasonal s'Wells'. In partnership with the Wells Barkerville Community Forest, educational programs are sometimes offered to explore the ways in which the arts can enhance sustainability work within the forest and vice versa (Island Mountain Arts, 'Art + the Forest').

As IMA undergoes staffing and programming transitions, the Executive Art Director, Elyssia, is making space for the renewal of Wells' artistic identity. Interested in collective practices of care and creativity, Elyssia, as the sole full-time staff of IMA, is working tirelessly to reimagine the role of the residency as a source of pride, economic stability, and unique artistic expression in the Cariboo. Having had many engaging conversations with Elyssia while in Wells, I have come to better understand that this kind of adaptation and resilience is necessary in rural and remote towns, and valuable as a contribution to the larger arts ecosystem in British Columbia.

Community Outreach Initiatives

As the following passage from the island Mountain Arts website (2021) suggests, the central focus of the IMA residency is artistic development across mediums, and not necessarily outreach:

> At the core of IMA's programming is the self-directed artist in residence program, which provides affordable space for artists of all mediums to create in. It is intended for, but not limited to, visual artists, filmmakers, curators, musicians, producers, directors, writers, and photographers. Artists also have the opportunity to facilitate outreach programs such as artist talks, concerts, studio visits, workshops and exhibitions. These activities are intended to promote interaction and professional development and provide access for the community to a diverse range of arts practices. (Self-Directed Residencies)

The question of whether or not artists-in-residence seek to socially or artistically overlap with permanent residents depends on their practice and creative vision. Visiting artists may or may not participate in the outreach programs mentioned above and might instead choose to operate independently in the studio. During my stay, I was eager to participate in events that would bring me closer to residents and other art practices. I attended Martha Jane Ritchie's exhibition opening called 'Boreal Relief' which is comprised of linoprints based on images drawn from the forest that surrounds Martha's home in the Yukon. IMA hosted a public reception and artist talk for Martha's show, which generated a lively conversation about species migration, material techniques, and connecting with nature. Later in the season Martha hosted two printmaking workshops, one for adults and one for children. These efforts to engage the community and share knowledge or skills exemplify community outreach initiatives that can be educative for public audiences – artists and residents alike.

In response to my time at Island Mountain Arts, I worked independently in the studio to stage a series of figurative arrangements inspired by theatrical performances and historical moments. Using found materials, including a children's puppet theatre, stones from a nearby

quarry, and gold pencil crayons. I carefully stacked the stones in various formations, creating characters in tension with each other. Precariously balanced, these characters often crumbled when destabilized by subtle movements, knocking each other down before being built back up. Referencing the delicate and wavering nature of historical interpretation, especially when the characters of our stories are shrouded in legend, these stacks of gilded stone speak to the theatrical history of gold mining in the region.

Figure 11. *Stone Balancing.* Mea Bissett (2022)

The Klondike Institute of Art and Culture (Dawson City/ Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Yukon)
Figure 12. Mea Bissett (2022)

Note. View of Dawson City/ Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in at the intersection of the Yukon and Klondike Rivers, taken from the Dome.

Historical and Community Context

The last of my research travels took me north, to the famed town of Dawson City/ Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. This is the land of the midnight sun, where thousands upon thousands of hopeful prospectors, adventure-seekers, and rugged tourists have congregated for many years. The land itself bears the scars of the Klondike gold rush, which began in the late 19th century and saw between 30,000 – 40,000 miners and entrepreneurs flood the town site (Berton, 2011). The impacts of this rush cannot be understated; many books and films are still being made that depict dramatic details of the Klondike gold rush and its role in developing settler-colonial North America/Turtle Island. These stories continue to shape Dawson City, its culture, and ways of life.

There are many other stories that also inform the historic and cultural identities in the region, and "although it is difficult to determine accurate dates, patterns of movement, and

origins of Yukon's first inhabitants, we know that First Nations people have frequented the area for millennia" (Dawson City, 'Before the Gold Rush'). The name 'Klondike' is in fact a mispronunciation of "Tr'ondëk", the Hän name for the river: "tr'o" meaning hammer rock, used to drive the hammer weir stakes into the mouth of the river, which itself was called "ndëk. "Loosely translated, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in means "the people who live at the mouth of the river" (Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government, 2015). Since time immemorial, this land has been active with animal and human migration.

In 1998, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement came into effect, which ensured that a First Nations chief and four councillors were and continue to be elected, directed by the Elder's Council, who will participate in an annual General Assembly. That same year, a group of artists decided to inaugurate an art education initiative: the Dawson City Arts Society. As a non-profit organization, their goal was to enrich the quality of life and create an arts-based economy in the Yukon. The following year, the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture (KIAC) commenced operations as a centre for teaching, performance, and exhibition of visual, performing, media and literary arts. The residency is now co-operated by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the School of Visual Arts, and KIAC. As discussed in during my interview with Dan, co-management between the school, the residency, and the band government permits policies and programs that represent diverse public interests, as discussed in this section.

Mission Statement

KIAC's programming goals are listed on their website and provide insight into how the institution seeks to build critical, relevant, and creative spaces for diverse audiences. In summary, KIAC seeks to provide high quality arts education for the community and beyond, while providing facilities and festivals that boast international participation. They aim to

prioritize territorial and national arts advocacy by partnering with local and regional

organizations to maintain successful festival events. Their goal is to enable independent arts

production by offering training and making equipment available. The ODD gallery (operated

through KIAC) seeks to exhibit and present international, national, and regional artists, and

develop diverse outreach activities that engage public interest. KIAC, as described on their

website, claims to support cultural awareness and seek to build connections between community

groups by promoting immersive experiences that engage public audiences (Programming Goals).

These goals and commitments speak to how 'community' can include a whole region, or

a shared way of life. They point to the responsibility of providing access to education through

public programming as a way of empowering community, and the importance of partnerships in

supporting these programs. Mission statements are public statements that are usually in grant

applications and partnership proposals. They also inform applicants about what local issues the

artist residensy seeks to address, allowing the public to gain insight into the values of the

institution. As a practicing artist, I always keep one eye open for residency application calls, and

often look first to mission statements to gauge how my work aligns with the residency's values. I

ask myself: Do these mandates meet my needs as an artist? Can this residency provide me with

opportunities for professional/personal/social growth? Certainly, in the case of KIAC, I felt

supported as an artist, despite not officially partaking in the residency program.

Space and Surroundings

Less than 250 kilometres from the Arctic circle and set against the dramatic backdrop of

the northern wilderness, KIAC is a thriving hub for artists, tourists, and students alike. With a

population of 1,577 (Statistics Canada, 2021), an increase of nearly 15% since 2016, Dawson

City is the largest town that I visited, and the most remote. Dawson City has a rich history, and

"is built on a foundation of cultural diversity and grand ideas" (KIAC, 'About Dawson City'). In 1898, at the peak of the gold rush, the population was estimated at 30,000 (Zaslow, 1951). In 1902, Dawson was incorporated as a city under the municipal act of that time. By 1918, Dawson City's population had declined to less than 1,000 (Parks Canada, 2021). In the 1980's, a new municipal act was adopted that categorized Dawson as a 'town', and it was incorporated as such. A special provision was enforced that allowed the town to continue to be called 'Dawson City'. This was in part for historical reasons, and in part to differentiate it from Dawson Creek in Northern B.C. The territorial government has since posted signs at the town's boundaries which read "Welcome to the Town of the City of Dawson".

Welcome I did feel: *On my first day in town, I was greeted by Dan Sokolowski, the Film Fest Producer ([Dawson City International Short Film Festival](#)), and Coordinator of the residency. Dan toured me around the residency, which is housed in a 19th century building and operates year-round as a site for workshops, the ODD Gallery, a ballroom theatre for film and theatre festivals, and an artist program. The residency accommodations and studios are located just up the street, in another historic property operated by Parks Canada. Dan finished the tour by pointing to a shed that I could, should I need, use as a private studio. He also offered up the keys to his home, knowing that he would be away for a few days, and I might need a place to stay.*

These demonstrations of helpfulness and care seem to be commonplace in Dawson. There is a culture of sharing and generosity that residents describe as necessary for life in the north. "We're all willing to help out, since we know that we will have our turn asking for it", I heard repeatedly. There are also many stories of tourists getting stuck with a broken-down car on the side of the road in winter, or other desperate circumstances. The standard of helping someone in

need - whether it be transportation, housing, or a hot meal - is set high for a reason, and that

reason is often survival.

Figure 13. *Tombstone Territorial Park, View from the Grizzly Lake Trail*. Mea Bissett (2022)

Note. I took the opportunity to visit Tombstone Territorial Park while in the Yukon. Emma, a friend and fellow master's student and I drove slowly up the Dempster Highway which is famous for destroying tires. We spent the week hiking, speaking with other tourists, and learning about the distinct geological features of this landscape. Artists visiting the Yukon can hike in Tombstone and other impressive parks to get a better sense for the vast, rugged, and beautiful northern landscape.

Figure 14. *Memory Map of Dawson City.* Mea Bissett (2022)

My memory map of Dawson City is particularly full, indicating a surge in how much I experienced on site. Beyond KIAC facilities, artworks were exhibited along the '9th Avenue Trail', near the banks of the river, in and around Dawson's historic properties (the mortuary, the museum, the S.S. Keno), becoming part of the unique environment that identifies Dawson City. As a document of my experiential learning, I can trace the areas where I was exposed to artworks, stories, and sites, which happened less inside KIAC facilities and more outside, in and around town. Learning, in this sense, entails more than acquired knowledge. It also involves sensorial, embodied, and place-based experiences. My written journal entries detail these experiences in another way:

After meeting with Dan, I took the day to walk around, read the historic panels that describe features of the landscape and history of the goldrush, and poke my head into some of the shops along Front Street. One stop was called the 'Trading Post', which sells antiques and pelts alongside mining materials for good prices. There also a polish owned jewelry store and grocery store that I'll be returning to. On my way back to my lodgings I saw a sign for a gold jeweller outside a beautiful log cabin. I thought I'd have a quick look but ended up being there talking with the owner and artist Leslie Chapman for some time. Leslie is a jeweller specializing in gold which comes from her family-owned mine across the river. Her, her husband, and son still operate the family owned mine. She said that if there are 100 mines around town, most of them are family run. We spoke at length about the mining in the area and the arts. She had a wealth of knowledge and an openness that made me excited to speak with her again. I got her card and hope to contact her soon for a conversational interview.

These encounters demonstrate the robustly social and artistic character of Dawson City. Coming from all over the world, people flock to this location and find ways of pursuing a creative career. In Leslie's case, she has learned to mine local gold which she then uses to craft her jewelry: *I started as a goldsmith, kind of for practical reasons. My husband and I moved into the bush in the seventies, and thought we could live off the land. That's pretty hard thing to do in the Yukon though. It's a pretty harsh and unforgiving climate. We staked claims, and got to know some miners, and started off on a small scale as miners. I worked with him for about 20 years, and we gradually got bigger equipment and hired people to work for us. We were reasonably successful, but then in the 90's the gold price started dropping, but the cost of mining was going up. So that meant our profit was really being squeezed, and I thought, you know, one answer to this is 'value added processing', like a farmer selling pasta instead of raw wheat. So I bought*

some books and a few key tools. I just started practicing. And I actually asked a local Silver

Smith 'how do I get started? What do I need to do?' She invited me into her workshop and we

melted some of our gold together, so I watched and learned how to do that. She kind of gave me

tour of her basic setup with her tools, so that I had a basic idea of what was involved. Another

different artist went through a tool catalogue with me and checked off the absolutely essential

items I needed to order. So you know, I was kind of mentored in an informal, brief, but really

important way by a couple of local artists.

Leslie's story of being an artist, placer gold miner, and mentor in the Yukon captures

some of the reoccurring themes from my research travels. Namely, that adaptation and creative

solutions are important features of living rurally, that informal learning relationships (like

mentorship) offer valuable arts education and are possibly more common in rural areas, and that

the spaces artists occupy are influenced by their surroundings; the rural context and landscape

informs what opportunities and practices are possible in the arts. As I walked around town

popping into business and talking with people who I crossed along the boardwalks, I came to

know the space and surroundings, not just of KIAC but of the artistic community that keeps

Dawson City on the map. Casual encounters lead to friendly interactions with familiar faces, and

after a short time, I felt welcomed and comfortable as an artist, researcher, and acquaintance.

Figure 15. *Leslie in her Gallery/Studio.* Photo by Miriam Behman (2022)

Note. Leslie invited me back to her jewelry shop, which also houses her studio. Visitors can catch her in the middle of the making process, and also see a host of artworks on display by artists from around the Yukon Territory.

While in the Yukon, I took the chance to hike in nearby Tombstone Territorial Park where I attended a workshop on natural dyes and the Honourable Harvest (Kimmerer, 2013) led by Dawson-based artist Miriam Behman (results of the workshop pictured below). Unfortunately, my time in Tombstone was clouded, as I became ill with Coronavirus. I felt the irony of getting the disease in a remote northern park after having carefully travelled across the country, at rick of exposing myself and others. Without medicine, I relied on tea that my travelling partner Emma made using locally foraged plants, harvested with the honourable harvest workshop in mind. Hiking and healing in Tombstone while exposed to 24-hour sunlight, and without cellphone service or showers, I came to appreciate the plant medicine and fresh air more deeply, underscoring the resourceful and resilient attitudes that characterizes northern life.

This experience continues to inform how I relate to the land by harvesting plants and other natural materials for my art practice.

Figure 16. *Wild Rose Dyed Cloth.* Mea Bissett (2022)

Programs, Events, and Activities

KIAC is brimming with annual, monthly, and one-off events that activate the town and keep an influx of artists on steady rotation. Festivals include the Dawson City International Short Film Festival, the Dawson Daily News Print and Publishing Festival (pictured below), and the Yukon Riverside Arts Festival (the latter two I was able to attend). Artists, visiting or local, exhibit at the ODD Gallery or the Confluence Gallery, both welcoming contemporary spaces which appear to have all the amenities found at a high-end gallery space in Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal. As for the performing arts, there are music, theatre, and film facilities in 'the

Ballroom' on the second floor of the KIAC offices in central Dawson. Workshops and courses

include community arts education in filmmaking, sound recording, darkroom processes, pottery,

painting, sewing, and seasonal professional development workshops on grant writing, brand

creation, social media, and taxes for artists.

Figure 17. Mea Bissett (2022)

Note. Pictured above is a printmaking workshop led by artists-in-residence Dan Starling. This
workshop, as part of the Dawson Daily News Print and Publishing Festival, allowed anyone to
try their hand at linocut printmaking and operating different printing presses. The workshops
were held in the historic Dawson Daily News building, which was recently refurbished and open
exclusively for the festival. A few artists, including Dan, travelled from British Columbia to
facilitate the workshops.

The town was bustling with festival goers and tourists, who were flocking north since the

American/Canadian border opened for the first time since the Pandemic: *Today was the first full*

day of the Arts Festival, which kicked off at 11 am on the waterfront. Tents and booths had been

set up next to the Yukon River, where an artist originally from Nova Scotia was demonstrating

plaster casting. Kids and adults alike walked away with silicone and plaster casts on their

fingers or toes. Next over was 'Caveman Bill', who has been living in a cave across the river for

over twenty years. He was demonstrating wood spoon carving and metal smithing. Over from

Bill was Jen, who had brought with her two of her angora rabbits to demonstrate how to spin

their wool on a traditional wood-pedalled spinning machine. Elsewhere in the riverside was a

man who carves arrowheads using traditional flint flaking techniques. Afterwards, I bought a

button made of decoratively carved moose antler from a woman who talked with me at the length

about the pleasures of being in a rural place where there is less violence, anger, and stress and

more space in her life for spirituality.

In the artist tent, I saw ceramics works, blacksmithing, herbal tinctures and drawings for

sale. Outside was the performance trailer, which was a log structure built on wheels. John From

Dawson, my host in town, was performing. I volunteered to help video record his performance. I

recognized a few people from the sauna in the crowd, which was a venue featured in the Arts

Festival. The sauna is a renovated steamboat parked at the edge of the 'swimming hole', a

water-filled basin leftover from placer mining. Last night at the sauna I met six other people who

were all living in Dawson, three of whom grew up here and three who moved other countries.

We spent a few hours diving into the lake and returning into the steamboat for warmth. We were

surrounded by mist floating down from the mountains and the rain bouncing softly on the pond.

Blue birds were flying low on the water. I thought of the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, and its

emphasis on food security and art as equally important for a healthy life. Perhaps this sauna, as

an offering of health and repose, was itself an artful gesture.

These journal entries address how rural artist residencies operate as places of public

pedagogy. They reflect how public arts events hosted by the residency can reach broad

audiences, and present opportunities for learning through informal and social encounters. They demonstrate that the environments, infrastructures, and attitudes of a residency shape what is possible for artists, local and visiting alike. In my opinion, they relay how public art experiences can contribute to wellbeing, community health, cultural mediation, personal growth, and meaningful learning.

Community Outreach Initiatives

KIAC appears to be an important community hub, serving not only artists-in-residence, but the greater public by hosting free events and providing space for community gathering. This expanded social role and sense of responsibility for artist residencies to platform community needs adduces their public value and demonstrates a socially minded attitude. Indeed, community outreach initiatives that engage local audiences, tourists, and visitors can lead to positive social outcomes, including cultural movement and diplomacy (Ptak, p. 272), the assistance of successful partnership building between stakeholders (Kukkonen, p. 61) as demonstrated at KIAC, and rural economic revitalization by generating opportunities for funding growth (Duxbury & Campbell, 2011). While in Dawson, I witnessed artists who were developing their careers by presenting, networking, and selling their work. I also saw artists sharing artworks specific to their cultural backgrounds, promoting cultural awareness and appreciation. These arts-related experiences can bridge individuals across age groups, learning contexts, and geographic locations (Andrews, 2016; Bowen & Kisida, 2017; Carlisle, 2011).

Summary Discussion of the Residencies

These case studies offer a preview of three rural/remote Canadian artist residencies, illustrating how they are similar and/or unique. Each case presented above is described using examples from public web content and my own experiences on site. These portraits draw from

specific examples to illustrate the different roles that artist residencies play in their communities, and how they function as emergent and adaptive spaces. Contextualizing each residency by studying the educative potential of environments, infrastructures, and attitudes makes space for questioning 'how does learning happen through the residencies? and in what ways is that learning in line with public pedagogy? These field observations and web sources address these questions by drawing out good practices, ensuring that rural and remote communities thrive in the arts

At the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, I was considered an artist in residence and researcher. At Island Mountain Arts, I was a researcher with full access to the studios, and therefore spent quite a bit of time reflecting on my questions through material inquiry. At the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture, I was a researcher and participant in the many art making events going on at that time. For the duration of my spring travels and beyond, my questions took shape according to the particularities of each place, the issues at hand, and the interests of other participants. These case studies are the result of remaining open and attuned to the many factors influencing myself as artist/researcher/teacher and those who I encountered along the way. Factors include safety and health, histories and current affairs, infrastructure and opportunities, attitudes, and peoples' willingness to meet me halfway, an appreciation of the landscape and experience of the environment, and the fortunate circumstances that led me to these places at these times.

All in all, each residency offers something unique to the arts ecosystems in their region. For example, The Ross Creek Centre for the Arts provides carefully considered social outreach programming that seeks to empower local residents and address sociopolitical issues in Nova Scotia. Island Mountain Arts is a landmark for festivals and arts celebration in and beyond the

Cariboo Chilcotin region of British Columbia. KIAC is a thriving milieu for arts and culture in the north, despite being more remote. Below is a brief discussion on the environmental, infrastructural, and attitudinal similarities and differences of each case. In the Methodology section that follows, I will reference these case studies in conjunction with autoethnographic methods to list how environmental, infrastructural and attitudinal practices can support public pedagogy at artist residencies.

These cases are characterised by four qualities typical of case study research: holistic, empirical, interpretive, and empathic (Stake, 2006). These studies are *holistic*, because they position the phenomenon of learning within the historical, spatial, social, political, and economic context of each site. They are *empirical* because they are based on my observations in the field. They are *interpretive* because as a researcher, I relied on my intuition when observing and experiencing interactions. Finally, the *empathic* characteristic of qualitative case study research means that as a researcher and artist, I have reflected carefully on the emic perspectives of my culture-sharing group.

Historical and Community Context

All three of the sites under study have long and complex histories of First Nations presence, colonial settlement, and immigration. The entangled movements of people in rural and remote regions continues to inform the attitudes and identities of place, such as how the land is used and considered, what services are available, and what cultural practices are in play. The storying of each site, both historically and in contemporary context, underlies every experience, whether that of temporary visitor or permanent resident. For instance, the shape of the landscape in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia is both the cause and effect of longstanding agricultural traditions. To this day, the region experiences a simultaneous abundant harvest resulting in

widespread culinary tourism, and the highest share of severe food insecurity affecting 4.6 per

cent of households (Storring, 2020). In response, there is an underlying attitude at the residency

that access to healthy living is a basic human right, and happens through programs that address

food insecurity, equitable social opportunities, and creative expression. Furthermore, the belief is

that these three issues are not mutually exclusive.

The shared experience of historical context and contemporary local issues validates one

definition of community, which is held between those who share space or place, and not

necessarily opinions or beliefs. Conversely, these residencies share an attitude of advocacy and

empowerment for artists across Canada/Turtle Island, thereby connecting us all in community.

Mission Statements

Across the board, the mission of these arts institutions is to provide high quality services

and facilities for artists and offer educational programming that engages the community. This

requires infrastructural planning and collaborative attitudes, resulting in partnerships,

professional programming, territorial and national arts advocacy, and a consideration for the

financial and artistic wellbeing of community members. The artist in residence programs are

meant to host international, national, and regional artists who will be able to research and

develop their practices, build upon their artistic network, and develop as professionals. The

possible benefits for the town are the creation or maintenance of an artistic community, abundant

learning opportunities which enrich how the place is experienced, and a broadened cultural

awareness that builds community connections.

As I observed on site, all three residencies approach these missions using the resources

(environments, infrastructures) available to them – whether it be through hired staff, board

members, grants, regional networks, or loyal volunteers. The artist residency programs

themselves are happening at different paces – some institutions see a constant turnover of resident artists, whereas others only host artists-in-residence occasionally, focusing more on other programs. Alongside resource availability, this is due, in part, to the institutional priorities which range from social justice to economic growth, sometimes at the expense of the artist in residence program.

While on site, I also observed that some events or programs had low attendance rates. Limited resources (short staffing, small budgets, minimal promotion of events) could account for less successful programs. However, the residency's outreach initiatives must be matched by the community. That is, residents need to express a convivial attitude, and be willing to participate and engage with arts programming in order for the residency to achieve success as a space for artistic creation and education.

Space and Surroundings

All three arts institutions are housed in buildings that had at one point been used for very different purposes. By converting cattle barns, meat markets, and historic residences, each space reveals the town's history and the resourceful attitudes once required to launch an arts institution in town. Finding creative solutions to limitations of space, materials, and budget results in a motley assortment of buildings used for facilities. As a result, the character of these residencies attracts artists and visitors from around the world. Beyond the residencies' walls, the landscapes that surround these buildings are deeply entrenched in the identity of each place, and from what I heard and saw, are a major draw for artists seeking to be inspired or isolated in order to make work.

The remoteness of these locations also has consequences, which became evident at each site. For instance, everything is more expensive and less available. This includes food, gas,

building maintenance supplies, as well as art materials that would be easily sourced in any city. Supply chain issues extend to practical amenities, such as the equipment needed to fix up old buildings (or convert them into an arts institution). Artists and residents alike have to manage with more limited materials at their disposal. In my own studio practice I was challenged by supply limitations, which in turn motivated a creative resourcefulness that in the end benefitted my work. I sought to borrow materials, use less of what I would have otherwise, and sifted through piles at the dump, looking for objects that sparked inspiration. I also sourced natural materials from the land, which once documented, were returned. Having to ask around for materials, or source them outside of the studio meant interacting with people in outdoor public settings, and therefore talking about my practice more socially and informally. In this way, the rural environment made for a more public and less private experience, recalling the distinction between being an artist in residence (embedded in community) and an artist on retreat (independent or away from others).

Educational Programming

My time on site was short (less than two weeks at each), and though I had plenty of time to familiarize myself with the residency and location, my stay did not always happen during scheduled programs. For instance, I did not attend courses (ceramics, painting, dance, for example) but knew them to be ongoing throughout the year. At each residency, instructional programming of high quality was listed as central to their mandates. Indeed, the residencies boasted impressive facilities and staff who were well equipped to deliver educational programming for all ages and levels. Of the programs that I did witness (public workshops, artist talks, performances, and festivals), I learned a great deal about different creative processes, cultural practices, and ways of exhibiting artworks. I saw how these programs garnered a

following in the communities, attracting both veteran and new participants, drawing broad

audiences into the residency spheres, and illuminating the towns. Often, participants stayed long

after the event to talk or explore the facilities, proving the value of in-person activities that stage

experiential, informal, and social learning.

Outreach Initiatives

Outreach initiatives include programs that are tailored to the needs and interests of the

community. Sometimes, they address local social issues, with the purpose of empowering or

connecting people. Depending on the institution's mission, vision, and resources, these outreach

initiatives are developed in different ways. For example, some artist residency programs

prioritize outreach initiatives by suggesting that artists visit and give demonstrations to children

at school or volunteer their time helping around town. Other residencies might accept

applications based on curatorial themes, which sometimes prioritize artworks that are socially

engaged or address issues or topics that are pertinent to the region. Sometimes, arts institutions

rely on public funding such as provincial or federal grants that favour community outreach or

engagement with social justice issues. Factors that might dissuade community outreach,

especially if this outreach involves visiting artists, are language barriers, financial constraints,

issues with accessibility (physical or social), lack of resources in order to implement

programming or keep up with growing interest, or a lack of engagement from the community.

Considering the relationship between art making and community making through

outreach initiatives raises questions about what kinds of aesthetic forms are popularizing in

contemporary art, and how they contribute to public pedagogy. For instance, Badham (2017)

describes the expanded social role of art, artists, and institutions by underscoring relational,

situational, or participatory arts as 'public practice'. Referencing the work of art critic Claire

Bishop, socially engaged art uses "people and their contexts as form and content of their artworks to draw attention to contemporary political issues and to affect local social conditions" (Badham, 'An expanded social role for art, artists, and institutions').

Social forms of contemporary art practices that use site-responsive projects for public interaction require an attitudinal shift away from a traditional model of isolated studio labour towards collective and community-based processes. This attitude, although popularized since the 90's as a 'social turn' (Bishop, 2005), is neither mandated nor necessarily practiced by artists attending the three residencies. During my research, I observed a handful of artworks that did engage relationally/situationally, (ironically, one such performance was a comedy skit that critiqued graduate level research institutions!) but for the most part, I observed artworks that were likely made as independent studio endeavours. These works were then exhibited during festivals, at galleries, or other public venues as part of public or outreach programs.

Figure 18. *Miscellaneous Data Collections from Nova Scotia and British Columbia.* Mea Bissett

(2022)
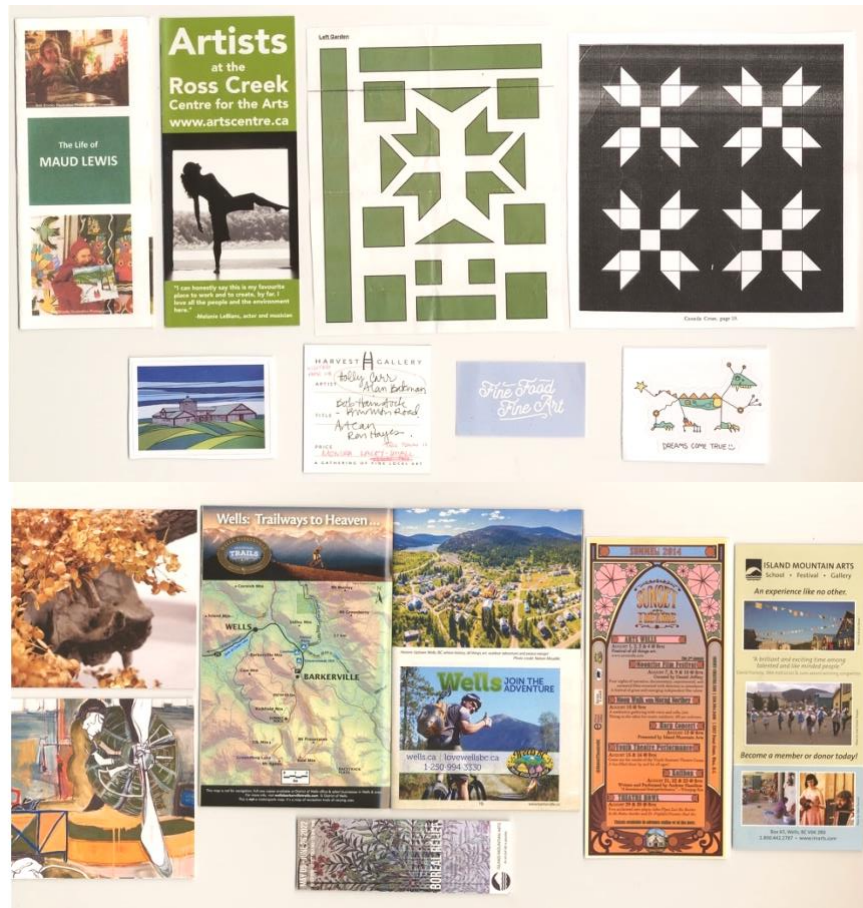
Note. These brochures, business cards, event tickets, artworks, maps and exhibition catalogues were collected on site at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts and Island Mountain Arts. As a participant in festivals and events, I held onto miscellaneous items at each site as part of my data collection. I used them to find out more about the history of the area, other arts programs in the community, and artists who were exhibiting locally. These scrap materials gave me a good sense of the 'who, what, where and when' of arts programming, and therefore social, educative, and arts-based opportunities. Note the Mi'kma'ki Morning Star/Canada Cross patterns in the top right; these were the plans for a new garden plot at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, given to me by the gardener, and which I later used in my studio practice.

CHAPTER 4

Choosing Multiple Methods

In order to address the question of how rural and remote artist residencies operate as places of public pedagogy, and in search of good infrastructural, environmental, and attitudinal practices, I drew from multiple methods of qualitative inquiry. In this section, I combine the case study approach with autoethnographic research (see below Table 1). By mixing these methods, I opened myself to how different methodologies can stir different results. Combining multiple methods also allowed for a flexibility and responsiveness to the conditions of each residency, whereby I could tailor my approach as I went. As Sandlin, O'Malley, and Burdick (2011) wrote, public pedagogy scholarship calls for interdisciplinary and contextualized sensibility towards research and theorizing, as it seeks to inhabit the often ambiguous or complex spaces of pedagogical address. In this section, I discuss techniques applied during data collection, the intentionality of each approach, and the types of data gleaned at each site.

Table 1

Data Collection Timeline

	Winter/Spring	April	May	June
Method	Case Study	---------------Autoethnography/Case Study-----------------		
Location	Montreal/ Tiohtiá:ke	Ross Creek Centre for the Arts Canning/Sipeknekatik, Nova Scotia	Island Mountain Arts Wells/Dënéndeh, British Columbia	Klondike Institute of Art and Culture Dawson/Trondëk Hwëchin, Yukon
Interviewees		Ian	Elyssia Jules and Gord Rachael	Leslie Dan

Note. This table demonstrates the data collection timeline, which began remotely using case study strategies, and later combined autoethnographic methods at different locations. On location, I met artists and residency coordinators who were interested in participating in conversational interviews. More information on the interviews and data collection methods can be found in Chapter 4: Methodology.

A foray into the genealogy of autoethnography reveals that the origins of this method date back to the Enlightenment when social study researchers pushed back against the positivist idea that a universal truth is out there, and that we can discover it. Classic ethnography, (which itself comes from white, male, heteronormative and ableist anthropology), maintained the idea that we can observe a culture from a distance, before reporting back to our own culture. Critical ethnographers, in turn, believed that to truly understand a phenomenon, we need to immerse ourselves and become a part of the culture under study. With critical ethnography came the practice of self-reflexivity, which is when a researcher attends to their positionality by disclosing their personal, social, and cultural background. Autoethnography, as a response to classic and

critical ethnography, is thus the pursuit of a contextualized, localized understanding of a culture-sharing group that the researcher identifies with (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). Autoethnography, as a qualitative methodology, requires that the researcher practice reflexivity, empathy, and creativity.

Interested in community art education, I spent my graduate studies noticing a gap in academic literature. Rarely do our studies recognize the structure and value of rural art education and public pedagogy in the development of artistic practices. My own experience living rurally in Quebec and Ontario, as well as my travels to rural communities for artist residencies, gave me insight into the role of rural art education as an important part of healthy living. For this reason, I chose to conduct an autoethnographic study by situating myself as both an artist, researcher, and teacher (part of the culture-sharing group under study), and therefore, as a source of data. Autoethnographic researchers draw data from their own stories to recount their experiences in narrative form. My previous experiences as an artist in residence will not be a considered as a source of data, but rather, as the stimulus for this research. I limited my data pool to what was collected at the three sites, which took the form of visual journals, written daily reflections, field note observations and photographs, as well as interviews.

Written Reflections

I started each day by writing down my thoughts on how I was feeling, what the environment was like, and the goals I had for the day. I practiced writing about the people I was meeting, and what it was like to be in a new environment. Often eager to step out and start my fieldwork, whether that was interviewing someone who I had met , attending an event at the residency, putting in studio hours, or exploring the area, I always dedicated an hour or so to writing my reflections first. Excerpts from the written reflections were included in the case study

section of this thesis, to help illustrate the emotions, sensations, and impressions I was having during my research travels. These descriptions are rich with the details of my days and describe many things that I learned while visiting the residencies. Written reflections offer a unique form of qualitative data, as they chart experiences through all the senses and in great detail, which benefits the analysis process and subsequent meaning making.

Field Notes

There were numerous opportunities to get involved as an audience member or participant in events that were happening through the residencies, and in the greater arts community. Between artist talks, festival workshops, exhibition openings, and gallery visits, I was busy absorbing and enjoying as much as I could in a day. Before, during, and after these events, I was busy taking notes of the people I was meeting and what I was learning. These field notes became important memos that I later incorporated into my written and visual journals.

By recording in-situ observations of artists and residents within their natural settings, I followed Punch's (1994) advice to immerse myself within the daily life of a group, community or organization in order to discern peoples' habits and thoughts, as well as decipher the social structure that binds them together (p. 84). I remained sensitive to the fact that my observational field notes and written reflections had limitations. Namely, they were dependant on my perceptions at any given point in time, which were shaped by my personality, biases, and the nature of the interaction (p. 84). This positions myself, the researcher, as the primary 'instrument' of my research. Graneheim and Lundman (2004) have argued that "there is no single correct meaning or universal application of research findings, but only the most probable meaning from a particular perspective" (p. 110). Using rich descriptive language (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Creswell, 2016, p. 99) I sought to document the educational

infrastructures, environments, and attitudes accurately and sincerely at each artist residency.

Visual Journal

My visual journal served as a space to creatively reflect on what I was observing and

learning. Visual data of creative and documentary form is considered a valid and accurate record

in qualitative research (Rose, 2016). Everywhere I went I carried my pencil crayons and

sketchbook, though often I would only make entries at the end of the day. With a looseness and

expressivity, visual journaling allowed me to relate to the artworks I was engaging with. It was

also a place to practice new techniques, and map each site based on memories. The visual data

also served as an entry point to meeting people, who would stop to ask about the drawings.

Interviews

Conducting interviews proved to be one of the most enjoyable and fruitful parts of this

thesis. I was able to sit down for long conversations with people whom I would never have

otherwise met. Each interview felt special in its own way because the interviewees were willing

to share stories and insights that enriched my understanding of the questions at hand. I conducted

participant-centred (Creswell, 2016, p. 281), conversational interviews with six people and one

interview through written correspondence. Interviewees were either artists living in the

community, previous artists-in-residence, or directors working at the residency. I coordinated the

interviews with the directors in advance and invited the artists to do an interview after having

met them on site. If they showed interest, I would follow up first by sending them a list of

questions and the consent form, welcoming them to consider how they would like to contribute.

Once they gave informed consent, we schedule a time to meet in person, with the exception of

one interview that needed to be rescheduled online after I tested positive for COVID-19, and

another interview that happened through written correspondence. The interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 1.5 hours and were held in a quiet space such as an office or studio where I could record without interruption.

Each conversation took twists and turns that I could not have anticipated, leaving me energized with fresh ideas and questions on how artist residencies serve as educative spaces for international and local audiences. This aligns with the constructivist belief that interviews are where knowledge is co-constructed through interactions between the interviewer and interviewee (Kvale & Brinkman, 2015), and "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience, to uncover their lived world" (p. 3).

The interviewees generously shared stories about how they came to be a part of the community, what their art practices entailed, what kinds of experiences they had with the residency, and what it was like for them to be living rurally. In turn, I shared my own stories of being an artist in residence, living in the city, living in the country, and working in community art education. The flexibility of this approach, particularly compared to structured interviews, allowed for the "discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants but may not have previously been thought of as pertinent" (Vargas de Freitas Matias, 2016, p. 55). I felt a closeness with each person I spoke with, connecting over a mutual interest in the arts. Collaboratively, we explored the questions and made meaning out of our stories.

After the interviews were recorded, they were transcribed and sent back to the participants for editing. This process is referred to as member-checking, which adds to the credibility of my findings and contributes to ethical research (Creswell, 2016, p. 252). At this point, the participants were reminded that they were able to withdraw their participation at any time before July 30th, at which point data analysis would begin. They were also invited to choose

a pseudonym in lieu of their name. None of the interviewees rescinded their participation or chose a pseudonym. By inviting the participants to review/edit/delete/add their own words or remove themselves from the study, I was sharing authority and strengthening our connection through ethics and respect. This approach is intended for collaborative research and meaning making, which are landmarks of compassionate autoethnographic research (Ellis & Bochner, 2016).

Compassionate Autoethnographic Research

Collaborative research takes many different forms and at times it is difficult to differentiate collaborative research from good field practices. Throughout the data collection process, I practiced collaborative research by respectfully observing and conversationally interviewing. As a gesture of reciprocity, I lent a hand by photographing an exhibition opening for the artist, moving equipment to help set up for an event, taking shifts gallery-tending during a festival, sharing food with participants, and gifting artworks that I had made on site. I also prioritized the participants' stories over my own, by compassionately listening and attending to their different perspectives and opinions. A compassionate autoethnographic approach recognizes that stories relate by overlapping, intersecting, and extending one another in an attempt to achieve an understanding from multiple vantage points. Compassionate research stems from a relational ethic of care, by emphasizing the agency and safety of participants while committing to positive social change (Ellis and Bochner, 2016, pp. 177-182).

Relational Ethics of Care

As a researcher, I did not exist in isolation from the participants of my research. I lived and worked in connection to a social and professional network which involves my friends, acquaintances, relatives, and coworkers. As we move into the Data Analysis section, I keep in

mind that as I write, I implicate others. My reflection of, for example, an artist talk, might influence others from supporting that artist. Similarly, the locations that I have selected are identifiable, as are the homes and workplaces of people within my network (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). My writing is therefore responsible to other people whom I care about. Remaining reflexive about my position as a reporter and translator of personal experiences will encourage trustworthy findings, rather than authoritative conclusions (Creswell, 2016).

In using my personal experiences, as well as the experiences of people in my network, relational ethics are particularly important. This is true for most autoethnographers (Ellis, 2007), who either seek approval for their findings from those in their network or change identifiable characteristics of participants whom they wish to protect before publishing. This in mind, I have chosen to omit certain discussions that might reflect negatively, in favour of a discussion on pedagogic practices. Furthermore, certain passages from the original transcripts were redacted by the interviewees during member-checking. This discretionary decision seeks to respect the boundaries and scope of this study, while winnowing comments (Creswell, 2016). These research practices do not interfere with the validity of my findings in response to the research question, nor the 'essence and meaningfulness' of the story (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011, p. 282). Ultimately, more detailed research into the value and role of rural artist residencies as educative spaces is required to build a more complete picture of successful and unsuccessful strategies in practice, and that is beyond the scope of this initial survey of practices.

Data Analysis

Coding Using Mixed Methods

As a mixed methods study, I designed a code system by combining techniques from ethnography, 'basic' qualitative analysis, and visual data in qualitative research. The following section outlines what these techniques are and offers examples of how these techniques were employed when inductively generating codes.

Practicing Autoethnographic Data Analysis

Autoethnographic studies, just as ethnography, focus on culture, context, and both individual and societal issues (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022). Fetterman (2010) describes ethnographic research as iterative, building on ideas throughout the study. For the duration of my data collection, I applied analytical approaches that descend from ethnography while observing artists-in-residence, their community contexts, and local issues. These analytical approaches are triangulation, pattern recognition, and visual representations. These processes helped to guide my study and altered my perspective on the educative potential of rural and remote residencies. As my perspective changed, and I understood more deeply the experiences of artists and residents at each site, so too did my inquiry change. For instance, the central question of this thesis shifted from focusing on *what* people learn at artist residencies, towards the infrastructural, environmental, and attitudinal conditions that best stage public pedagogy at artist. In this section, I will discuss the terms triangulation, pattern recognition, and data visualization, and how they came to inform my data collection and analysis process.

Triangulation proved to be a valuable tool for verifying statements that were mentioned either during interviews or in passing. For example, I was able to refer to each residency's website for past and current program information, as well as online reviews of these programs, to

validate what had been said about them, and vice versa. If statements were made from multiple parties that did not add up, I prompted the issue further to reconcile any differences. I remained attentive to the nuanced ways in which my own experience as an artist in residence, compared to what I was observing in others. Oftentimes, triangulating my internal thoughts with external behaviours and descriptive facts with visceral emotions happened naturally in the research process (Cooper & Lilyea, p. 202), and led to important realizations about the different experiences of learning at artist residencies.

Patterns were emerging in the data, as were exceptions. I realized that I was in need of a more efficient analysis tool than what sticky notes and highlighters could do when organizing these emerging patterns. I chose to purchase a subscription to ATLAS.ti, a data analysis software tool that has the capacity to process diverse data forms (transcripts, photographs, and uploaded artworks), and visualize data (cloud-like formations of prominent words and ideas). I was able to translate colour-coded tags that had previously be assigned directly into the ATLAS.ti system after uploading all my documents. I did a thorough read-through of the database including the member-checked transcripts, daily journals, photographs, and case studies.

It was time to start building a code system. I began by coding passages that stood out simply because they were part of a recognizable pattern, or they were passages that I had already been comparing and contrasting with other statements on the same issues (triangulation). I also exercised Creswell's (2016) advice for ethnographers, whereby codes are developed to group theoretical perspectives (in this case, 'socially engaged learning' and 'informal learning' opportunities), as well as descriptions of the culture of artist residencies, and issues within the field of art education (p. 723). Lofland and Lofland (1995) suggest coding based on a typology of events, activities or settings. I initially coded different types of events held at the artist

residencies, before deciding to group them together based not on their type, but for whom they

impacted (ex. 'youth learning opportunities', 'adult learning opportunities', 'community-oriented

program development', 'international connections', 'arts tourism', etc.) Bogdan and Biklen

(1992) further propose contextualizing codes based on perspectives such as attitudes,

relationships, and understandings of events. I generated codes that referenced 'appropriate or

successful social relationships', 'challenge in artist-resident relations', 'challenges of the

location/landscape', and 'improved quality of life through art education'.

Practicing 'Basic' Qualitative Analysis

'Basic' qualitative analysis - without analytical strategies specific to autoethnographic or

any other qualitative methodology - can be incorporated using general, qualitative coding

methods such as descriptive coding, in vivo coding, emotion coding, and initial coding (Saldaña,

2011). Looking at the interviews and my written reflections, I applied 'emotion coding', which

seeks to categorize the emotions expressed by participants or inferred by the researcher. I toggled

with an automatic function in ATLAS.ti called 'Sentiment Analysis', which assesses the tone

and/or sentiment expressed in any given passage[10]. The software aims to detect bias or

imbalances in the data expressed as sentiments, and automatically labels them as such. The

sentiment analysis search tool proposed 2962 sentences that contained imbalanced sentiments.

After reviewing the suggestions, it became apparent that I would need to manually review the

data and code the passages myself since what I understood as positive, negative, or neutral

statements were very different from the computer's scan. I also decided that since I was looking

for measures beyond emotional effects (such as institutional successes, personal and professional

implications, social consequences, etc.), then I would code accordingly. Using green (good

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[10] A 'passage' refers to an excerpt or segment of data, often in the form of a sentence or idea.

practices) and red (challenges) tags, I skimmed the data looking to categorize passages expressing either positive or negative impact. Additionally, I used yellow tags to code passages where the participants expressed consideration for the context, community, or various needs of others. Often accompanied by a red or green tag, these passages demonstrate a relationality and understanding between participants as an encouraging undertone of empathy or support.

Also drawing from 'basic' qualitative analysis techniques, I used descriptive codes to condense a passage into a shorter phrase, by summarizing the central idea. These descriptive codes became what ATLAS.ti refers to as 'quotations', essentially lean codes, or the primary building blocks of data interrogation. Sometimes these codes were 'in vivo', meaning the text itself provided a useful or meaningful name for a code.

Visual Data Analysis

Using artistic forms and expressions to explore, understand, represent, and sometimes challenge what I was witnessing at the residencies (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2014) aligns with arts-based methods in socially engaged public pedagogy research. In this section I describe how I applied basic semiotic strategies to code and analyze my visual journals. I extended basic semiotic analysis when reviewing the photographs that I took on-site, as another form of visual data.

Simply put, semiotics is the study of signs that hold meaning. These meanings are considered socially significant, and when analyzed, can further develop a complex understanding of a culture-sharing group. Coding has been referred to as the operation of identifying segments of meaning in data and labelling them (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019), which when grouped together and compared, reveal social significance. In application, I used basic semiotic analysis by scanning photographs and visual journal entries for evidence of learning environments,

infrastructures, and attitudes. The code system already developed in ATLAS.ti proved to be useful when analyzing the visual data, which was performed by connecting segments of the images to codes, and therefore the broader context of my research. By highlighting sections of each image and assigning them to set codes, I was fracturing and reducing the images to their key components. At times this process felt reductive, but I reminded myself that harvesting important passages also happens when coding text-based data, and it is a necessary part of abstraction during analysis.

Figure 19. *Visual Data Analysis.* Mea Bissett, 2022.

In this photograph, an artist leads an obsidian flint knapping workshop for the Riverside Arts Festival, KIAC. I triangulated this image with my written reflections to assign the following codes: 'educational programming', 'reference to an artist/art making technique', 'social learning experience', 'all-ages learning opportunity', and 'community-oriented public programming'. This screenshot shows how codes are assigned by highlighting sections of an image. Beyond codes, we can tell from this photograph that the workshop happened outdoors, with the possibility for audiences to sit closely to the artist, watching and learning from his demonstrations. Extra tools and materials were made available for people to try flint knapping techniques, which were described as an ancient practice specific to the region. As an artist and

researcher, this workshop provided me with new insights into site-specific materials, techniques, histories, and creative skills, memorably documented using photography.

Each image was carefully examined as the relevant codes were assigned. I remained open to the possibility of generating new codes, which reframed and abstracted the data to allow space for new considerations. I also noticed the limitations of this approach, which are that there are ideas worth exploring in the visual data that do not fit into the code system I had developed because they are difficult to succinctly categorize using text. Reviewing and coding the visual data helped promote memory recall, seeing as the images were labelled with basic information such as date, location, and a brief description, but were otherwise non-textual. Revisiting these memories while experiencing analysis for the entire project offered insights into different creative processes and their meanings, thereby improving the usefulness of this approach.

Figure 20. Mea Bissett (2022)

Above is an entry from my visual journal, created on the first day of my residency at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts. Layering both text and symbolic images, as I have done in this drawing, deepens my investigation, which itself involves language content (interviews, written reflections, thesis report), and visual content (artworks, and an analysis of sentiments/sensory experiences). This related to Shields' (2016) description of visual journaling as a form of creative inquiry which situates an artwork as evidence of knowledge, while moving beyond the page to allow the viewer to contextualize, imagine, and understand the process a researcher moved through while creating. In this way, "image and text work in tandem to reinforce emergent underlying meanings" (Sullivan, 2010). I analysed this image by searching for symbols that could be translated into codes, such as 'benefits of location/landscape', 'considering accessibility', 'considering community', 'improved quality of life through art education', 'intersection of local industries', and 'the role of the residency in greater community context'.

Merging Codes

By drawing autoethnographic, 'basic', and visual analysis methods (Rose, 2016), I was able to code the written and visual data sets using ATLAS.ti. These codes are theoretically charged, meaning they were generated with a sensitivity to infrastructural, environmental, and attitudinal practices as they pertain to public pedagogy. Despite theoretical orientation, the codes were developed inductively, meaning that they were loyal to the exact words and ideas in the data, open to the unexpected meanings that at times contrasted social and informal learning theories.

To avoid drowning in a long list of codes, I began aggregating them, by rereading, merging, and renaming them to reflect higher levels of abstraction. For example, I merged the codes 'social engagement', 'communal creativity', 'group exercise', 'public workshop', and

'festival events' into an expanded code labelled 'social learning experience'. As another example, I merged the initial codes of 'empowerment', 'personal growth', 'professional opportunity', 'experiencing beauty and pleasure', 'wellbeing', 'recruiting essential services', 'ameliorating economic opportunities', 'improved mental health', and 'becoming politically motivated' to make the expanded code 'improved quality of life through art education', applied across all text and visual data. This process of merging codes by revisiting the data and harvesting abstracted concepts is part of what Creswell (2016) calls the Data Analysis Spiral[11] (p. 624). Systematically building this exhaustive and exclusive code system enabled me to reflect on the data using ATLAS.ti analysis tools, such as the 'query tool', 'word cloud', and 'code co-occurrence explorer', which will be discussed in the following section.

Analytic Memos

Throughout the coding analysis process, I jotted down memos that helped materialize my ongoing reflections in a separate document called 'Data Analysis Daily Process Journal'. These memos were a mixture of intuitive comments, and early thoughts about the distinctions between codes, their analysis, and the results. These memos became a nascent source of consequently richer analysis, proving that "coding and interpretation are not two distinct phases, but interrelated processes that co-evolve" (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019, np.). The difference between these two processes is that coding is a mechanical operation used to draw out verifiable evidence, whereas interpretation is a jumbled and subjective experience of using codes to find insightful meanings. Below is an excerpt from my data analysis daily process journal that exemplifies this process:

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[11] A final list of codes can be found in the Appendix.

Using the query tool to filter quotations that were coded with both 'positive impact of residency on community' and 'improved quality of life' yielded results which demonstrate that community organizations such as artist residencies enrich the quality of life in small towns by strengthening community ties, fostering wellness through arts, providing platforms for cultural expression and boosting economic opportunities.

These results were initially coded as 'residencies are not an escape from reality', 'beauty is in the everyday', 'children benefit from the presence of artists', 'exposure to the arts develops responsible citizens and politically motivated people', 'residency fosters youth retention and population growth', 'more essential services come to town if there's an arts active community',

These codes contain the following phrases from interview transcripts: "the way that our programming illuminates the town needs to be as magical for the people who live here as for those who visit; like an exercise in mindfulness, the residency should give everyone the chance to recognize that this place is fantastical, and the fact that we have buildings that keep us warm when it rains it's fantastical. The fact that we can live here in the snow is fantastical. There are a lot of things that are really magical in the banality of the everyday. And I think that good art makes you recognize that life is magical, all you have to do is notice it."

Analytic memos, along with ATLAS.ti analysis tools jumpstarted the interpretation process of the analysis. These tools allowed me to retrieve passages that were filtered through specific conditions, such as sharing more than one of the same codes, involving certain words, or comparative sentiments. The query tool filters code combinations, which I used to look for patterns as well as unexpected outliers. I used the word cloud feature to analyze text-based data, revealing commonly used terms. The more often a word was used, the larger it appeared in the cloud (pictured below). I was relieved when the largest words were terms that I had used to

develop my research questions, validating that I had collected data which addressed the topic. The code co-occurrence explorer is another tool that allows quick access to interesting overlaps, and how often they occur.

In this section I gave a chronological overview of the data analysis process, from the early stages of reviewing the dataset, to coding using multiple methods, followed by merging the codes to create a code system. As part of the data analysis spiral, what followed was a cyclical return to the raw data while considering theoretical implications, precedent studies, and broader themes. In the following section, I illustrate what the data analysis spiral revealed. At this time, I invite you to shift with me from a technical tone towards a more embodied, receptive posture as we enter into this study's findings.

Figure 21. *Word Cloud Generated Using ATLAS.ti*. Mea Bissett (2022)

CHAPTER 5

Findings

In exploring the educative potential of rural artist residencies, I have opened myself to being moved and challenged by the stories shared by participants, as well as my own new experiences. Many of their reports resonated with my values as an artist, researcher, and teacher. Many more gave me new insights into the lived realities of rural life and issues. The vivid descriptions of material exploration and mentorship, as well as the stimulating conversations that were had around the purpose of art connected me to the participants in personal and profound ways. This research process evolved into a deeply embodied experience, one that will mark me long after this thesis is complete. I am left feeling humbled and reflective, buzzing with many questions about the pedagogical role of the arts in public space. Now I invite you, reader, to open yourself to these stories and questions, to let them enter you from a place of curiosity.

As you read this section, you will notice that I use personal pronouns (ex. 'I', 'we', 'you', 'they') to illustrate the findings and discuss their meaning. Doing so enjoins me with the participants, as members of the research and subjects of data collection. By addressing *you* I draw you into the fold and invite you to adopt an open stance that considers the findings in relation to your life. As Ellis and Bochner (2016) note, autoethnography is a form of writing that should allow readers to feel the dilemmas, think with a story rather than about it, join actively with the author's decision points (p. 219). The use of personal pronouns is consistent with the autoethnographic method, which positions the researcher, reader, and participants as both having an impact and being impacted by the research.

I present the findings of this study in two parts, in correlation with the two methods employed throughout this research: 1) autoethnography and 2) case studies. In Part 1 I will

discuss the themes that emerged as central to the experiences of the artists, residents, and artist residency coordinators whom I interviewed. These themes are discussed using an autoethnographic method of data interpretation, through the lens of an artist/researcher/teacher. Using examples and excerpts pulled from the conglomerate data pool, I explore what the data revealed. In Part 2, the themes are applied to suggestpedagogic practices, using specific examples from each case. These suggestions will be grouped into three categories that locate artist residencies as places of public pedagogy: 1. educational infrastructures, 2. educational environments, and 3. educational attitudes.

As you read, keep in mind the primary question of this study: How do artist residencies operate as places of public pedagogy? And what good practices generate educational infrastructures, environments, and attitudes at rural and remote Canadian artist residencies? To enter these questions, consider the following: In your life, have you experienced travelling to another region and being exposed to new ideas or practices? What are some of the opportunities or barriers you faced during these travels? What conditions were necessary for you to have meaningful exchanges, perhaps acquiring new knowledge, skills, or perspectives? How did social context, including the histories of the land, regional economics, politics, and social climate impact your experience while travelling? Conversely, are you a rural inhabitant whose hometown features attractions for international audiences? How is your community shaped by this? Evidenced by interviews, observations, and my own experiences, this section seeks to address these questions as they pertain to artist residencies in rural Canada/Turtle Island, as spaces of public pedagogy that can sustain or revitalize arts communities while providing artists with important professional development opportunities.

Part 1. Autoethnographic Findings

Themes

As described in the previous section on data analysis, I labelled passages as codes that were shepherded into groupings. These code groupings were not set in stone; the codes were best analysed when they could be rearranged, with the occasional outlier revealing new insights. These groupings will be referred to as themes, which aim to communicate what is meaningful in the data. They depict learning at rural artist residencies as: (a) embedded in social context, (b) situated in relation to the land, (c) occurring at an intersection of industries, (d) involving informal learning relationships, (e) requiring a hunger for knowledge, and (f) rooted in issues of access. These themes are not chronologically ordered; they are concurrent and congruent.

In the following pages, I offer examples of when these themes emerged from the data[12], as well as a critical analysis of these themes. My hope is that this section will serve not to assert authoritative answers but set the questions in motion. As such, I have embedded direct quotations and ideas expressed by participants, alongside examples from my field notes and daily journals. These excerpts are italicized and linked to the interviewee.

Educational Attitudes: Learning is embedded in social context.

Kukkonen (p. 28) writes that socially engaged arts underline the connections between creative production and social action through artworks and projects, which as Schlemmer et al. discuss, "actively engage with social justice and human rights issues" (2017, p. 57) and act as a catalyst for "emancipation and transformation" (Todd, 2018, p. 977). At all three artist residencies, the historic, socioeconomic, and cultural circumstances of the town were considered by the residency coordinators/program developers, which, to varying degrees, directly informed educational programming.

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[12] A comprehensive chart of the passages, codes, and themes can be found in the Appendix.

The Ross Creek Centre for the Arts stood out as especially concerned with social issues such as food insecurity and employability in programs and mandates. Excerpts from my conversations with Ian, Program Director, demonstrate some of these socially engaged initiatives. Ian: *Community Art Sundays are all about food security and celebration. Food and cooking isn't traditionally seen as "art". But in most peoples' lives, from a cultural tradition standpoint, it is art-making, like bringing people together, learning about each other.* And later in the conversation, Ian: *Agriculture is a huge part of this place. Were in the district of Sipekne'katik, where the wild potatoes grow. It's really easy to go into worlds of ideas through agriculture and art. Agriculture serves as another creative space, a space for dreaming, and integrating the history and strengths of this place. We worked with schools last year, and it was all about seeds of thought, seeing ideas grow.* There is a mindfulness and passion in how Ian spoke about the role of the residency in the larger community context, echoed in the programs at the centre; 'Women's Art Retreat', 'B.E.A.R Employability Program', agricultural work exchange programs, are some examples.

At Island Mountain Arts, there appeared to be less intentional integration of social issues into the residency's programming. There were, however, strong links made between the socioeconomic impacts of the mining industry on the lives those living in Wells, and how these impacts are felt and perceived in the arts community, as discussed with Elyssia: *I don't see myself as outside of the world of extractivist practices... and sometimes it's kind of shocking to see yourself and your practices in the same light as the mining industry or the forestry industry, but ultimately, all these 'industries' are built from practices that have learned to treat human livelihood in the way that we have treated the land, as commodity to be bought and sold. It's all proximity, it all comes from just being close by to that.* The social impacts of being in

community, or in combination with unlikely groups of people makes space for new qualities of relationships.

Cultural diversity, an important aspect of social context, is recognized and honoured at KIAC, which is co-operated by SOVA (the School of Visual Arts), the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture, and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in band office. In conversation with Dan, residency coordinator, he said: *It's always been a priority of KIAC to incorporate where we live, and the people that live here which of course, includes the Indigenous people. I think just because of the setting, the way the town is merged, there's social integration because we all live in town together… the building of KIAC was gifted a Hän name (Dënäkär Zho, or 'house of mixed colours'), which is on the front of the building, and a lot more buildings are doing that so when you walk around town you see this other language which puts it front and center that this is a community on Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in territory.*

To varying degrees, social context and engagement shaped the programs of each residency by informing their pedagogical approaches, targeted audiences, and overall identity. As places of community art education that can contribute to public pedagogy, defined by Biesta (2012) as the promotion of sociability and contribution to political and critical public discourses, the data revealed a variety of ways in which social context was considered at the residencies. Should the social context of the region not be considered in residency programming, it is likely that visiting artists would be less exposed to the realities of the place and have less interactions with community members at the residency. Conversely, residents would likely have less interaction with the artists, and their artworks, limiting opportunities for social exchange, knowledge exchange, and place-based learning. As Elyssia said: *Our strongest residencies have involved artists who really wanted to get to know the community of Wells. They talked to*

strangers at the pub, made friends outside of just me. All that can take time though, and it isn't

for everyone. Some people just want a space to head down do their work, which is totally

legitimate.

> *Educational Environments: Learning is situated in relation to the land.*

When asked about the relationships between landscape, creativity, and pedagogy, most of
the interviewees drew strong comparisons that were exemplified in their personal art practice or
conceptions of pedagogy. Dan described an experimental film that he recently completed for a
film festival hosted through KIAC, which combined images of the 'moosehide slide', a notable
landslide scar that drapes down the mountain above town, oral histories, and research. In this
way, the physical, spiritual, and historical presence of the land shaped Dan's work: *So there are*
two stories of how the slide happened. There was a geological research study that I used as part
of the voiceover. And there's also a First Nations legend that goes way back about how that scar
occurred. I was able to find a nice version of it that somebody had written and then had the help
of an elder who was able to read it for me. And then I blended the two, so that it is a double
narrative.

In another instance, a visiting artist used elements of the landscape to make their work,
building an anthology of land-based paintings from wherever they went: *We had another artist*
come up, who made pigments from dirt and rocks that he found around the area. That was the
work that he did wherever he would go to do a residency. He would make pigments and paint
with whatever he found. So he was burning things in the yard of the residence to get stuff down
to powders. There's a lot of landscape-based art that is created here.

Dan's insights are reminiscent of Sandra Styres (2018), who distinguishes 'place' from
'space', referencing the pedagogical potential of placehood:

Place refers to physical geographic space and is defined by everything that is included in that space—also referred to as landscape, ecology, and/or environment…Land is more than geographical space… [it is also the] underlying conceptual principles, philosophies, and ontologies of that space. (p. 27)

Styres draws on Indigenous scholarship and stories to underline the inherent role that the land plays in developing our personal and collective epistemologies. All three of the residencies that I visited had programs that positioned public land as pedagogical. In Wells, the Sunset Theatre (which operates separately but adjacent to IMA) held its Exploration Series, where actors and playwrights presented their unfinished works to the members of the community, generating feedback and discussion. The series gets its name from mining exploration, as a metaphor for searching for ideas and extracting stories for production.

In Dawson City, and across the Yukon, members of the community are troubling the dominant histories of the Klondike gold rush, making space for Indigenous stories of the land. In conversation, a friend said that mining is only one part of the history of this place, and that we can learn a lot more about local identity through Indigenous stories and movements on the land. Dawson City's residency, KIAC, has mandated Indigenous partnerships and programming, with the goal of drawing in broader public audiences. Diversification, and the problematizing of dominant narratives of who exists as the 'public' could lead to attitudinal shifts towards advocacy practices in arts institutions. This, in turn, could present an opening for visiting artists to learn about local context and histories of the land, becoming aware of local issues, arts and culture. Artists who are sensitized and informed might respond to local contexts in their own practices, which could draw greater interest and attendance of audiences. Deeper awareness and advocacy of who constitutes the local 'public', as those who are situated on the land, could also contribute to the sustenance of Indigenous arts and culture.

Figure 22. *Friend or Foe*. Terrance Houle.

Note. I took this photograph in Dawson City, along the 9th Avenue Trail. It depicts a nearly collapsed panel, one in a series made by Terrance Houle. Telling stories, myths, or histories using Native American Sign Language, Houle installs these panels in public, followed by a performance and hiking tour to enact stories told by the local, historical, traditional Indigenous peoples of the area. Being exposed to languages or stories by way of public art activates the environment and makes space for audiences to think differently about who or what constitutes the 'public'.

Learning does not necessarily mean acquiring something from someone else. As discussed by Ellsworth (2005), dominant educational discourses and practices position knowledge to be a thing already made and learning to be an experience already known. Moving away from institutionalized understandings of knowledge transfer or transmission, public pedagogy attends to the pedagogical potentialities of memory, the epistemological weight of history, embodied and affective forms of learning beyond language, and historical sites of public discourse.

Farther down, the road drops to sea level. I came to a stop at the mouth of Blomidon National Park. The beach that hugs the red rocks is sheltered from the elements, and today the sun has its grip on every inch of copper-stained sand. Around each bend is a new wind, new weather. Water poured down from the cliffs, and on the breeze, the surest signs of spring. Jeanne, a friend of a friend, drove up from Kentville to pick up a carding mill that I transported all the way from Montreal as a favour. They told me about their practice as a tanner of sheepskins, and how it was hard to find good skinners in the valley. They were self-taught, much like other artists and artisans whom I have met along the way. In exchange for transporting the carding mill, they left me with a bag of raw wool from various sheep farmers in the valley. In the coming weeks I'll be learning how to properly clean the wool so that I can weave my own tapestry. This excerpt from my daily journal describes the atmosphere surrounding the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts. As an artist in residence, my studio work benefitted from my experiences on the land, outside of the residency's walls. Being open to the lessons and opportunities that emerge from being 'in-situ' resulted in new perspectives and understandings of what it meant to be an artist in a rural place.

It was apparent to me that the rural environments of each artist residency shaped the experiences of artists and their modes of making. Some of the artists and coordinators I spoke with confirmed that they had purposefully chosen to live in these areas because of the landscape, and how it gives character to the community. Dan: *Five minutes out of town you're in the middle of nowhere which is beneficial to artists. What that remoteness does is make the town feel like a tighter community. I think most small towns that are far from a large urban center, you find there always is a sense of community and people are always helping each other. Everyone knows each other, sometimes in a good way and sometimes not in a good way. But you do get the*

feeling that if there's a problem, we have to solve it ourselves. In this quote, the relationality between members of the community is positioned as unique to rural areas. Resourceful attitudes are considered integral.

In contrast, Rachael, a previous artist in residence at Island Mountain Arts, learned a tough lesson about living and artmaking in a remote place: *It makes you rethink the materials and resources you're relying on. The supply chain becomes very apparent. The larger Canadian art world can seem very connected and very disparate at the same time. It makes you think more deeply about your desired audience and what you might do when the available audience is quite literally only your neighbours. Living rurally, on bad days, makes a great procrastination excuse and can be very isolating and demotivating. Some artists thrive with this amount of independence, but I find it lonely most of the time.*

In conversation with Leslie, I ruminated on my perceptions of the difference between rural and urban environments, and how they shape arts-based learning experiences at residencies: *In urban areas, an artist can't help but compete with the thousands of other artists who are vying for the same opportunities. It doesn't matter whether you are by nature a competitive person, there is always a degree of competition that impacts your experience of being an artist, and consequently, how you make your artwork. This sits in contrast to the possibility of collectivity in non–urban arts communities, where in order to survive/thrive, an artist must uphold and support the other artists in their community through partnerships and shared events. I get the impression that this collectivity (as opposed to competition) influences local artists' practice in positive ways, by providing more opportunities to show/perform and more freedom to make mistakes and take risks, two important features of creating unique and meaningful work.*

Casey (1996) writes that we are never without "emplaced educational experiences . . . we are not only *in* places but *of* them" (p. 19). Moreover, Styres (2018) says:

> We find our existence in the intimate and embodied expressions of place. Such knowledges are highly contextualized, soulful, (re)membered, and experienced… By inhabiting spaces—by being present in those spaces, to occupy those spaces, to story those spaces, to (re)member and (re)cognize those spaces—they become placeful. (p. 27)

Of course, not all artists have land-based or place-based art practices, though certainly most who travel to these rural residencies do so, in part, to experience the landscape. Of the artists and arts workers who I did interview, all of them made direct correlations between place, creative practice, community, and pedagogy.

Figure 23. *Mea Bissett* (2022)

Note: Electroacoustic composer and artist in residence Dorian Bell recording sounds from the Bay of Fundy, Nova Scotia.

Educational Attitudes and Infrastructures: Learning Occurs at an Intersection of Industries.

One of the most perplexing patterns that emerged from the data was when someone expressed the pedagogical potential of the intersections between art and other industries in town. Consider Dan's story: *there was an artist a couple of years ago, she was doing projects on*

permafrost and the easiest way to find where to get cuts of permafrost is at a mine because they're cutting into it. So she was able to find a miner and go out to the mines, and they allowed her to photograph and videotape stuff out there and then she had an open studio, and all these miners were there who had never set foot inside KIAC before. And they were really touched that she was using stuff that they had done in her art. Maybe there's is a prevailing attitude on both sides that these people don't like us, or we don't like them. But when you get together and you're having a drink, talking about permafrost, you realize that actually there's a lot in common there, you can learn a lot from eachother… She came back to the residency 3 different times, because of the permafrost in different seasons.

This passage draws out how relationality, or community-mindedness can result in meaningful exchanges between unlikely groups of people. Residencies, as community hubs, can facilitate these relationships and exchanges by building community networks and staging public events. For example, open studio or exhibition events can draw diverse public audiences, inviting them into conversations in which they may learn from one-another, or find meaningful connections between themselves and their environment. It also affirms that artists whose work relates to the local context can create openings for reflections on rural life. Pictured below are video stills from Rachel Rozanski's film called 'Perma', which was created at KIAC. Rachel is the artist who is mentioned above in my conversation with Dan.

Figure 24. *Video Stills from 'Perma'.* Rachel Rozanski.

Note: Rachel's work at KIAC focused on permafrost degradation across the North. For the full video, visit Rachel's website.

Related to concepts of placehood and the pedagogical potentials of the land, learning at the intersection of industries considers the layered and emergent spaces of environment, industry, artmaking, and pedagogy as part of the public realm. In conversation with Jules, a resident playwright and actor at the Sunset Theatre in Wells, she told the origin story of Wells: *Fred Wells, when he was building this company town, insisted that if you were to be hired by the Cariboo Gold Quartz Company you had to play an instrument. You couldn't drink, you couldn't smoke, and you needed to have some kind of musical talent… I think the idea was to build a well-rounded community so that it wasn't just about mining. He really did build a holistic environment. It wasn't just about the gold in the ground - it was about asking how we can build a community that thrives in all these different aspects of life, like arts and culture and business, and to this day there are miners, merchants and artists in this town.*

Merging or meeting multiple industries, such as the arts and tourism, has educative potential as well as community-building capacity. Dan: *We're trying to get more artists or tourists into the gallery. Parks Canada now makes KIAC a stop on their tours, just to let people know what it is and what goes on here, and they go right through the gallery… You know you can only go to Gertie's* [a bar] *so many nights in a row. There's a lot more to Dawson then going to the Dredge or going to Gertie's. And I think people can appreciate doing something a little different in the town. They can say 'I saw this film that this person made about eating local food for a year!' And we had that filmmaker in here last week. There was a great Q&A afterwards.* Similar ideas were shared by Leslie, a jeweller and miner who I interviewed in the Yukon: *A lot of people seem to appreciate my show up here, because, well it's the same thing for me - when I travel somewhere I want to see what local people are doing.*

Bayard (2005) states that integrating the arts as a formally recognized industry could help build regional identity beyond resource extraction and tourism. Considering the arts as an industry reveals possible infrastructural connections across neighbouring industries in the region, such as funding partnerships. For example, corporate mining practices could fund artist residencies, demonstrating to the community their interest and investment in local needs, thereby bridging communities. Unique to rural areas, the intersection of industries establishes attitudinal and infrastructural openings that mutually benefit the artist residencies and their greater communities.

Educational Attitudes: Learning involves informal learning relationships

Across the country I witnessed different relationships and dynamics of learning that diverged from the formal teacher-student model, such as mentorship, apprenticeship, and collaboration. These relationships were dynamic, often subtle, where skills, techniques, or ideas

were imparted generously and informally. During my conversation with Leslie, she described the origins of her interest in skill sharing, which resulted in her having mentored multiple artists who came to the residency: *I actually asked a local Silver Smith 'how do I get started? What do I need to do?' She invited me into her workshop and we melted some of our gold together, so I watched and learned how to do that. She kind of gave me tour of her basic setup with her tools, so that I had a basic idea of what was involved. Another different artist went through a tool catalogue with me and checked off the absolutely essential items I needed to order. So you know, I was kind of mentored in an informal, brief, but really important way by a couple of local artists.*

Leslie then went on to apprentice artists who were interested in honing their skills: *I've had a lot of people over the years ask me if I would take on an apprentice... the silver smith that first showed me how melt gold ... She told me that there's a really ancient creed in metalsmithing, and that is that if somebody sincerely wants to learn, you have an obligation to at least help them by pointing them in the right direction. So I took that pretty seriously, because it really did inform what I've been able to do. So what I usually do is I will invite them to come to my shop, same thing as this woman, Sharon, did for me. I'll show them the basics. For example, here's what's involved in soldering, or other basics that I use in my practice. I've done that for quite a few people, some more successfully than others.*

One-on-one interactions of this kind are helpful to artists wanting to develop their competencies or spend time with a material that requires particular tools or facilities. Apprenticeships and mentorships appear to be possible in small towns, at least for those interested in specialized skills that have been honed by someone in the area. This demonstrates one way in which artists-in-residence can learn from interactions with community members,

affirming that rural artist residencies can provide educative opportunities. As a practice, artist residencies might act as a liaison between local and visiting artists, connecting those with similar material processes. The benefits of these connections are mutual: artists leave with developed professional skills and residents are exposed to international arts, business opportunities, and technical development. Leslie*: the community has been enriched by various different interesting people who come through. Almost always they become friends, or at least develop contacts with people in the same artistic field in town. Like a potter will get to know the local potters, and then there's a cross fertilization of techniques and ideas. I've seen that happen in Dawson. I don't even remember this woman's name, but some years ago there was a metal artist here who needed a rolling mill for her project so she looked me up and found me. We exchanged ideas, we talked about techniques. I let her use my equipment, and I also learned from her. She mostly worked in copper, which is new to me.*

Of course, town residents are not infinite taps of educational material and energy – respecting the boundaries and limits of any community member is necessary for building trusting relationships. When describing her apprentices, Leslie spoke to this limitation: *I'll show them the basics. For example, here's what's involved in soldering, or other basics that I use in my practice. I've done that for quite a few people, some more successfully than others. At first I said okay, come in once a week, and I'll teach you, and that didn't really work so well, because I'm just too busy. I do a lot of custom work, and if I don't kind of stay on it, then I end up getting swamped.* Visiting artists can neither expect nor rely on volunteer time. This is where residencies could consider hiring local artists as part-time instructors, as is the case at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts.

Figure 25. *Spoon carving with Bill*. Photo by Melissa Naef (2022)

Perhaps the most common informal, social situation for artists to exchange, learn, or hone their ideas and techniques is through instructional workshops or events hosted by the residency, like the one pictured above. Unless there is a school with classes specific to the arts, usually these events are the only place for artistic development or feedback. In the East, West, and North, I participated in or observed workshops through the residency, validating the relationality, learning, and socializing of public art events.

Ian spoke about several different workshop initiatives at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts: *We also want artists who don't ordinarily interact in community-wide ways to have a chance to share what they're working on. And that happens in so many different ways… maybe they're facilitating a workshop with youth and a member of our youth leadership program gets to work, gets to help set up materials and really learn about the craft of how to share certain parts of a practice.*

And another instance, Ian: *In this region, a lot of people are coming out from Mexico and from Cuba, from Jamaica as well. We partner with some local agricultural producers to connect*

with these migrant workers, and do some photography workshops. It's not just a learning moment on photography, but bringing ideas and photographs together, and then showing them alongside what they were working on. And lastly: *In a lot of our programs, you might get to work with somebody who is a full-time practicing artist, whether they're local or international… our youth leadership program we have teens who are coming from all over… They can volunteer to learn about childcare or to learn leadership skills, and they come to live here on site for the summertime. And in that time they get to meet and work with tons of artists. They're also generally interested in the arts out of their own curiosity and passion and exploring where that could take them. Whether they're a musician or a writer, or interested in theatre, or whatever be - they get to work alongside and with practicing artists… And it's really cool, because it doesn't matter what those participants go off to do in the end, but access to the arts and being creative or being curious in the world, sharing different kinds of languages, creating things collectively, sharing stories, will influence you in positive ways, and that's a big part of our mission at Ross Creek as well - platforming voices from the community.* Here are some examples of good practices alive at the Centre – leadership programs, workshops, volunteering – which stage residencies as places of public pedagogy that are important to the community, to the professional development of artists, and to the sustenance and success of rural arts.

Another public event common at artist residencies are artist talks, which aim to support the professional development of artists, and inform attendees on the creative processes and meanings of artworks. These talks are usually publicized by the residency and held in a gallery space, often accompanying an exhibition. Artists may present works in progress or finished works, as well as images that portray their creative development over the years. Artist talks can be fun and informative. Usually food and drinks are served, attendees can mingle and ask

questions or encourage the artist to pursue a specific idea or material. As a good practice, residencies that host artist talks are delivering public programming that can strengthen rural communities through informal education, socialization, entertainment, and creativity.

Figure 26. *Martha Jane Ritchie Giving an Artist Talk at Island Mountain Arts.* Mea Bissett (2022)

This photo was taken during Martha's artist talk at IMA in Wells. Following the event, I documented the experience in my daily journal: *Between 6-8 pm was the artist talk and exhibition opening for Martha J. Ritchie's show 'Boreal Relief'. Martha's show was an incredible feat - she had packed her truck in her hometown of Haine's Junction, Yukon, and driven here with an entire oeuvre. Using printmaking on paper and textiles (wearable arts), as well as sewing, painting, drawing, and sculptural techniques, Martha brought the boreal forest into the gallery in an immersive and cross-seasonal exhibit. There was food and wine served, though most remained masked due to the outbreak at the school and in town announced today. The turnout was great - there were probably about 20 or so people who came through. Martha gave an artist talk, accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation with images and videos of her*

process and techniques. Everyone loved seeing how the prints were made, and Martha answered questions on the materials of linoleum and rubber, oil-based inks, tools, textiles, and more. She spoke wonderfully about her inspiration of being in and with nature, sitting alone on the forest floor and feeling connected or a part of everything minute.

Some residencies mandate either an artist talk or a workshop. My conversation with Dan revealed the reason why: *The one thing we do mandate is that they do either an open studio or an artist talk, just so people can have the opportunity to meet them and see what kinds of work they do. If the artist does have a particular skill or thing that they do, we will do a workshop, and that's where a lot of the learning does come in. Because then the public can see how that art was created, or how that artist works. There's a thousand different ways of making a painting or a film, so it's always great to see someone's little take on how they make their work.*

Having experienced many artist talks that left me feeling full and inspired, I understand these events to be exemplary of informal education. Counter to the traditional structure of teacher-student typical within an institution, artist talks decenter teaching and learning relationships. These events pose occasions for collective meaning making and ideation, raising questions about how, where, and when we know teaching and learning to occur.

Naturally, I have also experienced artist talks that are underwhelming or unhelpful to my own practice. Elyssia spoke to this: *I feel sometimes like it's hard to feel like you can get a truthful opinion in critiques. When I was living in Whitehorse people always expressed a liking for the work because it was 'nice' during critique. I like hearing about the good work, but I always want my audience to critically think about what I'm saying. What are we actually talking about? What do you agree with? Why do you agree? What are you actually seeing? What is not right about what we're doing here?*

In my conversation with Jules, she talked about how the Sunset Theatre mediated their community feedback sessions, mutually benefitting the artists and participants: *We usually have it so that when the artist has questions about what they are writing, they can also ask the audience. So that the questions go both ways, between performers and audience… And talking about the training and sharing of skills- we find that the people in this community have actually become really good at understanding what their feedback can give to an artist. We encourage people to not say things like well, 'I didn't really get it', or 'I don't like this part'. We try to encourage feedback that is constructive. People that come here who live in the community and have been through the process a number of times, they understand that it's more helpful to the artist to say, 'can you please explain what this part was about?' or 'I didn't understand when this happened', as opposed to 'I don't get it'. I feel like we have some budding dramaturges in this community!*

Adjacent to this is the reality that one-off or short-term exchanges are often not enough for in-depth critique or feedback. Most artists-in-residence are only around for a short period of time, usually between one week and three months. Jules: *As we grow, one of the things I'm noticing as an artist working on a piece, a week is not enough. It feels like we're just getting started.* And Elyssia: *I think it's a large privilege to be able to travel, to be able to come in and think about things differently and make art for a temporary time and then return to where you call home. But the art that artists coming here are working on is not always of interest to what people who live here are thinking about or concerning themselves with.*

Educational Attitudes: Learning requires a hunger for knowledge

Scattered throughout the data are references to the necessity of conviviality for learning to take place. Any person could show up to a remote residency and get busy in the studio

researching, experimenting with material, and otherwise learning independently. To seek opportunities for skill sharing or new knowledge requires a hunger, or at least an open and curious demeanour. Elyssia spoke to this attitudinal difference, as it pertains to community outreach (recall the earlier discussion on participatory/situational/relational artworks): *I think it really depends on the artist, who they are as a person, and how they choose to interact with the community. That's the other thing, our residency isn't a residency where we will mandate you to spend time with the community. We operate by building community-artist bridges if the artists want that. But some people just want to come and work, and that's what they came here for, and that's just as valid. It's like any relationship - the relationship is what you choose to make of it. I do think that being in a small place you do feel like you can build relationships with people maybe a little bit more readily or faster.*

In this case, the residency aims to practice liaison between artists and community should that be of interest to the artist. Otherwise, they respect that some artists require independent studio practices. At both Island Mountain Arts and KIAC, I requested to be put in touch with artists in the community, or be updated with arts events in the area. The residency coordinators were happy to help. Their facilitation enabled my research, learning and experience. I did not, however, stage participatory arts events. As a temporary researcher and artist, there were limits to who I encountered as the 'public', further exaggerated during the off season.

In conversation with Ian, I discussed how I distinguish between an artist residency and an artist retreat: *think about the language we use - to be 'in residence' or to 'reside'… meaning to be present in a place or community. I think we both understood each other when we said that a 'retreat' is okay. Going somewhere and isolating yourself to be productive and focused, trying to gain inspiration from that focus is fine! It's valid. But as a community worker, I am bias towards*

thinking about where I am, why I'm there, who else is there with me, or who has been here before me. This landscape isn't empty. I like challenging that by asking what do we need to do to have a career as an artist? The answer is certainly not more isolation.

In the following passage, Gord points out the reciprocal nature of learning relationships in theatre feedback workshops, underlining the informal educative potential of critical discussion at rural residencies: *What they do is create a more educated audience, because the audience is taking part. It's not just observing and absorbing something. Performers understand how important the audience is, but the audiences generally don't. And so when they have the opportunity to come in and see from the very beginning, or take part in something like the cabaret, or get up on stage - they can understand what it is about. Then they as an audience are able to get far more out of it. And the whole process is better.* As for good practices, these feedback workshops creatively and critically engage the public, developing their skills, whilst sharpening the artists' process and product.

Educational Infrastructures, Environments, and Attitudes: Learning is Rooted in Issues of Access

In this study, 'access' refers to the facilities and conditions that enable or limit engagement with the artist residencies. Physical accessibility, language barriers, available materials and tools, staff numbers, the state of facilities, and social networks all shaped the relationships and opportunities for artists on site.

In terms of having access to facilities, Dan spoke to the social and practical benefits of the residency: *KIAC facilitates people to be able to do things at its base level, which I think is really important. I think that if this building and our facilities weren't here, and someone came up to work as an artist, they'd end up working in a bit of a vacuum. Some artists do like that, but*

others want to feel like there are facilities. Like an easel, or a space for an afternoon to take photographs… For musicians to play a concert, or for those in theatre, or even to do film screening, we have the space and tools to do that, rather than relying on the school gym or another space… Even volunteering at events, if you're interested in the arts but you're kind of shy, you can volunteer at the door. That way you can see people coming in, you can meet them, so it's a great meeting place for people to exchange. You can start to find your initiative, the group you like to talk with, or people that have similar interests as you. In terms of a social benefit for an art community, which does need a hub or a social area, that's what this residency provides.

Aspects of each residency were inaccessible, whether that be because the facilities were not physically accessible, the programs were too expensive for some to participate, or the social environment wasn't conducive to diverse participation. For example, Sakura, an artist from Japan who was working on exchange at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, mentioned that she wanted to visit this Canadian residency specifically to practice her English. The energy and effort required to speak another language, however, sometimes kept her from participating in events or asking for help.

Transportation was a common issue, seeing as these residencies are not only expensive for international travellers, but also often require a commuting vehicle. As I wrote in my journal: *If it weren't for my car, I would most likely feel isolated. Because I can drive into town, I've been able to glean a greater understanding of what artists in the area are up to. I can visit their galleries or studios, talk with them in person, and see their practices… One thing about rural and remote residencies, which I've encountered at each site, is that transportation offers freedom, and if you don't have access to a car, you can feel stuck on site without the ability to*

explore the landscape or points of interest around town. Without a car, it is challenging to get around town for supplies, get out of town for activities, and ultimately, it can feel limiting. Cars are usually very expensive to rent in rural areas, and the driving conditions are tougher than the paved roads of the city. To drive out here, you must be comfortable with washouts, flat tires, lack of reliable cell phone or internet service, and asking for help. That's if you manage to get your hands on a car in the first place (Daily Journal Entry, April 2022).

Underscoring all of the interviews was a celebration of the residencies as spaces for local residents to engage with or have access to the arts. Ian said: *We know when we do outreach work that there are the kids who you can tell when they pick up a drawing tool, don't have very many opportunities to do that. It's really hard for them. And that's a long road to walk if you have less access.*

Elyssia commented on this as well: *The way that our programming illuminates Wells as a place needs to be as magical for the people who live here as for those who visit. And that's one of the beauties of holding public events, of shutting down streets and putting a concert on a front patio. As much as it is commonplace, it still illuminates the public space that those who live here are used to, and makes us think 'oh, this can happen here'… It's almost like an exercise in mindfulness… There are a lot of things that are really magical in the banality of the everyday. And I think that good art makes you recognize that life is magical, all you have to do is notice it.*

Beyond access to the arts, residents benefit from the regional development and access to essential services that might not exist if there was not an artist residency in town, said Ian. *Why would a doctor want to move to Nova Scotia for work, if they can't go see a show or interact with cultural settings in a way that's meaningful to them and their family? If it's just driving to the hospital and then going home and watching tv, they're gonna move away again!* Rural

revitalization or empowerment relies on cultural activation, where entertainment, identity, advocacy, and community can flourish. Considering issues of 'access' reveals where initiatives to revitalize and/or empower must be supported, leveraging the importance of pedagogies for and by the public.

Reflections as an Artist/Research/Teacher

Reflecting on the themes that emerged from the data helps to clarify how artist residencies contribute to ecosystems of art and public pedagogy. As communal spaces for social engagement and creative processing, they address elements of culture that, often subtly, teach beliefs, identities, and futurities (O'Malley, Sandlin & Burdick, 2020). As an artist, these themes enriched my understandings of meaningful material engagement. I spent time both in the studio and out around town, visiting the studios of other artists as part of the relationality of residencies to the wider community, learning about what was important to them through their artworks. I saw theatre artists practicing in amphitheatres built in open fields (Ross Creek Centre for the Arts), origami artists stringing birds along walking paths outside of town (KIAC), metalsmiths teaching teenagers how to use their tools, artists who were exhibiting (IMA), artists who were at a standstill with their work, artists who were questioning why they were making art at all. These interactions expanded my understanding of creative processes, informing how I chose to make art in response.

As a researcher, the relationships I built through conversation and the observations I made on site validated my intuition that artist residencies serve important roles as economic, cultural, and community mediators, as well as the issue of rural art education being neglected in academic literature. In the end, I was overwhelmed with countless examples of how community art education contributes to public pedagogy, and how public pedagogy not only sustains rural

communities but allows them to thrive. What started with the question of how and what we learn at rural artist residencies transformed into a study on the many factors that contribute to 'learning', which itself, as a concept, challenged me to the core. My questions shifted away from 'learning' as knowledge transfer, towards an inquiry into the embodied and situated experiences of learning conditionally, or *in relation to*. In a sense, as a first-time researcher, I was enacting the very practice of an artist in residence. I travelled to be exposed to different ways of being, to have time to focus on a project, and to learn experientially, which can inspire new modes of production. My role as artist and researcher collapsed into one. As such, I have crafted the following section to synthesize some of the practical applications for teachers, facilitators, coordinators, or anyone interested in brainstorming good practices, and what it might take for an artist residency to bloom as a creative community space.

Part 2. Case Studies: Pedagogic Practices in Action

The following section draws from the case studies, as well as interviews and observations made on site that exemplify 'pedagogic practices'. Each artist residency employed unique and innovative strategies to reach broad audiences and uplift their arts ecosystems. As spaces that hold potential for community development, public pedagogy, and artistic achievement, rural artist residencies are innovatively and imaginatively using the resources available to them. This section is primarily intended for residency coordinators, but involves strategies applicable to investors, community members, and visiting artists alike. It does not list all possible strategies but acts as propulsion for future considerations and research beyond the scope of this study.

Educational Infrastructures

As an operative term, I have used 'educational infrastructures' to refer to the systems in place that support and maintain rural artist residencies as educative milieus. These systems consider the role that the residency serves in the greater arts ecosystem and maximize the potential of the arts industry. Capacity and limited resources have been identified as major threats to rural community art education initiatives (Duxbury & Campbell, 2011; Kukkonen, 2021). The three residencies that I visited address these infrastructural challenges in unique ways, which are demonstrated by the following pedagogic practices:

- Participate in local, regional, and national arts events, by submitting to conferences, attending online or in-person artist talks, meeting with arts councils from nearby places, and keeping an active online presence. For example, the IMA residency has hosted the Northern Exposure Conference, which, as expressed on their website (2021) "draws together music and arts industry from rural and urban British Columbia to share ideas and knowledge on the sector, access professional development, and foster growth and support networks". In my view, networking with other arts workers is an important contribution to arts communities and ensures that the residency's programming reflects contemporary ideas and practices.

- Consider the relationships between neighbouring industries, such as resource extraction projects, tourism, or agriculture, alongside arts programming. Negotiate support, whether financial or social. For example, if there are active mining or research projects in and around the residency, might these corporations financially support local arts programs? This could lead to a redistribution of profit and greater investment in the host community.

- Focus on collaboration over competition. Island Mountain Arts boasts regular music festivals and events. Rather than competing with other music venues, they team up. Attendees can buy wristbands that will give them multi-venue access, promoting movement between events rather than forcing attendees to choose between them. Attendees will become exposed to more diverse arts, while experiencing a heightened sense of community liaison.

- Promote rural strengths over deficits. Research into rural art education reveals that there are many challenges faced by rural inhabitants. Artist residencies have a platform to promote the unique appeal of rural life. Programming based on this uniqueness (such as taking advantage of easy access to nature, workshops that demonstrate heritage crafts, or courses that cater to community outreach) prioritizes rural perspectives and contributes to policies that are compatible with rural visions.

- Partnering with local organizations, schools, and volunteer groups can ease strains that come as a result of staffing shortages. Put together programs that engage adults and teens who are interested or able to help facilitate, as is seen at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts.

- Tailor programs to the town's needs. Addressing local issues and interests will generate participation, reputation, and create fodder for grant applications, thereby encouraging rural arts to sustain and/or thrive.

Educational Environments

Considering the pedagogical potential of spaces beyond the classroom can benefit the residency by amplifying its presence in town and creating distinctive programs. Educational

environments exist in both the private studio spaces of an artist residency, as well as in public spaces where activities and amenities are shared.

- Program alongside or with regional parks, municipal walking paths, or ATV trails. Situate the residency on the land and prioritize responsible stewardship. Consult and engage the local band office, respecting their resources and practices that are already in place. Learning from/of/on the land in a way that highlights Indigenous stories and presence can be a generative and creative community act, pertinent for the work of artists and educators.

- Consider updating the accessibility of residency spaces, both indoors and outdoors. Funding exists for updating facilities to meet adequate accessibility standards. This includes physical as well as social accessibility. An inviting and accessible space will draw larger and more diverse crowds, mutually benefitting audiences and artists.

- Keep facilities clean and inviting. If the facilities are crowded or need repair, this could damage the artists' experience and therefore the residency's reputation. If maintaining facilities are a primary issue, consider moving the studios into another building. Community centres, libraries, or in the case of Island Mountain Arts, public schools can provide workspace for artists-in-residence.

- Be flexible with facility usage: As Pousette (2011) outlines, there are no generic or universal facility usages for studio processes (p. 58). Think flexibly about the overlap between supporting studio practices and community engagement. Be transparent about what facilities and supports the residency can provide. Overpromoting what materials and resources artists-in-residence will have access to reflects negatively on the residency, and can damage their reputation in the community and beyond.

- Make use of outdoor spaces. Maintain an outdoor area that is inviting and useful. Whether it be a patch of grass or an open field or a forested area, create walking paths and signage, install benches, and invite residency-goers to both enjoy and help maintain the outdoor space. The Ross Creek Centre for the Arts has torchlight walks, 'forest school' spaces, and day camps that make full use of the surrounding environment, for example.

Educational Attitudes

Educational attitudes involve the relationality inherent to community art education, public pedagogy, and artist residencies as social environments. Smith, Tuck and Yang 2019) remind us of the importance of asking questions about educational relationships: "much of what we are looking at, what we are studying when we are doing educational research, is engaging in and simultaneously seeking to know more about relationships and relationality" (p. 9). As such, educational attitudes encompass efforts to relate, and a willingness to learn.

- Encourage informal learning relationships. Mentorship, peer support, apprenticeships, and other skill sharing relationships can connect artists with people in town, enhancing community connections and involving resident skillsets, evidenced in my conversation with Leslie in Dawson City.

- Plan educational activities for all age groups during festivals, workshops, and events. The transformational potential of exposing children to practicing artists is part of rural wellbeing and resilience. *In my conversation with Ian (Ross Creek Centre for the Arts) he was talking about the effect that he sees sometimes on a kid's face when they have musicians or playwrights come from out of town and host a series of workshops with the kids. These kids might go to a school where there are only 30 others. Maybe they've*

never met a professional artist before. He said that you can always see the moment of realization, like oh, like this is what artists look like, and they came all the way to where I live, to my neighbourhood to do it. Maybe the kid will start to wonder if and how they could make art, too.

- Endorse enthusiasm. Learning happens as both independent pursuits, through studio experimentation, researching, reading, and material problem solving. It also happens through social interactions during events, programs, at galleries, or in and around town. Create options for artists to seek out both independent and social learning during their stay.

- Welcome participation from diverse communities by inviting international artists. Make sure to provide information and materials on site that are suitable for English Second Language (ESL) learners. Employing external curators or hosting thematic residencies are also ways of unlocking the pedagogical potentials of difference, newness, and diversity.

Data Applications

In concert, these infrastructural, environmental, and attitudinal strategies can be mobilized as working parts, forming dynamic networks that support of the vitality of rural artist residencies. If toggled and tested across residency initiatives, the results could spark new projects and connections between communities that, despite differing circumstances, can learn from each other. As both platforms for social change and steppingstones in artists' careers, these propositions underscore residencies as emergent spaces of creative experimentation, skill sharing, and rural sustainability.

Residency coordinators are encouraged to make effective use of related studies on rural arts and education. This includes research from the varied perspectives of community building, culture mapping, cultural facilities, arts tourism, sustainability, and Indigenous advocacy of land, as well as urban/rural studies. They are encouraged to implement regular feedback strategies such as program evaluation surveys or exit interviews. As this thesis has demonstrated, collecting anecdotal information (in this case interviews and field notes in the form of qualitative data) can inform planning and contribute to designing formal analysis processes that can be applied to grant applications, policy changes, and stakeholder agreements. As Donovan (2017) points out, qualitative and empirical data can provide organizers with opportunities to understand equity and access as well as to evaluate how well arts ecosystems are working.

Increasingly, the arts are being identified as a powerful strategy for revitalizing rural communities:

> An increase in arts activity can draw new residents and businesses, boost civic participation, develop new social gathering places, and build bridges across ethnic and class divides—all of which strengthens communities. The arts can profoundly affect the ability of a town not only to survive over time but to thrive. (Cuesta, Carlo and Associates, 2005, p. 70)

Applying these good practices can build community, highlight community-wide issues, and generate a sense of place: all important steps towards rural revitalization or sustenance.

Public pedagogy often occurs in the subtle, nuanced moments of information sharing, exposure, and activation of public space. Inviting publics (comprised of artists, teachers, tourists, industry workers, and anyone else with whom a place is shared) to develop creative potential, participate, learn, self-express, and immerse within the community, as is possible through a rural artist residency, can fulfill the potential of public pedagogy. That is, allowing people to learn from and with each other and by connecting place to practice can result in an "indefinite

circulation of discourses, promotion of sociability between strangers, critical reflection of social structures, and a contribution to the public sphere" (Ripatti-Torniainen, 2018, p. 1019).

Reflections on Rigour

Rigour in qualitative research can be understood as the application of appropriate methods to meet the objectives of the study, followed by an explicit and detailed description of those methods (Phillips & de Wet, 2017). The concept of *trustworthiness* helps to assess qualitative rigour (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Nowel et al., 2017). Shenton (2004) summarizes trustworthiness within a framework of four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. With these criteria as my guide, I can verify the rigour of my research study.

Using well established research methods assists in the confirmation of credibility. Both case studies and autoethnographic research are time-honored methods that apply sample group strategies as a multiple case study approach using purposeful sampling (Stake, 2006), theory testing (Yin, 2014), and the use of inductive/deductive coding (Creswell, 2016). Other methods include developing a familiarity with the culture of participating individuals and organizations, achieved through my own experiences as an artist in residence.

Triangulation is also an important feature of trustworthiness. In this study, data was collected through organization websites, individual interviews with a range of participants to offer multiple viewpoints, publicly available documents, and field notes which led to rich descriptions in written and visual journals. These datapoints were pooled and analyzed using triangulation. For example, at Island Mountain Arts in Wells, I heard different accounts as to why the famed ArtsWells Festival had recently ceased. By speaking with community members, artists, and the residency coordinator about the issue, I could glean that although the reason for

the festival's closure remains contested, the underlying narrative was that the festival's success overwhelmed the infrastructure, which could not support an event of that scale. The process of triangulating these qualitative data points exposed a real concern for rural artist residencies, and how they operate as public spaces, prompting the question: What infrastructural and attitudinal practices need to be exercised? In this case, program evaluation, and an adaptation to the changing needs of the community.

Another feature of rigour is the encouragement of candid responses from participants, who were in this case given the option to refuse participation or remain anonymous, and through member checks were able to withdraw their participation and edit their transcripts. One further adjustment to the credibility of my findings would have been to send the residency coordinators the case studies for review, making space for their feedback on the portrayal of the institutions and programs that they represent[13]. Credibility also relies on comprehensive examinations of previous research findings, which was limited given the scope of this study and a general lack of research into rural art education.

Transferability involves contextualized descriptions of field work sites, descriptions of the phenomenon under study (public pedagogy, community art education, pedagogical impact), applying the same methods to different sites, all of which was prioritized in this thesis. Dependability ensures the research design is logical, detailed, and traceable. The literature review, which comes as a result of an early audit trail, changed significantly throughout the writing process, a reflection of the evolution of the theoretical framework. Although this demonstrates a progression in my familiarization with the subject and deeper appreciation of its implications, more could be done to ensure that "the manner in which concepts inherent to the

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[13] Expanding upon the scope and timeline of this project would allow for this kind of continued communication.

research question give rise to the work to follow" (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). Namely, adjusting the scope of this thesis by focusing on one phenomenon (such as artist talks) or one rural region rather than the broad topic of how rural Canadian residencies serve as spaces of public pedagogy.

Limitations

The aims of this study were to 1) identify mid-sized rural Canadian artist residencies and programs for case studies, 2) situate these residencies as places of public pedagogy, attentive to contextualized place identity and social learning opportunities, and 3) to illuminate and disseminate infrastructural, environmental, and attitudinal strategies through autoethnographic methods, followed by a discussion on how these findings are understood within the field of art education. How the case study and autoethnographic methods met those objectives were limited by certain aspects of the research design. Namely, sample bias/size, the elusive language around 'public pedagogy', 'the arts', and 'community', and the exclusivity of 'good practices'.

Selection bias and sample size uses individual accounts to speak to the broader population (Creswell, 2016). The subjective experiences of learning within or adjacent to the residency were explored from the first-hand perspectives of six interviewees who were either residency facilitators, artists, or community members. Their experiences cannot be taken to represent all possible experiences of what it is like to be in relation to an artist residency. In other words, their perspectives cannot be aggregated to make sweeping claims about the overall impact of the arts (Guetzkow, 2002) This is anticipated partially due to the challenge of defining terms such as 'public pedagogy', 'the arts', and 'community'. As discussed, how these terms are used varies considerably from one group to another. The meanings, values and uses of these terms are bound to the context (cultural, geographical) in which they are situated.

Additionally, the results of this study are influenced by my own language choices, assumptions, and interests. As Maurice Punch (1994) noted, "field research is dependent on one person's perception of the field situation at a given point in time" (p. 84). Presenting the findings as case studies and autoethnography implies that as a researcher, my observations and resulting writerly voice influences the overall depiction of the situations at each residency. It is probable that despite member checking, another researcher would describe their findings in quite another way.

One limitation typical for arts impact studies is the disregard for the potential negative impacts of the arts (Guetzkow, p. 19). It is possible that participants withheld critical comments about the communities in which they live and work to avoid alienation or tension with fellow community members. If this is the case, the study does not encapsulate the entire experience of living and learning adjacent to an artist residency, as I have sought to explore what interviewees deemed to be pedagogic practices, and what I was able to witness in my field observations. As a case study, this thesis profiled the specific qualities and characteristics of the three residencies to find out more about learning exchanges between visiting artists and local residents. More extensive research with a broader scope is needed to determine common themes or trends in rural community art education in Canada. Furthermore, it would be valuable to conduct research that questions how the arts act as a harbinger for gentrification, by researching prominent or successful arts communities in rural areas.

Educational Significance

This study addresses a gap in literature on rural artist residencies by contributing an embodied, relational, and first-hand account of experiences in rural art education:

> Most research in the field of artist residencies addresses the impact of residency programmes and artistic mobility on artistic careers. However, research on artist-

community interaction, especially in the context of 'engaged' rural artist residencies, the contribution, value and potential of these institutions, is narrow and rare.

Additionally, no research is being done to analyze the value and contributions of these residencies from the perspectives of community members. (Gatelytė, p. 4).

The significance of this research in the field of art education is threefold, as a study that satisfies a need, contributes information that could lead to rural empowerment and sustainability, and is applicable for art education delivery both within and outside of classroom curricula.

Responding to the Research Questions

This study asked *how* rural artist residencies operate as places of public pedagogy. Theory and a literature review explicated the *why*, that is, the need for more research that emphasizes cultural vitality and art education as essential to rural sustainability or development. Conversational interviews expanded on this question by asking participants to share their perspectives on living rurally and sharing their take on the pedagogical value of the artist residency in their town. Travelling to three sites provided me with foundations to form relational, embodied, and first-hand insights on the trajectorial possibilities in this question. The case studies and autoethnographic results were discussed as exemplary of good educational infrastructures, environments, and attitudes. Although limited to three places, this study provides a framework for future analysis on the pedagogical potential of community arts spaces.

In essence, the research questions lead me to understand that travelling artists can get more out of the residency experience by engaging with and in the community and learning as much as possible about what makes that place unique. In turn, residents can benefit from relationships with the artists that are built on mutual skill sharing. They, alongside policy makers, arts advocates, and stakeholders, can also see the artist residency as a place of social, economic, and cultural growth. Residency coordinators can consider their work as important to

the arts ecosystem of that region and can use the framework of public pedagogy to assist in grant application, program development, and visioning.

Why This Research is Important to Education

This study sought to privilege the distinctiveness of rural places and explicitly recognize the arts as a platform for learning. This has benefits for individuals, for example, when a metalsmith artist in a remote community learns about jewelry practices from another country by interacting with international artists-in-residence, they expand their technical and conceptual horizons. Similar reflections were made across the country, reflected in conversation with Leslie, an artist and resident of Dawson City; Ian, an artist and program director in Nova Scotia; and Dan, an artist and program director in the Yukon.

On a community level, case study research that matches theory with documented practice-based activities and innovations can inspire new initiatives that rethink how the locale is portrayed to both visitors and residents. On a regional level, this research could be used to identify gaps in educational and artistic infrastructure, catalysing policy changes and adaptations. This is another trajectory that warrants further inquiry with a more expansive, detailed study of rural residencies in Canada. In this way, "stakeholders involved in rural arts education can learn how to advocate for arts-supportive policies using language and evidence that makes sense to policymakers" (Kukkonen, 2021, p. 162). If coupled with other data, such as economic or statistical analyses, this research could be used to project future arts or community planning based on informed, forward-focused decisions. Community art education can also be read to know more about the rural creative class, and how attracting people from urban areas into rural communities can change arts economies and culture-sharing relationships.

As discussed by Mayes (2010), creative decision making, problem solving, critical analysis, presentation of alternative viewpoints, collaboration, and networking are inherent to artistic processes, and applicable when building community growth strategies. Although I did not survey schools, as this is beyond the study, I can speculate, based on my experiential knowledge as an artist-teacher that when schools do partner with artist residencies, art education becomes more available and has a greater impact on students in rural regions. Learning, both inside and outside of the classroom can inform curriculum content. O'Malley et. al (2020) speak to this when calling for critically engaged and essential work *outside* of institutional spaces that also allow public pedagogies to shape the work done *inside* of them.

Rural artist residencies know the invaluable role they play in their communities and beyond. Their distinct contributions to the accessibility of the arts must be widely recognized so that funding bodies can assign rural-related grants, more people can seek out their programs, and more policies can be set in place to support rural locales. Artist residencies themselves can play a major part in raising awareness through socially engaged programming and arts advocacy. Researchers, artists, and educators alike can take part by sharing stories that reflect rural arts successes.

CHAPTER 6

Moving Forward

First and foremost, my hope is that this study will generate conversation on rural arts education and this talk will lead to advocacy and action. This study celebrates informal art education as vibrant and vital in rural regions across Canada/Turtle Island. The possibilities for future research and potential applications are plentiful. My own practices as an artist/research/teacher have been reshaped by this experience. These three roles used to seem separate, but through this relational and collaborative meaning making project, they have melded into one multifaceted way of being where collective imagining and research as creation can transpire.

I would like to return the results of this study to the public, and I have a few ideas as to how. I could pursue questions about the educational infrastructures, environments, and attitudes in a more robust study, leading to a handbook on educational programs at rural artist residencies. This handbook would offer concrete examples of innovative strategies that support arts policy and advocacy. Alternatively, applying arts-based knowledge translation, I could curate a touring exhibition that returns to the residency sites, and organizes local and national artworks that speak to the themes addressed here. Arts-based knowledge translation has the potential to communicate research findings with the goal of catalyzing dialogue, awareness, engagement, and advocacy as a foundation for social change on important social issues (Kukkonen & Cooper, 2019).

This study could also be revisited as a PhD, which sets the stage for a broader scope and therefore more in-depth, actionable findings. Pursuing further graduate level research would connect me with other scholars, artists, and arts workers who are breathing life into rural cultural

and education studies and shedding light on pressing social issues. Future research would likely take up different methodologies, diversifying the findings and ensuring rigorous analysis.

In Closing

As this study comes to a close, I find myself back at my desk in Montreal. The late autumn trees are nearly leafless, and the air is becoming crisp. The sounds of the city are changing outside my window, neighbours are raking leaves in preparation for imminent snowfall. The cycle of seasons is ending, and we are bracing ourselves for the long stillness of winter. So too does this project sit on the precipice of change – a simultaneous completion and beginning. As I tie up loose ends, I also dream of the places that this data can go – the residual buzz of questions both new and old hover between each line.

This work began during the long months of remote pandemic-era studies. I remember feeling the impossibility of travelling to do in-person research, in places I had never been and with people I had never met. Since then, both my physical surroundings and my beliefs have unfolded like a map, stretching across territories, and laid bare. Autoethnographic studies are personal by nature, helping the researcher make sense of their individual experiences. They are also political and instigative, reflecting on issues often overlooked. Now, when I look back on this process, I see opportunities for change, evidence of growth, and the satisfaction of opening oneself to the kinds of qualitative questioning that require collective response. Learning, be it formal or informal, happens through discomfort, risk, and being open to the unfamiliar.

The question of how artist residencies serve as places of public pedagogy holds fast, requiring more research that prioritizes relationality, care, differences of opinion, and which reflects the creative and resilient nature of rural communities. This will take the efforts of many different people who are willing to acknowledge that the land plays a fundamental role in our

understanding and experience of place, which now more than ever is crying for care. It will also require a pivotal appreciation for the arts and education as central to personal and collective wellbeing. Let this testimony be one small step in the direction of transformative change.

Now that I am back in Montreal, the map I had stretched coast-to-coast-to-coast neatly folded up, I can begin to attune to the buzz … a growing and insatiable hum of curiosity for the questions that have multiplied, and those who might be willing to ask them with me.

Figure 27. *Woodshed Mural, Artist Unknown*. Mea Bissett (2022)

Note: A mural painted on a woodshed in Wells, BC, which depicts under/above ground cycles of life and growth.

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Appendix

Table 2

Interviewees

Name	Location	Role
Ian	Canning/Sipeknekatik, Nova Scotia	Program Director at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts
Elyssia	Island Mountain Arts Wells/Dënéndeh, British Columbia	Executive Director at Island Mountain Arts
Jules and Gord	Sunset Theatre Wells/Dënéndeh, British Columbia	Jules: Director of Presentations at the Sunset Theatre Gord: Actor, Singer, Instrumentalist
Rachael	Online Correspondence	Artist
Leslie	Fory Mile Gold, Dawson/Trondëk Hwëchin, Yukon	Jeweler, Artist
Dan	Online Correspondence	Producer of the Dawson City Film Festival, Residency Coordinator

Table 3

Code Names and Code Groups

Code Name	Code Group
Adult learning opportunity	Learning Experience
All ages learning opportunity	
Youth learning opportunity	
Social learning experience	
Educational programming	
Challenge of location/landscape	
Community-oriented program development	Artist Residency Conditions
COVID impact on programming	
Considering accessibility	
Considering community	
Educational programming	
Negative impact of residency	
Positive impact of residency	
Considering exclusivity	
Residency vs. retreat	
Residency challenges/Room for growth	
Residency successes	
Role of residency in larger community context	
Improved quality of life through art education	
Landscape/location conducive to work	
Reference to an artist/artmaking technique	Art Making Process
Residency vs. retreat	
Appropriate or successful social relations	Community Context
Challenge in artist-resident relations	
Community-oriented program development	
Considering accessibility	
Considering community	
International connection	
Intersection of industries	
Role of residency in larger community context	
Considering the rural/urban divide	
Benefits of location/landscape	

UNIVERSITÉ Concordia UNIVERSITY

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant: Meaghan Bissett

Department: Faculty of Arts\Art Education

Agency: N/A

Title of Project: Learning Through Reciprocal Exchange: The Pedagogical Impacts of Rural Canadian Artist Residencies

Certification Number: 30016375

 Valid From: March 25, 2022   To: March 24, 2023

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Richard DeMont

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Dr. Richard DeMont, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee