



How to teach hard topics and engage in critical issues – through arts-based practices



Jill Baird, Curator
Educator & Public
Programs Museum of
Anthropology, UBC



Naomi Sawada,
Manager Public
Programs, Morris and
Helen Belkin Art
Gallery, UBC



Francine Cunningham
Artist, writer,
educator, graduate
student UBC



Listening to the voices / making space for Indigenous experiences & perspectives

1) A drawing from Speaking to Memory comment book 2) Beau Dick holding a brick from St. Michaels



Speaking to Memory: Images & Voices from St. Michael's Indian Residential School

Museum of
Anthropology, UBC
&

Witnesses: Art &
Canada's Indian
Residential School

Morris & Helen Belkin Art
Gallery, UBC



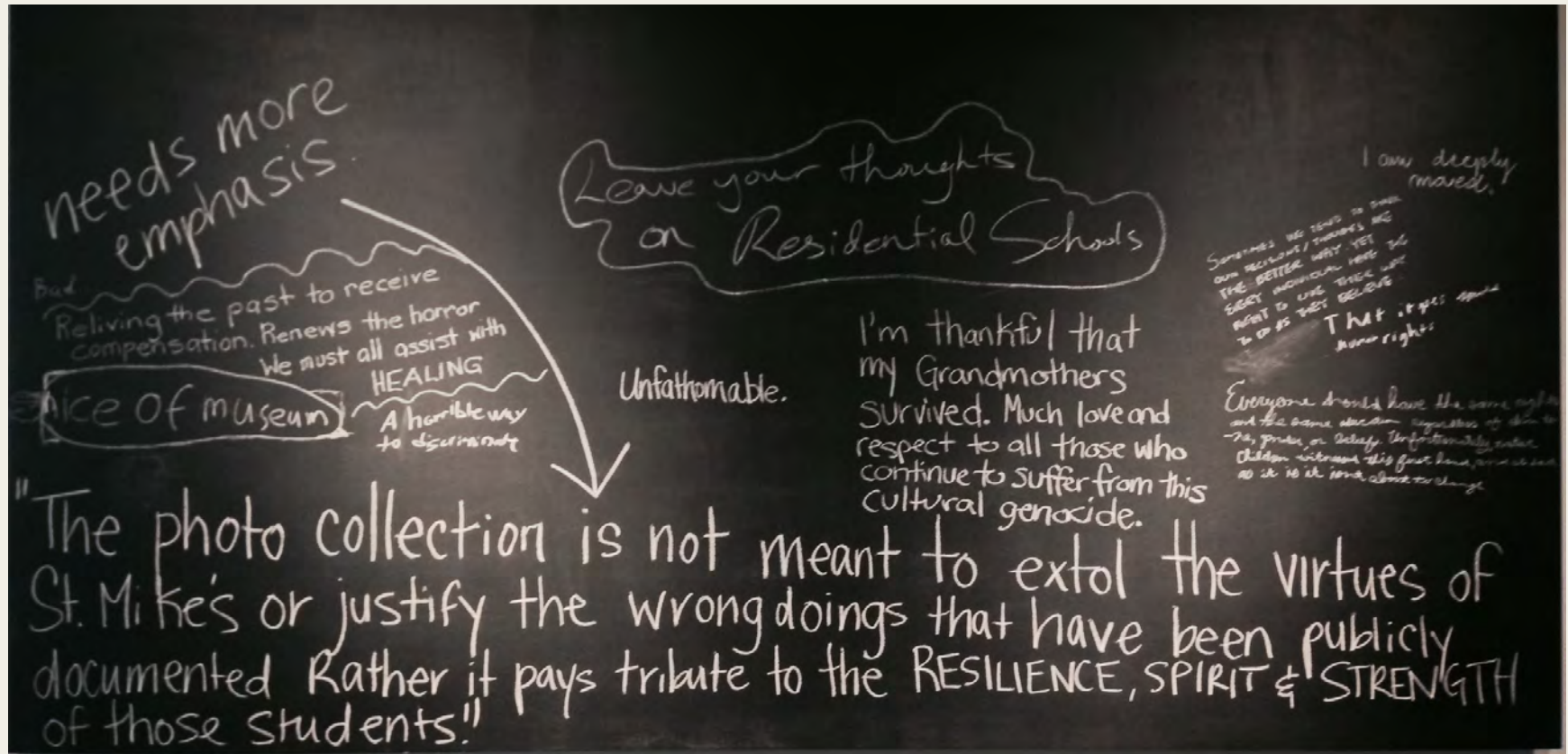
WITNESSES:

Art and Canada's Indian Residential Schools

September 6-December 1, 2013

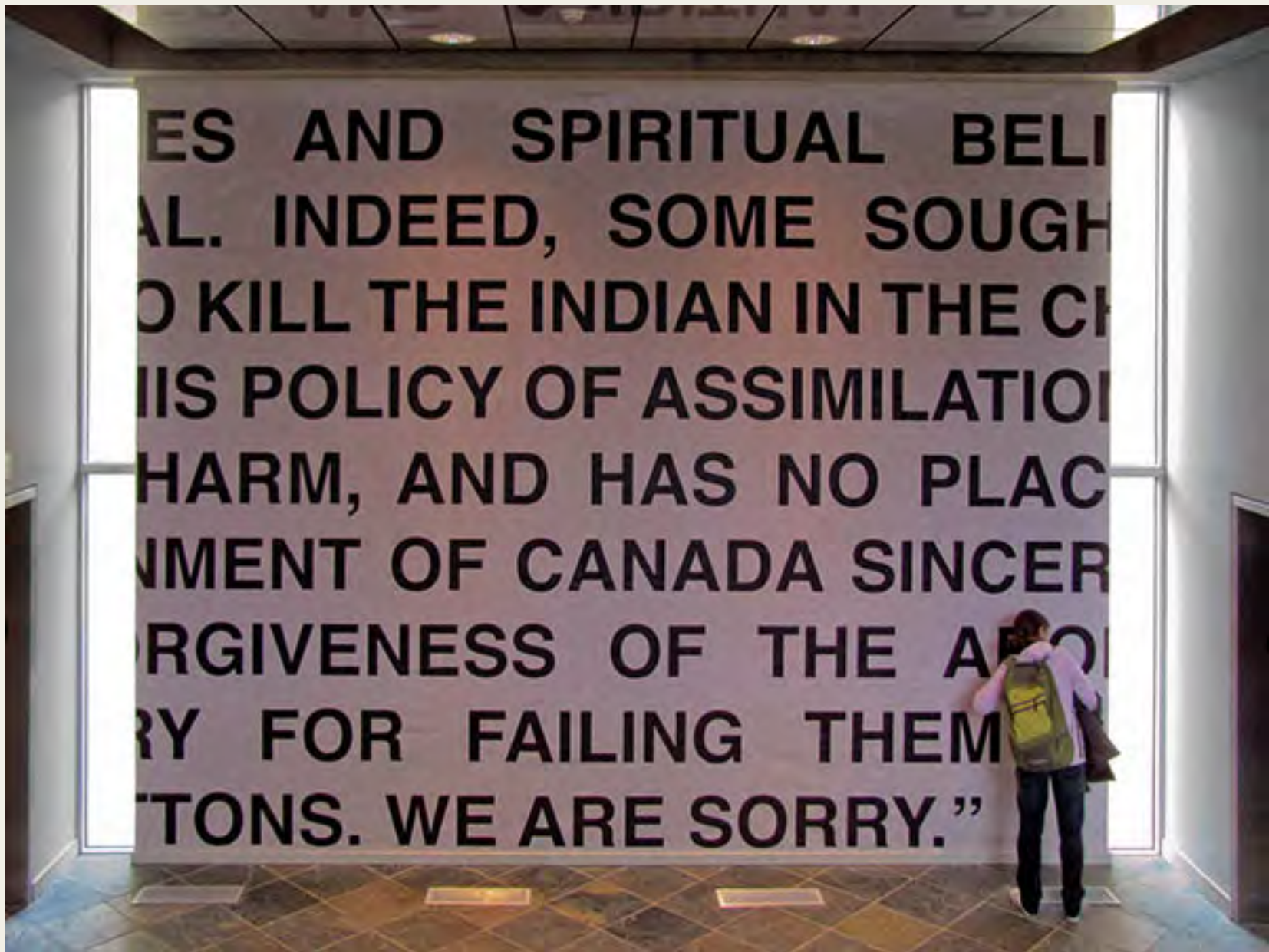
How do we engage in critical issues?

- Bring in relevant perspectives/voices
- Look for non-traditional means of engagement
- Focus on educators





Joane Cardinal-Shubert, *The Lesson*, 1989. Mixed media installation. Courtesy of the Cardinal-Shubert Family. Photo: Micheal Barrick.



Cathy Busby, *WE ARE SORRY* 2013. Vinyl billboard and artist book (detail).
Photo: courtesy of the artist.



1996

The last Residential School in Canada closed its doors - Gordon Indian Residential, Saskatchewan

I want to get rid of the Indian problem... Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department.

Duncan Campbell Scott



NATIVE YOUTH PROGRAM





Speaking to Memory

IMAGES AND VOICES FROM
St. Michael's Indian Residential School

The residential school system was implemented in 1879 by the Canadian Government to eliminate the "Indian problem." The goal was to absorb the Aboriginal population into the general Canadian identity, and to impose the Christian religion, English or French as the language, and the abandonment of family traditions. St. Michael's Indian Residential School in Alert Bay (1929-1974) was one of 140 residential schools that operated in Canada.

This exhibit was developed with the U'mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay, which is situated about 100 metres from the now vacant and condemned St. Michael's Indian Residential School building. The exhibit you see here at MOA will also be presented in Alert Bay on the exterior of the residential school and in the Cultural Centre.

The exhibit brings together photographs from 1940-1944 taken by a St. Michael's student and her classmates. The individuals in the photographs have been identified, where possible, to acknowledge their identity and community. The photographs of the interior of the school were taken 2012-2013, showing where those children had lived their young lives.

The quotations layered on the building photos are from a variety of sources that express the Canadian government's rationalization for the need for Indian residential schools, together with excerpts from the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recognizing the impact of those schools. The personal statements are from former students of St. Michael's, recalling their experiences at the school.

The exhibit is intended to make a strong statement, and may be an emotional experience for some, particularly those who have felt the impact of residential schools on their lives.

Speaking to Memory: Images and Voices from St. Michael's Residential School.

“I basically learned nothing in school about residential school, except for the fact that there was Indian Residential School and that children were taken away and it was run by the government and churches. That’s basically it.”

Student



“I’m scared to have kids. I don’t want to say that I have bad parents because I don’t, but a lot of abuse has been passed down since my family was in Residential School and I am scared to death I will pass on that abuse. “

Journal reflection



“There was a speaker that came to UBC (Peter Morin) and he did a ceremony for those that passed away at residential school and he talked about how he has to learn about his traditions, ceremonies and songs from tape recordings because there are no elders to teach him anymore. I could totally relate to that.”





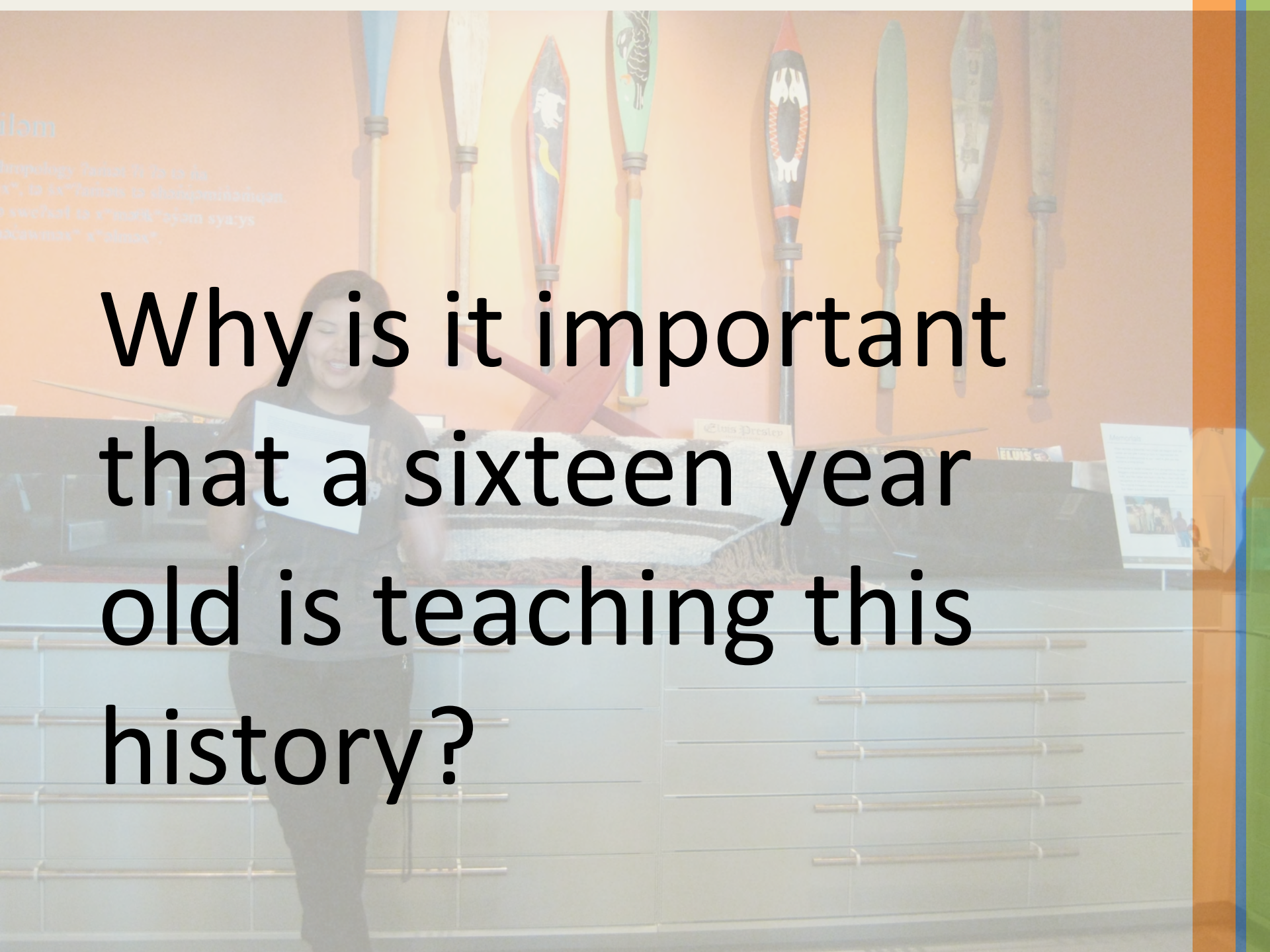
Indigenous Youth as Interpreters



“Wait, if I wasn’t able to speak my language, then I wouldn’t think like this anymore and I wouldn’t be my nation anymore. If I did my ceremonies in English they wouldn’t mean anything because it wouldn’t be the same. Whoa, so these kids, they lost all of that?”



“During this process I was able to talk more freely at home. This experience in the program has just really changed my view about how close the issue of residential schools actually affects my family. All the dysfunctions in my family, I thought they were there just because, but now I realize they are connected to residential school and are intergenerational effects.”



Why is it important
that a sixteen year
old is teaching this
history?

Our shared history

The students showed us that we all have a role to play in learning and teaching this history.

The process made us all think about social justice in Canada

This research is supported by

- Citizens of Tomorrow, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- Museums Assistance Program, Heritage Canada
- TD Canada
- Aboriginal Career Community Employment Services Society (ACCESS)
- The programs were supported by
 - MOA
 - Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery
 - First Nations House of Learning
 - Faculty of Education
 - Indian Residential School Survivor Society



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada