

***Strangers no more* - Timothy Pynch, Professor Emeritus, University of Calgary, Canada**

Subversive and alternative traditions can maintain an underground existence (this appears to be the case with some aboriginal traditions), dissenting traditions can exist at the margins of a culture for a very long time, and . . . it is always possible to retrieve a fragment from the past that beams critical light on the dark surfaces of the present.

Michael Welton (1995), historian of liberatory adult education

There is an official Truth and Reconciliation Commission report (TRC) about Canada's Indigenous peoples. It encourages stories from all perspectives. I wish to contribute one story.

If we cannot tell a story about what happened to us, nothing happened to us.

James Carse (1986), historian of religion.

Being unwilling to accept the notion that nothing happened to me during a long life, I feel obliged to become a storyteller.

This story connects with similar stories told at other times, in other places. I am an historian of ideas by training. For me, the continuing TRC journey is a liberatory adult education idea guided by participatory action research (PAR). TRC jogs our memory. This can be painful. It can be worthwhile if we keep listening along the way. What do we hear? I focus on how we learn together in knowledge-making processes. I am an adult educator by nature. These are my strengths. I offer them in support of the TRC journey. My strengths are emerging from an academic

life searching for liberatory action-based ideas and from real-life experiences working with Indigenous peoples at home and abroad.

1. I start with my own spiritual connections with Indigenous peoples. These connections emerged slowly after my Treaty rights research job with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians commencing in the early 1970s. At other times, I was employed by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research. These organizations were exploring ‘*some aboriginal traditions*’ blending official documents with peoples’ storytelling memory of olden times.
2. Second, I relate these work experiences to my career as an academic adult educator committed to social justice activities. I drew strength from liberatory aspects of adult education which grew on the ‘*margins*’ of mainstream educational practice. I am combining these ideas with Indigenous historical and practical issues known to me.
3. Third, I connect this liberatory tradition to similar expressions of freedom in the English radical tradition emerging in the seventeenth century. This liberatory tradition tells of the resistance, or an insurgency, of people struggling to maintain individual and collective dignity. Liberatory adult educators are insurgents. PAR is one outcome of our insurgency and represents our intellectual strength.
4. Fourth, I suggest extending our insurgent understanding to other marginal peoples; to beam ‘*critical light on the dark surfaces of the present.*’
5. Indigenous wisdom calling us to action ends my story.

Indigenous influences

The Ganma metaphor of the Yolngu of Arnhemland in the Northern Territory of Australia describes a transformation when a river of water from the sea (Western knowledge) and a river of water from the land (Aboriginal knowledge) engulf each other upon flowing into a common lagoon and becoming one rich body of water. In coming together, the streams of water mix across the interface of the two currents, creating foam at the surface so that the process of Ganma is marked by lines of foam. A new kind of knowledge is created within the foam (Marika, Ngurruwutthun & White, 1992). Foaming is never ending and occurs here and there as different waters come to share their wisdom. The water mark within this paragraph appears throughout my story where Ganma processes appear. Yolngu gave me permission to use this image in this fashion.

Yolngu adopted me into the shark clan in 1989. My Aboriginal name is Gutkutpuy - shark's fin. My wife's Aboriginal name is Warrarrinya - crocodile. Our family lives in the town of Yirrkala in Arnhemland. Here, I found the courage to celebrate my connections with forms of knowledge and understandings like my own. Being submerged in a totally different culture while reflecting on life's meaning places us in touch with these other sources of wisdom, and we become more deeply in touch with ourselves along the way. I write this to remind myself that my own brief visit to Yirrkala—the source of Ganma and my Aboriginal family's home—remains a meaningful experience for me as I travel my life's journey.

I draw upon my lifelong search for the energies confronting the forces of fear that, at times, engulf all peoples. My inquiry is a spiritual journey. For me, spirituality is my relationship with similar forms of energy past, present, and future acting together to transform our realities. It is practical and action oriented. It practices interconnectedness. Ganma is a metaphor for my spirituality. I first heard about Ganma at the World Congress on PAR held at the University of Calgary in 1989, attended by

multi-national and multi-ethnic peoples. We titled it 'Participatory research: A celebration of peoples' knowledge.'

I can readily relate to the fear of being different in society. I've lived and travelled widely in Africa and Asia. My family came to Canada as immigrants. In 1909, progressive leaders within the Methodist Mission in Canada wrote a book about the "great national dangers" accompanying immigrants, including my own family:

For there is a danger and it is national! Either we must educate and elevate the incoming multitudes, or they will drag us and our children down to a lower level. We must see to it that the civilization and ideals of Southeastern Europe are not transplanted to and perpetuated on our virgin soil (Woodsworth, 1909, 4).

My parents came from Southeastern Europe as children in 1897 and were included in that book as "strangers within our gates". Indigenous peoples were called strangers in the same book. As I write these words in 2018, Haitian refugees are our new strangers. Strangers can become allies when we share our stories, blending them along the way until - ***strangers no more***. This is not a surrendering. It is a giving of ourselves so we can take from others. This is best done by gathering together patiently in one place. Many cultures met at the World Congress in Calgary in 1989 sharing knowledge-making traditions while maintaining individual integrity. We gathered to celebrate people's knowledge (*la sagesse populaire*) through PAR.

We gathered in Calgary to support each others' struggle for freedom, a quest at the heart of liberatory adult education (Lindeman, 1926). That quest is continuous. Reflecting on the dialectic of freedom, Maxine Green (1988) suggests "that freedom shows itself or comes into being when individuals come together in a particular way, when they are authentically present to one another (without masks, pretenses, badges of office), when they have a project they can mutually pursue" (16). ***Strangers no more***.

Reflection. While I was captured by the radically democratic PAR movement in 1989, global trends were moving elsewhere. With the fall of the Berlin Wall symbolizing the collapse of Soviet communism that same year, Western voices celebrated the ‘end of History’ and the victory of manic capitalism. I was

Fear is a normal part of life. It also can be intentionally crafted to control us by various powerful interests. My purpose is to counter the merchants of fear by identifying forces of resistance to their trade that have been appearing now and then throughout history. This resistance resembles an insurgency based on listening, learning and practising processes of disciplined hope. We grow stronger along the way.

Reflection. The word ‘hope’ appears often in current political discourse. I have found Jonathan Lear’s (2006) *Radical Hope* most helpful for my purpose. Lear was inspired by the example of Crow Chief Plenty Coups. As leader of his tribe, Plenty Coups found the courage and hope within himself and his tradition, to face confinement for his people

Hope is not about the short-term gain of five-year plans or political party platforms. Hope is about long-term sustainable human strengthening. If we think in short periods we cannot be hopeful of the future. Yet long term thinking proved disastrous in the severely planned economies of twentieth century dictatorships. Political scientist James Scott (1998) suggests four rules of thumb to avoid similar disasters; take small steps, favour reversibility, plan on surprises, and plan on human inventiveness (345). Historian Timothy Snyder (2017) outlines twenty lessons to guide contemporary efforts to avoid repeating the political evils of the twentieth century. The oral historian Studs Terkel (2003) devoted his lengthy activist life in Chicago to the power of hope to guide ailing U.S. democracy out of deepening inequality resulting from the fear generated by 911. For him: “hope appears to be an American attribute that has

vanished for many, no matter what their class or condition in life. The official word has never been more arrogantly imposed. Passivity, in the face of such a bold, unabashed show of power from above, appears to be the order of the day. But it ain't necessarily so" (xv). His stories tell of a vast underground of social activists - allies in our liberatory quest. He told the stories of the so-called 'deplorables.'

Liberatory adult education is about facilitating social change democratically by teaching critical dialogue skills in combination with purposeful practical action in communities. I regard liberatory adult education as an infinite game in the sense of a boundless vision of life as play and possibility. Infinite games cannot be owned and are beyond the grasp of controlling forces. Historian James Carse (1986) says "that where the finite player plays to be *powerful* the infinite player plays *with strength*". We all have strength. All human beings are competent to contribute to the affairs of society, especially within the communities where we live.

'Liberatory' ideas counter the controlling impulses of church and state, and all inequitable forces inhibiting individual agency. Leroy Littlebear, Blackfoot elder and professor at the University of Lethbridge, spoke about his freedom during the 1989 PAR conference:

What we mean by spirituality is not necessarily anything to do with church or beliefs and so on, as much as it has to do with the whole notion of people togetherness. Spirituality is a holistic view. A holistic view implies respect for nature very like indigenous people's belief about everything being related. We can look at PAR as a spiritual movement if we go by our definition of togetherness. Environmental movements can be seen as true respect for nature and can be seen as a spiritual movement (Pyrch, 2012, 117).

His words imply liberation 'with' each other rather than the negativity of 'freedom from'. The words we chose reflect our values.

Our Canadian liberatory imperative is reflected in historian George Woodcock's (1992) 'possibility of the impossible' inspired by the Dalai Lama's vision of "a zone of Ahimsa", a place of peace - Tibet. Woodcock imagined places of peace in Canada. His lifelong passion was community based participatory democracy and he drew upon Indigenous traditions of self-government to support his case.

Some of these native peoples, like the members of the Blackfoot and the Iroquois Confederacies, have old and sophisticated political traditions of their own, forms of confederal and participatory democracy in which women often played a leading role commensurate with their contribution to the economy of the community. The native demands for sovereignty to be granted to each aboriginal "nation" or language group to conduct its own affairs and develop its own political structures are equally important, since once they are granted they will offer precedents for small-scale organizations, which among the general Canadian population would devolve power by transferring more control of their own affairs to municipalities and even to small communes through town meetings. In this way, power could be made to spread upward rather than widening downward and the politics of freedom might begin to take shape (204).

He understood ethical renewal flowing from below, from the depths of humanity. To that end, liberatory adult education flows within and between human communities releasing latent wisdom - creating foam.

In the words of one Yolngu educator:

Here are two "Yalu" (nest) and they are very different from each other but have some things in common. Between the Yalu there are rivers, mountains and all kinds of things that stop the miny'tji from seeing each other and they are worried about not seeing each other.

So, they start planning and working out ways so that they can communicate/translate and be partners in sharing, doing, talking and doing things better for both “Yalu” and help them in growing and developing the miny’tji and Yalu from both sides.

To do this they sat down with their miny’tji and made plans to improve their relationship and when they have made their plans they send out messengers to deliver their plans and meet some place in between. They meet in the middle and showed each other their plans, made changes, added more and put their plan so that there was some similarity with their plans.

This was a new start, a start to a new journey; they started doing things together, sharing culture, skill, ideas and languages. This is like Yolngu (yalu) and Balanda (yalu). We Yolngu teachers are getting rom from the Balanda (yalu) and taking them back to the miny’tji we come from. The Balanda is also doing the same from their yalu, but this doesn’t mean that the Yolngu becomes Balanda and the Balanda becomes Yolngu, but they stay in their own djalkiri and yalu. We only can change skills, ideas and ways of doing things but not ourselves, we stay the way we were, are and will be: Yolngu stays Yolngu and Balanda stays Balanda (G. Ngurruwutthun cited in White, 1991, p. 97-8).

This is PAR: Yolngu and Balanda engaging in free and respectful association—participating in authentic ways while listening deeply. They are engaging in research by collecting information, making their plans and revising them to their mutual satisfaction. Then they act by starting on a journey together. Throughout, they are being directed by Ganma—their guiding world view—the model driving their science. My story is

being guided by Ganma—our world view—the spirit of the PAR methodology driving our inquiry.

To locate stories of similar disposition, we look to the **margins** - to the '*margins of a culture.*' Here we find our nearest allies.

Hope at the margins

Welton suggested that liberatory ideas lie at the **margins** of societies where they work to counter the powers of mainstream conformity and control. The concept of **marginality** is a foundational strength of the adult education movement. However, as professors of adult education struggled to make our field of study an academic discipline during the 1960s, they viewed marginality as a weakness. Fifty years later, academic adult educators once again are worrying about legitimacy. Academics Brookfield and Holst (2011) end their comments about the value of social democracy in the field of adult education saying, “we know our ideas are on the **margins** of the formal field, yet we believe that unless the formal field begins to address the pressing demands of growing sectors of society that make these ideas necessary, the field will find itself increasingly on the **margins** of the growing struggles for cooperative and sustainable relations between people and the planet” (221). What will we have to give up? What price legitimacy? Why treat our strength as a weakness? Could it be that, being marginal, we are on the fringes, or perhaps the frontier of our discipline?

I remain at the **margins** within the liberatory tradition. It's not always comfortable here, yet, I am committed to the liberatory possibility. I am in good company.

As radical social action is about challenging social control and changing established power relations, there will be times when radical education becomes difficult and even dangerous. But, for

learners and educators alike, the action can provide learning that exhilarates and liberates (Jesson & Newman, 2004, 264).

Courage is a necessary quality in our troubled times. A British philosopher writes: “The politics of resistance . . . requires constant courage, fortitude and prudence. It accompanies the modern adventure of freedom and possibility, but in its ambivalent and ambiguous **margins**” (Caygill, 2013, 208).

Reflection. I spent most of my professorial years in a Faculty of Continuing Education. Continuing education - university extension - is a practical place in the academic world where we function as a modest community service. As such, continuing education is a **marginal** activity in most universities with little academic influence. For me however, as a full-fledged Faculty member at the University of Calgary I had a ‘legitimate’ place. This enabled my practical liberatory adult education insurgency in a conservative culture. I wonder if anyone noticed?

Liberatory adult education connects most readily with the **margins** of other movements and, together, we are preparing humankind’s ethical renewal. With our commitment to action-oriented change with its political imperative, members of the Action Research extended family might represent the **margins** of our individual disciplines; perhaps a frontier. This might give us an advantage in that - assuming disciplines are free flowing balloons of knowledge and given that the **margins** lie at the edge of balloons - the **margins** are closer to one another than to any other part of the balloons. In our continuing search for inter-relationships in all aspects of being, knowing and becoming, the **margins** are strategically well placed. TRC might look to the **margins** of other societies for mutual support and understanding.

One thing about balloons. If there are too many balloons, their edges - their **margins** - are lost in a blur of colour. Size is an important factor in liberatory practice. Like a functional circle of learners - something like an Indigenous talking circle - of about 24 individuals, it is good to be able to see/feel/touch one another. Similarly, we can experience our deepest self during oral history processes. Svetlana Alexievich (2017), Nobel laureate and oral historian of Russian/Soviet stories of women and girls in war and peace, adds a note of caution.

The more listeners, the more passionless and sterile the account. To make it suit the stereotype. The dreadful would look grand, and the incomprehensible and obscure in a human being would be instantly explained. I would find myself in a desert of the past, filled with nothing but monuments. Great deeds. Proud and impervious . . . meant for a big audience - the way other people tell, and they write in the newspapers - about heroes and great deeds, so as to educate the youth with lofty examples. I was struck each time by this mistrust of what is simple and human, by the wish to replace life with an ideal. Ordinary warmth with a cold luster (88-9).

Our soulful inquiry can be co-opted to serve the state. To hear the **margins**, we must slow down and listen to one another face to face to experience all our intelligences starting with the emotional and the physical. Historian Timothy Snyder (2018) senses the smothering of local voices in the USA as in Alexievich's Russia. He writes:

Where there are local reporters, journalism concerns the events that people see and care about. When local reporters disappear, the news becomes abstract. It becomes a kind of entertainment rather than a report about the familiar (245).

Human scale nurturing in local settings is at risk in cultures dominated by reality show entertainers.

My continuing education colleagues and I (Bratton et al, 2003) wondered if the liberatory tradition might be interpreted as a feminine phenomenon, if not a feminist one. Several questions arise.

There are many feminist perspectives in the adult education literature, but are there perspectives that interpret adult education itself as a feminine concept? If adult education is a feminine concept, could this explain why adult education has been a **marginal** player in educational systems, basically paternalistic cultures celebrating “power over” relationships? “Power with” relationships like interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary inquiry are still rare in the academy. If adult education celebrates femininity including a nurturing interconnectedness, our influence may be hidden behind the dominant culture’s focus on individuality and aggressive competitiveness - flexible capitalism. If this is true, we can understand more fully why adult educators are **marginal** at best and perhaps anathema to an educational establishment wanting to remain in control of the “learning business,” and to the management establishment’s preoccupation with the “bottom line.” Can we create new metaphors to celebrate the fluid, organic and free nature of adult learning? Can these metaphors facilitate workplace learning as a democratic process? How might we combine our liberatory tradition with the burgeoning interest in action research? How can we reconnect with our work and not be overwhelmed by our job (148)?

These questions address the nature of power in society which tends to isolate the infinite nature of work into finite jobs. And yet, “power is finite in amount. Strength cannot be measured, because it is an opening and not a closing act” (Carse 1986). We require strength to continue the never-ending infinite game of liberatory adult education.

Adult educator Michael Newman (1999) reflects on the nature of hegemony, a concept originating in the Italian WW2 resistance.

“Hegemonic control is achieved by making particular ideas so mainstream

and 'common sense' that those in opposition are **marginalised**. A dissenter becomes an outsider expressing nonsensical points of view which can be summarily dismissed by ignoring the arguments and holding the person of the dissenter up to ridicule. Phrases such as: 'You must be joking' or 'surely you cannot believe that' are used to intimidate and silence opposition" (75). Hegemonic control places work into box-like jobs preoccupying economists and politicians who shout about 'jobs, jobs, jobs' seemingly unaware of the richer meaning of work. Jobs come and go but work continues. My work is facilitating liberatory adult education. My job was in the Faculty of Continuing Education. What is the 'work' of TRC?

Mainstream Canadians placed Indigenous peoples at the **margins** where my own family joined them in a book in 1909. This brings us close to others marginal. Sometimes, we embrace the **margins** purposefully. An early initiative of the Canadian Association for Adult Education was formation of the Indian-Eskimo Association in 1957. Adult educators sought to use our influence to support long overdue acknowledgement of Indigenous ways of knowing. Elsewhere, Indigenous Zapatistas from Mexico attended the founding general assembly of the North American Alliance for Popular and Adult Education held near Rocky Mountain House, Alberta in 1994. The assembled host saw us at the **margins** of mainstream education governed by the state, controlled by the academy and managed by the professions. The concept of popular education reflects the liberatory adult education tradition. How do we choose stories for this tradition asks one Australian colleague?

So, whose stories, whose histories, shall we tell and write? In our classrooms, learning circles and workplace meetings, everyone has a story. If these are shared, they will begin to describe a history. Connect this history to other peoples 'histories' and popular education begins, producing and reproducing new and previously **marginalised** knowledge about who we are and how our societies came to be (Boughton, 2004, 131).

Popular education (*educación popular*), perhaps a more international term than liberatory adult education, is rooted in the real interests and struggles of ordinary people. Are you an ordinary person? Popular education is overtly political and critical of the status quo. It is committing us to progressive social and political change in the interests of fairer and more egalitarian societies. Unlike mainstream reformist ideas, popular educators are clear that inequality is an underlying evil undermining our health and well being. What are we doing about it, this evil?

Reflection. Using my own influence earned by contributing usefully to the Seventh World Congress on PAR held in Cartagena, Colombia in 1997, I created a place for Indigenous knowledge-making traditions in the First Sage *Handbook on Action Research* published in 2001. In part, the *Handbook* resulted directly from the Congress proceedings. I co-authored a chapter in the *Handbook* titled ‘The sights and sounds of Indigenous knowledge’. We felt “a strong sense of responsibility to share the wisdom we have been given by Indigenous voices and to place this wisdom within the wider world of action research. We do this by presenting our stories in a way that is inviting and opening for our readers . . . Rather than precision and certainty, we seek openness and translucence where energies are protected, and knowledge is incomplete - and therefore uncontrollable” (Pyrch & Castillo, 2001, 379).

Tradition

Tevya in Fiddler on the Roof would shout (!) out this word. Our strength lies within our traditions. Historian E. H. Carr (1961) suggests “history begins with the handing down of tradition; and tradition means carrying of the habits and lessons of the past into the future.” We focus on the future. Mr. Justice Berger of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry wrote

in 1977: “Native society is not static. The things the native people have said to this Inquiry should not be regarded as a lament for a lost way of life, but as a plea for an opportunity to shape their own future, out of their own past. They are not seeking to entrench the past, but to build on it”. To strengthen their building process, they might learn from and contribute to other liberatory traditions. **Shout it out!**

We are living in interesting times. This is a curse and a blessing. Philosopher of science Stephen Toulmin (1995), a long-time advocate for PAR, captured the enormity of our challenge:

Historically, the last time our ideas about knowledge went through such a deep change was the mid-seventeenth century. Between 1630 and 1690, a set of fundamental issues was framed which, for most of the next 300 years, defined the Received Program of epistemology and human sciences. Contemporary critics of this program refer to it as the ‘Cartesian’ program (p. ix).

The Cartesian program, based on individual knowledge, mechanics, rationality, and objectivity, led to great advances in material improvements while creating, along the way, tension between rational and spiritual views of life. The mechanical world-view produced improvements in technologies and commodities; yet from the beginning in seventeenth century England, forces of resistance to the mechanical world-view were frequent, regular and recorded.

Christopher Hill (1972), a prominent historian of the seventeenth century English revolution, concluded there were two basic themes of radical inquiry in those years. The first theme stresses the value of practical knowledge - plain blunt common sense - as the focus of education and science, and well documented in a rich popular literature in pamphlet form. The second theme is humankind’s individual and collective desire to control our soulful integrity ourselves. As radical ideas faded with the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, official knowledge-making reverted

to scholars and soulful concerns defaulted to the established church. But, radical ideas lived on. They are re-appearing in the guise of liberatory adult education as it began blossoming in the Anglo literature a century ago. Hill's themes reflect contemporary commitment to 'social history from below' while recovering hitherto muted voices. Did the Donald Trump electoral victory capture those voices? Some English radicals took their ideas to the Americas after 1660. Others remained at home quietly preparing fresh expressions of liberation. Recalling Welton's words - '*dissenting traditions can exist at the margins of a culture for a very long time*'.

The eminent historian R. H. Tawney (1914) reflected those liberatory ideas in his lifelong devotion to serving the British working class. Writing about the strength of the Workers' Educational Association just prior to WW1, he declared:

Perhaps our educationalists have not hitherto allowed sufficiently for the surprising fact that there is no inconsiderable number of men and women whose incentive to education is not material success but spiritual energy, and who seek it, not in order that they may become something else, but because they are what they are (78).

How unusual for an academic scholar to understand 'spiritual energy'. Tawney exemplified Welton's *critical light on the dark surfaces of the present*.

Liberatory traditions bring together phenomena like the Gnostic gospels of early Christianity (Pagels, 1979), Elizabethan prophesizings (talking circles) in the 1570s, liberatory ideas of the English revolution in the 1640s and the insurgency leading up to it, and so on. We must think fearlessly (George Orwell) and so cannot be politically orthodox. It takes courage to think fearlessly.

James Scott (2012), a scholar of timeless liberatory traditions world-wide, is reviving our muted voices - another '*critical light on the dark surfaces of the present*':

The job of most history and social science is to summarize, codify, and otherwise 'package' important social movements and major historical events, to make them legible and understandable. Given this objective and the fact that the events they are seeking to illuminate have already happened, it is hardly surprising that historians and social scientists should typically give short shrift to the confusion, flux, and tumultuous contingency experienced by the historical actors, let alone the ordinary by-standers whose actions they are examining (133-4).

Liberatory traditions have room for 'tumultuous contingency'. Svetlana Alexievich (2017) documents this phenomenon in contemporary Russia. I see tumultuous contingency in Madeleine Thien's (2016) Chinese people's resistance during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and state brutality at Tiananmen Square in 1989. Her story tells how '*subversive and alternative traditions can maintain an underground existence*' in one of humankind's ancient civilizations. Thien, Alexievich and Scott are contemporary voices in an anarchist tradition that flourished within radical inquiry in Europe beginning in the 1860s. Anarchist ideas are reappearing in the twentieth-first century globally to counterbalance rising repressive states and practices. The "peculiar fluidity of anarchism" (Woodcock, 1962) keeps it alive and safe always.

While introducing the liberatory ideal in *Anarchism*, Woodcock wrote:

Anarchism presents the appearance, not of a swelling stream flowing on to its sea of destiny, but rather of water percolating through porous ground - here forming for a time a strong underground current, there gathering into a swirling pool, trickling through crevices, disappearing from sight, and then re-emerging

where the cracks in the social structure may offer it a course to run. As a doctrine it changes constantly; as a movement it grows and disintegrates, in constant fluctuation, but it never vanishes (15).

It flourishes at the margins.

Christopher Hill's two themes - the practical and the soulful - are prominent in the contemporary action research extended family and particularly in PAR. The editor of the 3rd edition of *The Sage Handbook of Action Research* believes "action researchers represent the possibility of re-enchanting knowledge creation for a flourishing world" (Bradbury, 2015, 3). Is this 're-enchanting knowledge' the same as Hill's 'soulful integrity'? Is knowledge-making a spiritual experience? Is this experience connecting the balloons at the margins?

It takes courage to know how to know. Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1987) tell us "that at the core of all the troubles we face today is our very ignorance of knowing. It is not knowledge, but the knowledge of knowledge, that compels" (248). Love facilitates this process since "we have only the world that we bring forth with others, and only love helps us bring it forth." Knowledge-making as an act of love places us at the margins of academic inquiry devoted to measurement and mainstream schooling locked in by orderly socialization. Does TRC understand knowledge-making as an act of love? If so, how is it being acted out? What does it look like?

Is knowing how to know a form of resistance to knowledge control? Is this concept part of the insurrection of liberatory educators? Like adult education's focus on learning how to learn, knowing how to know acknowledges individual agency and individual strength/ability while connecting with others in infinite play. We start with ourselves. Self-

awareness enables us to become aware of others. At the same time, Yolngu remind us that “we stay the way we were, are and will be: Yolngu stays Yolngu and Balanda stays Balanda”.

Yolngu taught us another lesson about traditional ways of protecting their integrity by distinguishing between common, deep and abstract knowledge. My Aboriginal grandniece told us about these levels of knowledge during the Calgary conference in 1989. She said she was sharing Yolngu common knowledge but retained deep and abstract knowledge to herself and her people. They were happy to share common knowledge as an opening ‘offer’. When I visited her in Yirrkala and brought my own understandings to share, I was gifted with more traditional knowledge that was beyond the ‘common’. My grandniece told me about the landscape and its meanings as we sat on a beach sharing stories in Arnhemland. *Strangers no more.*

Historian Michael Welton’s (1993) ‘Liberatory moments’ project in adult education is a valuable collection and analysis of global adult education initiatives to strengthen humankind’s resistance to hegemony. Expanding these individual moments from Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, South Africa and USA into a liberatory tradition strengthens ‘moments’ beyond the individual into the collective. And yet, each moment needs to be self-aware and confident enough to reach out to others. These moments are finite games of resistance within the infinite game of insurgency.

The concept of the relational self is the first of three principles characterizing the action research family, according to *Handbook* editor Hilary Bradbury (2015). Her second principle connects our individual systems into wholeness. Her third principle acknowledges the primacy of the practical. These emerging twenty-first century principles connect our

infinite game with the seventeenth century English insurrection's focus on the practical and the soulful (Hill, 1972). Our liberatory inquiry lives on.

All beings are interconnected. All peoples have history. "There are no people without history or who can be understood without it" (Hobsbawm, 1997, 172). It is by facing the truth of both our separate and our common histories that we can best learn to live together, enjoying "tumultuous contingency" civilly. Searching deeply into the tragic sense of community, political scientist Glenn Tinder (1980) suggests "civility is the stance in which one consciously bears, in the sense both of enduring and of supporting, the existence of multitudes of unpredictable and troublesome fellow humans" (199).

Reflection. Are Canadians a nation, or a notion asks philosopher Mark Kingwell in an article in the *Globe & Mail* on 28 April 2018? He suggests 'Canadian' is not an identity; rather it is a relationship. His concept is compatible with my search for connections bringing us together in our liberatory quest.

Indigenous memory connecting past and present is strengthening during TRC and can be found in our individual stories. Cree social worker Wilda Listener, MSW 2004, reflected on spirituality in her unpublished case study of on-reserve family violence. She said I could share her words.

The aboriginal social work perspective has been ingrained into me. My background is in Blackfoot and Cree ways of knowing. My maternal grandmother and mother were my first teachers. I was told the stories of the old ways and the knowing of the spirit of my ancestors. I recall something that I told my mother about the way I was feeling. I told her, "Mom, sometimes I get the feeling that I do

not feel I am from this world; like I am from another time.” Her response calmed me as she spoke, “When you were a baby, something occurred, and your grandmother told me that your spirit was from a long time ago.” This memory has stayed with me, and I write it here to illustrate the power of the story and of its intention. It’s not that on this earth at this time I felt out of place; it is that I could feel across time that things were different and that the ancestor family was still with me. I could feel within me the values and knowledge learned, as if from another time, that were not even told to me, but I knew and listened. The reason I told my mother about how I was feeling was that it seemed those around me did not share my values and behaviours. I felt they forgot what the old ways were like and what it meant to be human (Pyrch, 2015:706).

Ambiguity is ever present as we search within the hidden transcripts (Scott, 1990) in our knowledge-making action research practice. Functioning ambiguously takes great skill. Thus encouraged, we are ready to investigate reality in order to transform it. Indigenous knowledge-making traditions are supporting us along the way - our sustainability assured.

Resistance

Liberatory adult education traditions are related to resistance movements more broadly defined. Philosopher Howard Gaygill’s (2013) analysis of contemporary resistance movements focuses on the Zapatistas who

expressed a profound vision of resistant subjectivity which included the living, the dead and those yet-to-come. What is perhaps even more extraordinary is the way in which this haunted subjectivity was articulated with an emergent global capacity to resist . . . and worked to actualize a global capacity to resist that would in turn energize their local resistance. Their resistance would be for everyone but not for them; fostering the capacity to resist was an

end . . . a gift or act of generosity regardless of what it might bring to the resisters themselves (188).

The Zapatista resistance is an infinite game. Their selflessness strengthens the concepts of insurgency and liberatory adult education. Their values resemble anarchist traditions re-emerging in our times.

Caygill extends his analysis suggesting:

As a political model insurrection also evokes the gesture of defiance, but emphasizing a sustained uprising rather than the instrumental, goal-directed activity of revolution. Insurrection is resistant but not constituent, opening spaces rather than constituting them and mobilizing rhetoric of action, even violent action, to inspire its uprisings. Perhaps it is now a more salient term than revolution, with its promise of completed movement, placing beside this a sense of sustained defiance appealing to a capacity to resist that can disappear, return or re-emerge later and elsewhere, always surging up, resistant in the face of counter-resistance (199).

If revolution resembles a finite game, insurrection is an infinite game. Accepting this distinction, liberatory adult educators constitute an insurgency. Our journey is unending and unbound as we facilitate small scale learning in our various communities where we can influence our lives directly.

It has been said that anarchism is more than a political movement. Writing about history from below as people's knowledge drawing upon Italian WW2 resistance traditions, Eric Hobsbawm (1997), one of the most influential historians of our time, thought that anarchism "tended to have some of the characteristics of an active conversion, a change in the entire way of life of its militants". It is challenging to find the right words to express spirituality.

‘The Zapatista Women’ sent a note to their network in February 2019 reminding them of their never-ending insurgency in face of renewed state terrorism.

Maybe they tell you not to think about the Zapatistas because they are over now, that there are no more Zapatistas.

But when you think that that they already defeated us, without you noticing, you will see that we look at you and that one of us approaches and asks you in your ear, so that only you listen: “Where is your little light? What did we give you?”

From the mountains of the Mexican southeast. https://www.amwenglish.com/articles/letter-from-zapatistas-to-women-who-fight-all-over-the-world/?fbclid=IwAR3W1o-pFwc3NDK0MxctrDIA7cgUWRWU7CcZbY_JTllvlCYlz4ZmPbaqERo

Welton said: *‘it is always possible to retrieve a fragment from the past that beams critical light on the dark surfaces of the present’*.

Which qualities are useful for our insurrection? Drawing from her Blackfoot traditions, Sharon Big Plume speaks of the leadership of warriors for our contemporary struggle in her PhD dissertation in social work completed in 2007. PAR was her methodology.

Warriors are inspirational to the community; they stand out and are easily recognizable by others . . . The Warrior’s courage, honour and valour pull others forward while serving to strengthen and motivate individuals . . . Anyone, whether man, woman or child can be a Warrior and most likely, everyone must assume a Warrior role at some point in their lives . . . Warriors have a tough, unyielding side of defiance and assertiveness, and as well, they have a softer side of love, gentleness and kindness (266).

Our insurgency intentionally excludes no one in the community so we are impossible to control by the merchants of fear. Hegemonic control might be an illusion. We are freer than we think.

Canadian MPs and Cabinet Ministers Jody Wilson-Raybould and Jane Philpott are warriors. Is their speaking truth to power threatening an obedient Parliamentary culture? Their critical questioning of values resembles liberatory ideas articulated during the English Revolution of the mid-seventeenth century. Elsewhere, their questioning resonates with the Greek author Nikos Kazantzakis's (1973) soulful searching for truth in an oppressive world. He concluded that:

we ourselves must bear the blame if we are villains, cowards, or liars, for although we have an all-powerful voice inside, we dare not use it for fear it might destroy us. But we take the easy, comfortable way out, and allow it to vent its strength little by little until it too has degenerated to flesh and lard. How terrible not to know that we possess this force! If we did know, we would be proud of our souls (357).

Indigenous elder Jody Wilson-Raybould and her compañera Jane Philpott rejected the comfortable way out of the Parliamentary establishment and found their soul. As we are learning in *Strangers no more*, liberatory ideas are based on the practical and the soulful. As we saw earlier, Blackfoot elder Leroy Littlebear reflected these values at our 1989 PAR gathering in Calgary. Contemporary Indigenous voices are compatible with liberatory adult education traditions.

Participatory Action Research

Liberatory adult educators in the global south created PAR during the 1960s in response to the colonizing policies of Western powers. PAR aims to broaden and deepen knowledge-making processes to include all forms of knowledge - official, expert and people's - in respectful conversation. One of Colombian adult educator Orlando Fals Borda's (1988) four techniques of PAR is 'production and diffusion of new knowledge'. Four levels of communication emerge during this producing and disseminating so that there is a clear record of the knowledge-making processes of pre-

literate peoples' and scholars alike. PAR practitioners must be able to function at all four levels. How are TRC processes being recorded? It would be useful if everyone involved in TRC kept a learning journal. Furthermore, by sharing those individual journals we might together create records of our individual and community knowledge-making experiences. In this manner, journaling constitutes an action demanded by PAR. These actions can evolve into oral histories. Critical recovery of history is another of Fals Borda's four techniques of PAR - the remaining two are 'collective research' and 'valuing and applying folk culture'. **Strangers no more** is practising these four techniques throughout. The future will take care of itself. Our strength is our past. Someone famously said that 'the past is somewhat better lit than the future: we see it more clearly.'

Reflection. After attending the World Congress on PAR in Brisbane in 1992, Fals Borda, having been adopted by Yolgnu during the Calgary Congress, took the opportunity to visit his family at Yirrkala. He wrote to me a few weeks after returning home to Colombia and summed up his experience in one sentence. "I went to Yirrkala where I stayed with Leon White and family, visited the region, went hunting with my brethren, and **swimming with the crocodiles** (emphasis added)—they respected me as they are my totem". I marvelled at these words seemingly so different from his usual scholarly discourse. He was forever reluctant to share personal stories.

James Scott (2017) reminds us of the importance of historical inquiry for our insurgency: "history at its best is the most subversive discipline, inasmuch as it can tell us how things that we are likely to take for granted came to be" - creating *critical light on the dark surfaces of the present*.

PAR practitioners in the liberatory adult education tradition are imaginative teachers skilled in the arts of popular education. For one of us:

The expression of critical thinking does not need esoteric language or the proliferation of qualifications, but it does need dedicated teachers who can make relevant and practical connections in imaginative and democratic ways. The kinds of knowledge that education can help to produce and contribute to a better understanding is the essential ingredient a democracy needs if it is to flourish and continually reinvent itself from one generation to the next. The popular creation of knowledge, linked to social action, makes sense in a troubled world because supporting a campaign or joining a movement is a powerful way of learning through experience and making history, rather than simply enduring it. It is precisely this kind of informal learning that fuels the desire for more knowledge-making and more actively democratic societies (Thompson, 2007, 179).

Jane Thompson's words exemplify clear thinking and direct action as the drivers of our insurgency. Yet, James Scott (2012) tells us that the realities of direct action are fluid like the Ganma rivers: "that organized social movements are usually the product, not the cause, of uncoordinated protests and demonstrations, and that the great emancipatory gains for human freedom have not been the result of orderly, institutional procedures but of disorderly, unpredictable, spontaneous action cracking open the social order from below" (141). This sounds like 'tumultuous contingency'.

How is our liberatory resistance being recorded? How do we come to know the hidden transcripts (Scott, 1990)? Popular educators reveal the hidden transcripts through our instructional techniques, yet the meanings of the transcripts remain tacit -- translucent -- to sustain integrity. Our insurrection is opaque to avoid capture and co-optation: it is an infinite game played playfully.

To be playful is not to be trivial or frivolous, or to act as though nothing of consequence will happen. On the contrary, when we are playful with each other we relate as free persons, and the relationship is open to surprise; *everything* that happens is of consequence. It is, in fact, seriousness that closes itself to consequence, for seriousness is a dread of the unpredictable outcome of open possibility. To be serious is to press for a specified conclusion. To be playful is to allow for possibility whatever the cost to oneself (Carse, 1986, 19).

Is there a sense of Carse's playfulness in the Zapatista resistance - in the resistance of all Indigenous peoples - of all resistant cultures? How do we embrace surprise?

Poetic expression documenting surprise is a fitting process for our purpose. Perhaps we might listen like a chickadee. The chickadee bird is a powerful metaphor for Indigenous peoples of Western Canada as she thrives in the bitter winters despite her tiny frame. She does so because she is gifted with deep listening in her environment wherein lies all she needs to know to survive (Beatty et al, 2008). Has mainstream society forgotten how to listen like a chickadee? As we exerted power over Indigenous peoples with racist laws and oppressive practices, did we think we had silenced them? Did we think we had destroyed the infinite game of Indigenous resistance? If so, is what we did an evil? James Carse suggests:

Although anyone who wishes can be an infinite player, and although anyone can be strong, we are not to suppose that power cannot work irremediable damage on infinite play. Infinite play cannot prevent or eliminate evil. Though infinite players are strong, they are not powerful and do not attempt to become powerful.

Evil is the termination of infinite play. It is infinite play coming to an end in *unheard silence*.

Unheard silence does not necessarily mean the death of the player. Unheard silence is not the loss of the player's voice but the loss of listeners for that voice. It is an evil when the drama of a life does not continue in others for reason of their deafness or ignorance (39-40).

Perhaps Indigenous peoples never ceased speaking (or did we even ever listen?) their wisdom despite Canada's repressive laws and practices. Can PAR processes help release our unheard silence - this evil?

Lifelong learning in the liberatory adult education tradition prepares us for life's surprises. A sense of humour is helpful. Understanding the importance of humour re-connects us with Indigenous peoples. Warriors

can be quite irreverent at times, but they understand how the role of humour serves the people. Warriors can use humour as a survival strategy, and as a way to lead, reassure and inspire . . . Being able to laugh in the face of difficulty or trouble can give a sense of power over adversity (Big Plume, 2007, 270).

Laughter fits in well to Fals Borda's rich and deep communicative skills demanded of PAR practitioners. Our work is too difficult without laughter. At the same time, our insurgency can be expressed openly albeit in disguised form through humour and through non-verbal images within our record. Exploring arts of resistance in the face of domination, James Scott (1990) writes about the 'hidden transcripts' of both oppressor and oppressed.

Widening our inquiry

The adult education movement makes social movements move. Bob Boughton (2004) claims the Australian "popular educational tradition lives on today in the educational work of social movements which like their forbears in the early democratic movements know that education and agitation put together become powerful catalysts of social change" (130).

We learn through our experiences “not as the experiences of the individualised, classless, genderless, ‘race-less’ and ‘de-historicised’ adult learner the profession subsequently invented, but as the experiences of the social movements of which every learner is ultimately a part, and which have a deal of unfinished, transformative learning to pursue” (131). Boughton was deeply influenced as an adult educator after many years working in the Australian outback where Ganma sings. His thoughts recall Svetlana Alexievich’s work in Russia. Their thoughts are nurturing our insurgency. These thoughts reflect the ancient gnostic and anarchist knowledge-making traditions re-emerging in our soul-searching times.

European traditions of popular education, university extension and folk schools have been thoroughly studied for at least the century prior to WW2 (Steele, 2007). These traditions very much resemble liberatory adult education. Rather than fading before mainstreaming adult educational “functionalist and vocationalist spin” after the war, historian Tom Steele sees adult and popular education reviving within new social movements such as feminism, ecology, peace, disability and currently Third World debt, anti-globalization and anti-war movements. Remember, the adult education movement makes social movements move. For our Canadian work, we might add Indigenous revival to the list of social movements. All these ideas celebrate the lived human experience underling liberatory adult education. Lindeman told us in 1926 that; “lovers of wisdom focus the light of learning upon experience and thereby discover new meanings for life, new reasons for living “(110). After searching early Christian expressions of knowledge-making, historian Elaine Pagels concluded that “whoever explores human experience simultaneously discovers divine reality” (134). My experience of spirituality resonates with Pagels and Lindeman in our valuing individual experience as the basis of human inquiry into meaningful living.

Where else might we connect? “Is there still an Arab third way?” asks Hicham Alaoui in *Le Monde diplomatique* in December 2015.

The region’s regimes continue to deny their citizens a meaningful voice. . . Yet while these problems have not changed, unless for the worse, the social and cultural fabric of Arab societies has irrevocably shifted. Ordinary people no longer live in fear or awe of authoritarian states, and they cannot be cowed into obedience by threat of force or inculcating an ideology . . . fear, exhaustion and apathy are only temporary states of mind: regimes cannot delay reform forever. The failure of authoritarian governments to enact credible reforms was what caused the initial Arab uprisings in the first place. The choice is reform now or revolt later - and there are rumblings to suggest that this dilemma will not disappear.

How do Arab insurgents learn the skills to function safely and effectively along the way? How can their insurgency connect with insurgencies elsewhere? The new technologies might help. The internet is dominated by one language - English - meaning that an enormous amount of information, including radical democratic ideas, are available throughout the world in one language. These radical ideas come from the **margins** of society in the popular education tradition at least since the mid-nineteenth century (Steel, 2007). As we have seen throughout *Strangers no more*, these ideas can be found in cultures throughout time - ‘*can exist at the the margins of a culture for a very long time.*’ However, as we are learning, ideas can be co-opted by emerging tyrannies such as Facebook.

Reflection. The internet and social media seem to offer the means to facilitate dialogue. There are accompanying dangers. According to M.J. Crockett in an article in the *Globe and Mail* titled ‘Modern outrage on 3 March 2018: “Harnessing digital outrage for social good will require a mindful awareness of how social media manipulates our emotions. This technology may disconnect our expressions of outrage from our best intentions. . . Online platforms seem to be designed to keep us trapped in furious feedback loops that distract us from the difficult work that

How can we slow down and remove the noise from our lives? How can we recover the art of listening deeply? Or is it too late? Timothy Snyder has created a fearfully fantastic interpretation of the Trump electoral victory at the hands of neo-fascism conceived in Russia employing internet technologies in cyber warfare (Snyder 2018). How can liberatory adult educators respond?

How can TRC and Arab spring blend for their mutual benefit? Like the Ganma rivers, the interaction between TRC and Arab spring could create new ways - new foam. Can our Syrian refugees engage within the process of the knowledge-making of TRC? Since both are hopeful of better times after difficult challenges, they seem to be natural allies - *strangers no more*. Their solidarity is supported by the liberatory adult education tradition and my life's work. In keeping with Kingwell's notion of Canada as peoples celebrating relationship building processes, my work has national relevancy. On a personal level, the refugees and immigrants of the present remind me of my own family's experience as "strangers within our gates". We need each other more than ever.

Throughout our continuing inquiry, we must support one another. I list some of those walking with me below. Stephen Jay Gould (2003), one of the most influential evolutionary biologists of the twentieth century, concluded his life's work advising; "we had better hang together, or assuredly we will all hang separately." We might recover peoples' history, social history from below, as the common people (sans culottes) in France are recovering as we concluded 2018. One comment in the New York Review of Books sees the Yellow Vests expanding to include other social groups: "At the margins, it is already starting to do so, in fact, as high-school and college students have begun rallying, as have farmers and workers in other industries" (<https://www.nybooks.com/daily/>

[2018/12/11/from-sans-culottes-to-gilets-jaunes](#)) Our liberatory traditions will see us through. These traditions are understood within the memories of the sans culottes and played out on the streets. How are Indigenous peoples playing out similar traditions? Where are their streets? Am I welcome there?

Summing up

Ancient Aztec knowledge summarizes my story.

One day while walking with an Indian friend, Malaquias, he told me the story of the five friends and the five enemies.

The first enemy of human beings is fear. If you live in fear, you will live like a mouse in a dark corner and never see the light. Fear will become your enemy and you never will grow up. But, if you are not afraid of the fear you will have, then you can live in light, and fear becomes your friend.

If fear is your friend, then you are able to look around you with clarity. But if you think that you can see all things clearly, then you are really blind, and clarity becomes your enemy. If, however, you strive to see clearly, then clarity becomes your friend.

If fear is your friend and you can see clearly, then you will have power. But if you keep power to yourself, you will become weaker and weaker. If, however, you share the power, you will become strong and power will be your friend.

If fear is your friend, you see clearly, and you share power, then you will be wise. But if you think you have all the wisdom, then in reality you are ignorant, and wisdom will be your enemy. If, however, you admit that you do not know everything, answers will come to you and wisdom will be your friend.

If fear is your friend, you see clearly, and you share power, and you have wisdom, then you will meet old age. But if you sit, doing nothing and denying your history, then old age will be your enemy. If, however, you meet old age with grace, having met fear, seeing with clarity, sharing power, and making wisdom your friend, then you will live forever.

-Mexican popular folklore as told by Arturo Ornelas at the 1989 Calgary PAR Congress and cited in *Nurtured by knowledge* (1997).

My finite story ends. The infinite story of liberatory adult education supporting TRC processes continues. Our collective struggle is timeless. In my time of old age, I remain insurgent.

Madeleine Thien encourages me to say one more thing before I leave. Near the end of her novel about people's resistance in China, she notes our "desire to know the times in which we are alive. To keep the record that might be kept and also, finally, to let it go . . . To have faith that, one day, someone else will keep the record" (419).

This is a list of those who have been walking with me.

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