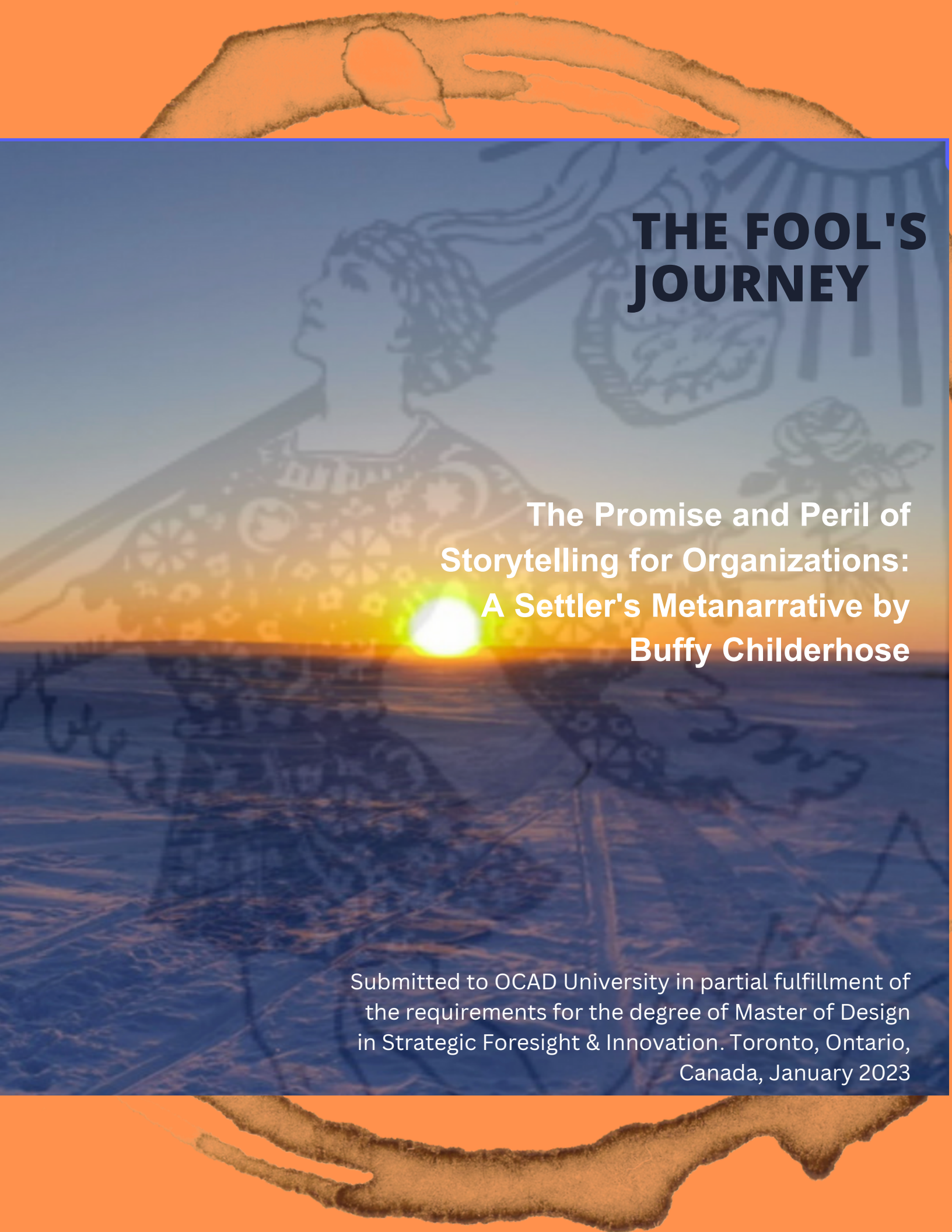

THE FOOL'S JOURNEY

The Promise and Peril of Storytelling for Organizations: A Settler's Metanarrative by Buffy Childerhose

Submitted to OCAD University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design in Strategic Foresight & Innovation. Toronto, Ontario, Canada, January 2023

Acknowledgments

Thanks to my advisor Suzanne Stein for guidance and patience. On more than one occasion I accidentally referred to her as my therapist which is the adult equivalent of calling your kindergarten teacher, "mum."

Thanks to Andrew Glencross for his help with the ESC designs.

I would like to thank my late father Ray Childerhose (CPO 2, RCN , Ret.), for whom the phrase, "Just Do It," was a personal mantra long before it ever graced a Nike billboard.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to engage with members of Pitquhikhainik Ilihainik Inc. on this project. Quana

I acknowledge that this paper is being submitted to a school on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Additionally, as a settler in Canada I would like to include a sketch from Baroness Von Sketch (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlG17C19nYo) as a nod to the performance of land acknowledgments. (See Appendix A for my attempt at a land acknowledgment in an Indigenous context.)

With this in mind, I have donated 500 CAD in Margaret Qutiaquq Oliver's name to the Heritage Society of Cambridge Bay. Maggi, and her journey, has taught me much.

Quana, Maggi.

Figure 1: Margaret Qutiaquq Oliver, Courtesy of Margaret Qutiaquq Oliver

Glossary

I**nuk:** A single Inuit person. Two Inuit people are *innu.*

I**nuinnaqtun** : A language spoken in the central Arctic, closely related to Inuktitut, and is one of the two official languages of Nunavut.

K**amik:** A traditional Inuit boot made of seal or caribou skin.

Palimpsest: A document (tablet, parchment, etc) from which the original text has been erased, scraped off or otherwise removed for reuse, yet the original text remains somewhat visible . From the Greek word palimpsēstos, which means "scraped again."

Plurivocal: Having multiple voices or perspectives.

Reconciliation: The process in which Indigenous peoples, the government (and settlers) seek to improve relations between parties, and, ideally, redress the injustices rendered by colonization.

Quana: *Thank You* in Inuinnaqtun.

Indigenomics: a term coined by Carole Anne Hilton to speak to the rising economic promise of Indigenous business, fortified by the belief that supporting Indigenous economic autonomy is a cornerstone of reconciliation

Abstract

My intention was to consider the literature and practices around institutional storytelling in an effort to learn how to best harness the power of narrative in an organizational environment.

The literature around organizational and business storytelling trumpet the trend as a kind of sense-making compass. Yet embedded in many of these texts is a sense that the transformative and emancipatory power of storytelling has been beggared in this environment, reduced to a humble servant of profit and power.

Via a literature review as well as case studies of Kaapittiaq, Tim Hortons, the narrative of Canada, and reflective storytelling, I became convinced of the necessity of narrative *de*construction, arguing for a plurivocal practice in which storytelling is an instrument of discovery and self-reflection rather than that which produces a static product for commercial purposes.

In keeping with the ethos of the research, I chose to structure this paper in something akin to a narrative style, rather than a conventionally academic one. The intention is to bring the reader on a narrative (and cumulative) journey of discovery, building to the presentation of a storytelling tool at the end of the paper.

Research Questions

As this project was a dynamic, iterative process, my research questions evolved as I defined the challenge of storytelling for organizations.

Initially, my research question was:

R1 **How might we use storytelling to help an organization chart its course into the future?**

My final research question was :

R1:**How might we use storytelling to help organizations better know themselves, and chart a course into the future without falling prey to propaganda and auto-mythologizing?**

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Research Methods

I began this research project using the Double Diamond design process model developed by the British Design Council (Design Council, 2019). This model has four distinct phases; Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver, each spanning across a range of stages in the design process.

Best suited for developing tangible, even physical objects, it seemed a reasonable choice as my intention was to create a tool for institutional or organizational storytelling.

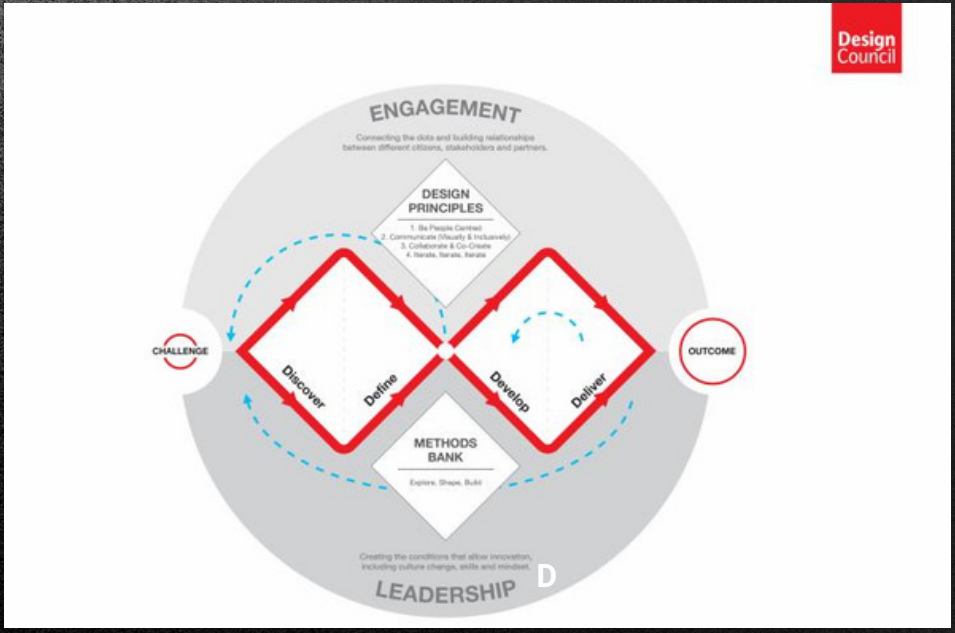


Figure 1: Double Diamond Process Model, https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/I

During the Discover phase, I initially researched the nature of storytelling via a literature review. As part of the research I undertook a case study of Tim Hortons to better understand how they used story in their brand building. This led to an exploration of the notion of Canadian identity, something leveraged in the Tim Hortons narrative. Additionally, I began to examine narrative building with a Inuit coffee company. I soon discovered I could only perform a kind of auto-ethnographic *thick* research "[...]for what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions" (Geertz, 1973, p 314).

As historian Hayden White suggested, all descriptions of social phenomenon require turning knowing into telling (White, 1980) and thus, all research is a narrative production (Bochner, 2012).

As I analyzed the information gathered from the literature review and case studies, I realized that my findings demanded I reconsider my research question, allowing the question to address the perils of storytelling (deception, mythologizing, propaganda) I had glimpsed in the process. As such, the Double Diamond as a method began to twist and shift. While the DD allows for iterations -- demands it even -- I found myself constantly looping through the process , a kind of eternal returning to the first stage of discovery and starting again.

In order to find my way through I adopted two strategies: The first was the idea of employing reflective storytelling as both a method and a measure itself. "Why shouldn't social scientists represent life as temporally unfolding narratives and researchers as a vital part of the action?" (Bochner, 2012). Accordingly, I chose to write much of this paper as a first person narrative, largely employing not the cool and ostensibly dispassionate *father tongue* of academic discourse but rather what Ursula Le Guin called the "mother tongue" (Le Guin, 1986) the language in which our stories are told.

The second strategy was to reconceive the Double Diamond as a kind of Möbius strip, endlessly iterating with no real need to have a final product. The oft-used thought experiment that explains a Möbius strip is to imagine an ant traveling such a loop. "The apparent loop would land the ant not where it started but upside down, only halfway through a full circuit. After two loops, the ant would be back at the beginning—but dizzy." (Alagappan, S. 2021). The Möbius strip serves as an apt metaphor for this kind of reflective storytelling research which is more about journey than a destination, process over product.

Dizzy, indeed.

The twisting of the Double Diamond into a Möbius strip is what I call the *Fool's Journey*. A disavowal of product-oriented research methods, the *Fool's Journey* eschews the fourth stage of the Double Diamond, or the "Deliver" phase," and reinterprets *The Hero's Journey* (Campbell, 1942), refuting the demand for an elixir, reconceiving research as an ongoing story of discovery.

Introduction

Scheherazade und the Sultan, Painting by Ferdinand Keller, 1880 | Wikimedia Commons

In 1001 Arabian Nights, (Burton, 2017) when King Shahryar learned his wife had been unfaithful, his first response was to make himself a widower. His second was to hatch a plan to forever safeguard himself against the shame of being a cuckold.

The plan was as simple as it was brutal; he would court virgins, wed and bed them the same night and in the morning, each poor wife was beheaded.

It was a foolproof strategy, thought the King.

Yet in time, there were few virgins left, save for the daughters of his chief advisor. Against the protestations of her father, his eldest daughter, Scheherazade, offered her own virtue to the monarch.

But an early death was not Scheherazade's plan.

On their wedding night, Scheherazade asked her husband if she could bid a final goodbye to her sister with one last story. Shahryar consented.

After all, who could deny such a sweet and simple request?

What Shahryar didn't know was that his new bride was a devout student of narrative. Scheherazade had grown up with her face buried in books, learning the wisdoms of the ancients, the secrets of the natural philosophers, the triumphs and missteps of 1000 monarchs.

Scheherazade planned this final goodbye story with her sister as a means to save herself. Each night she would tell a tale that left her husband rapt, and each night as he leaned in for the conclusion, she'd yawn and note that the sky was lightening. The conclusion is for another evening, she would whisper as she wrapped her robe around her and hastened them all to bed.

And she and her sister saw another day.

Although Scheherazade is a fictional invention (and one that has a very different resonance in a modern era), the idea that storytelling is a crucial part of human identity, necessity and strategy is no novel idea.

From the visual storytelling in ancient cave to Tinder profiles, there's nary one of us who hasn't been impacted and shaped by storytelling.

CHAPTER 1 STORYTELLING

"HUMANS ARE STORYTELLING ORGANISMS WHO, INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY, LEAD STORIED LIVES (CONNELLY AND CLANDININ (1990)

Cave drawings https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/85/gallery/

Humans have been telling stories for time immemorial, even before language rose in our throats. Consider the images in the Chauvet-Pont D'Arc cave in France (UNESCO, 1979). These simple yet haunting images date back as far as 30,000 BCE and show rhinoceroses, bears, and cave lions, even people and tools. Given their configuration, it appears that they're more than simple representations of what ancient man saw before them. One painting renders a scene that looks like something spraying out of a nozzle. While the imagery has puzzled archaeologists since its discovery, recent research suggests it might be the representation of a volcanic explosion.

Not a representation of a *thing,* but an *event.* Actions and the hint of consequence. The inchoate stuff of s*tory*.

30,000 years ago stories transmitted via drawings, hand gestures or speech, served a variety of purposes. These early stories could transmit practical knowledge. i.e, how to track prey. They could mark an occasion, i.e, the birth of an infant or the death of an elder. They could boast of triumphs or serve as cautionary tales. Perhaps in the caves in Chauvet, the images reminded people that the mountaintops occasionally and hazardously lost their tempers.

Seen through this lens storytelling is adaptive, even Darwinian - an evolutionary necessity.*

- A poetic assertion but truly there's no way of knowing if there was a group of people who didn't tell stories and thus didn't survive because, well, they didn't tell stories or survive.

After thousands of years of using cuneiforms as a counting system, Ancient Mesopotamia, now modern-day Iraq, was the site of some of the earliest writing, as early as 3,200 BC. Using the materials literally at hand, ancient Mesopotamians rendered stories on clay tablets, carving out precise cuneiforms with the reeds that were torn from the rivers that flowed through the region. Much of the text from the early days of these cuneiforms were pragmatic in nature, such as accounting, and business dealings, but by 3000 BCE, scribes were using the reeds to write down songs, prayers, and even stories, (Quenet, 2005).

> T**he Kesh Temple Hymn**
> The princely one, the princely one came forth from the house.
> Enlil, the princely one, came forth from the house.
> The princely one came forth royally from the house.
> Enlil lifted his glance over all the lands, and the lands raised themselves to Enlil. The four corners of heaven became green for Enlil like a garden. Kec was positioned there for him with head uplifted, and as Kec lifted its head among all the lands, Enlil spoke the praises of Kec (Wilke, 1972).

While the Kesh Temple Hymn - an ode to the deities of a temple - is often cited as one of the first examples of literature and history(2600 BC) --along with the Instructions of Shuruppak (Alster, 1974) -- the crown of the first story rests on the head of Gilgamesh.

The Epic of Gilgamesh is the tale of a spoiled young king, who was believed to be one third man and two thirds god. In a manner befitting a God King, Gilgamesh behaved poorly and the gods made a figure in his image to serve as a rebuking foil - Enkidu. Like a buddy film set in ancient times, the pair face off as rivals and when Gilgamesh bests Enkidu - they beecome fast friends and set off on a literally epic adventure of wanton violence, womanizing and hubris. When the pair are judged for their vulgar displays, the gods deemed that one must die. And so Enkidu is sacrificed for the arrogant folly of their youth (Sandars, 2003).

As Enkidu dies a slow and painful death, Gilgamesh stands vigil over him, for seven days and seven nights till a worm falls out of his nose. In his grief, the callow God King resolves to find a remedy for the brutal stuff of mortality. Like many a young man before him, Gilgamesh sets off on a dangerous journey to bring back the elixir that will deliver immortality.

This kind of quest, described by Joseph Campbell as the Hero's Journey (Campbell, 1949) is an archetypal monomyth that exists in all cultures, just one kind of a myriad of stories we tell ourselves as people. Certainly, storytelling is universal, but *why?*

Chapter 2
Why Tell Stories ?

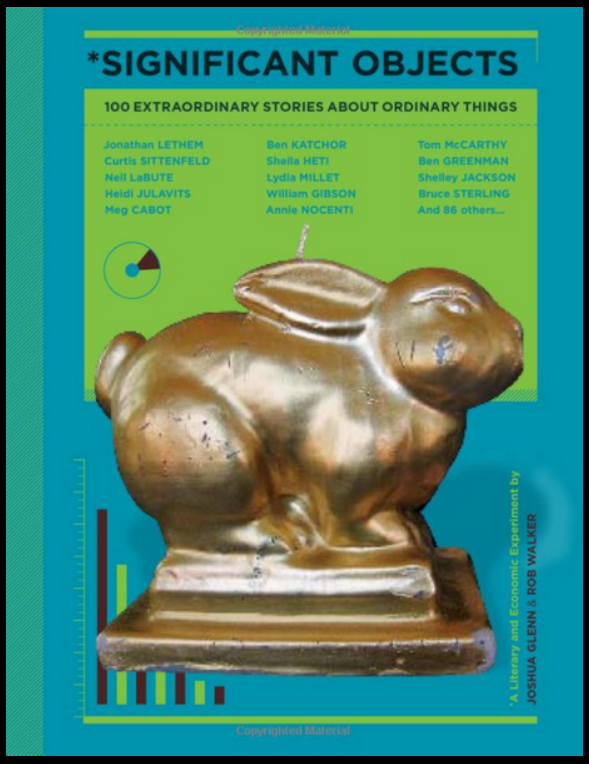
AI art of people gathered around a fire

Jerome Bruner, an educational psychologist argued that only through the telling of stories can we understand our experience, that the act of storytelling is an act of sensemaking (Bruner, 1991).

Indeed, what sense-making requires above all is a cracking tale: "A good story holds disparate elements together long enough to energize and guide action, plausibly enough to allow people to make retrospective sense of whatever happens, and engagingly enough that others will contribute their own input (Weick, 1995: p.61).

Sometimes a story can be little more than a fortifying idea - like the story of a nation (e.g. Land of the Free.). But often under that banner is nested a series of smaller stories (e.g. persecuted people of faith coming to America for religious freedom.). A good story often features a sequence of actions or events that involve one or many persons or forces. Often the active forces in the story encounter or create situations that shift their experience and the story tracks them as they respond to that change. In doing so, something is revealed about the particular circumstances of their world or themselves.

A generation ago, Bruner made the assertion that stories are 22 times more memorable than facts alone (Brunner, 1991). Certainly, it's clear that we can be swayed by stories. Consider the case of *Significant Objects*, a literary experiment designed to capture the power of storytelling. Rob Walker and Joshua Glen bought a number of thrift store objects that retailed, on average, for 1.25 USD. The pair then commissioned a number of contemporary writers to contribute narratives to the items which were then sold on eBay.



The cover of Significant Objects

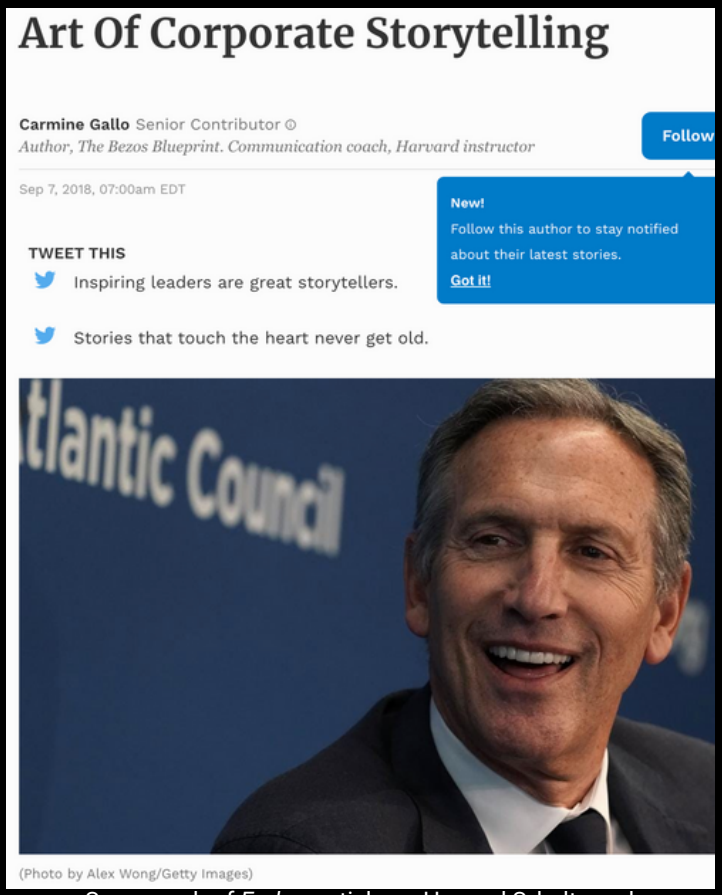
Once enhanced by narrative, the items sold at a significant profit.

While the authors' claim that the effect of narrative can be measured objectively (Walker, R., Glen, J. 2010) is certainly hyperbolic, it does reveal something about the relationship between business and narrative. It is also telling that the less than rigorous experiment was well-covered in business-oriented publications from *Fast Company* to *Adweek* and it continues to be frequently cited in business publications as an example of the power of storytelling in business.

One of the most famous examples of corporate storytelling is an origin tale from Howard Schultz, the former CEO of Starbucks who spins a tale of how he went from being a marketing representative to an industry visionary, thanks to the cafes of Milan.

Schultz found that a full-sensory experience greeted customers who stepped through the doorways of Milan's coffee houses. Italian opera played as baristas ground coffee, steamed milk and "pulled espresso shots in graceful, powerful motions as if they were conducting an orchestra" ("It's a Dream," 2015)

In 1997 he told Oprah Winfrey that it was a symphony of romance and community.



Screengrab of *Forbes* article on Howard Schultz and storytelling, 2018

"I walked in and saw this symphony of activity, and the romance and the theater of coffee… creating a sense of community" (Gallo, 2018). This, he explained, was a *third* place - neither home nor office but a place of familiarity and connection. While the tale that Schultz tells is certainly true (or, as true as any stories are) that's almost beside the point. This tale is a near sensate experience that draws the audience and connects them to the place, the teller, and the product.

And it is considered an exemplar of corporate storytelling.

Certainly, strategic narrative isn't solely the domain of capitalist organizations. In fact, almost all non-profits view storytelling as an essential component of their organization (Gabriel, 2000).

At a glance, this much-vaunted storytelling approach is nothing new. It is simply the marketing or communication models of the past being less explicit in their desires and using anecdotal information as the substance of the message.

Yet what appears to be the primary point of much of the recent literature about storytelling for organizations is that in order for the stakeholders of an organization to be connected (be it commercial, governmental or NGO) they need to be narratively engaged (Mladkova, 2013).

Beyond the front-facing storytelling, narrative is increasingly viewed as a mandatory tool in any manager's toolkit. Stories enable them to share knowledge, explain new ideas, engage and create buy-in. But these are not casual tales. Sharing a compelling anecdote in the boardroom or on a stage will serve a CEO well in the immediate moment but mastering a grand narrative is the way to guide an organization. In this new world of management storytelling it is said that the most frequent request made by organizations "is how to master the underlying narrative pattern of a springboard story, so that they can spark transformational change in their own corporate settings" (Dennings, 2006).

The trend is well illustrated by the trajectory of Stephen Dennings, himself. A former programme director with the World Bank, Dennings has emerged as a visible and prolific leader in the field of management storytelling with five books on the subject. A former World Bank director turned storyteller certainly seems like a tall tale. Indeed, Dennings has confessed that his entry into the world wasn't without turbulence. Initially, people in management eyed the very notion of storytelling warily.

"'Soft, fuzzy, emotional, anecdotal, irrational, fairy stories, primitive.' These were just some of the terms that advocates of conventional management hurled at leadership story training" (Dennings, 2011). Dennings recounts that his entry into the world of narrative was also greeted with suspicion. "What made my reception worse was that I didn't enter the world of storytelling on bended knee, in a mood of respectful submission to drink from the ancient fonts of wisdom" (Dennings, p 3. 2011).

It appears that suspicions about Dennings may have been merited . His words betray a disdain, and an unwillingness to actually learn from those who might truly know more than he. Even as he advocates for storytelling he fails to respect the craft of it, or the people who make their livelihood doing it (he has even described writing as being largely avocational (Dennings, p 4. 2011). For someone looking to harness the power of storytelling it appears that he casually disregards the whole discipline. The suspicion that greeted Dennings may have been spawned by this arrogance.

Or perhaps, the very people he sneered at intuited that his intentions might differ greatly from their own. Of course, there is no universal intention for storytelling. As stated earlier in this paper, the goals and uses of storytelling are myriad. But there is something essential that runs through much of the practice. Famed screenwriting and storytelling consultant Robert McKee says that "stories fulfill a profound need to grasp the patterns of living - not merely as an intellectual exercise, but within a very personal, emotional experience" (McKee, Story, 1997, p 52). Yet a search of commercial sites that offer storytelling solutions to business challenges yields language consistent with a much more proasic goal, pockmarked by phrases like, "storytelling […]gives a compelling reason to consumers to buy from you" (Da Costa, "Why Every Business", 2017) .

When I googled the names of several authors who'd written on the power of storytelling, I quickly fell into a rabbit hole of articles on persuasion and sales. This is emblematic of a disingenuity embedded in much of corporate storytelling. I suspect this mode of storytelling has less fellowship with McKee's view of "the human need to grasp the patterns of living" (McKee, Story, 1997, p. 44) than it does with Edward Bernays and the dark arts of Madison Avenue.

That, of course, is not the ideal version of a narrative practice. For contemporary business leaders stories truly are a valuable tool. Stories enable them to share knowledge, explain new ideas, settle conflicts, cultivate transformation, create corporate culture, and influence values and practices. Leaders can influence the quality of organizational learning through storytelling (Mladkova, 2013).

In one view of how storytelling *can* work in an organization, David M. Boje argued that organizations are by nature, storytelling systems. "In organizations, storytelling is the preferred sense-making currency of human relationships among internal and external stakeholders" (Boje, 1991). In Boje's estimation, storytelling is necessarily participatory, with both tellers and audience co-creating meaning via the dissemination of stories, and the interpretation of them.

However, storytelling is seldom a participatory act in a corporate environment. The vast majority of corporate storytelling is a one way flow of information and ideas, with little or no room to push back against the narrative. As Boje wondered about the stories disseminated within the Disney organization, "Who gets a voice in the CEO stories, whose voice is marginal, who gets no voice at all? " (Boje, 1995).

But what if the tellers of the stories were the primary stakeholders, and not solely in a financial sense? What if both stories and storytellers were considered a resource?

CHAPTER 3

STORIES AS RENEWABLE RESOURCE

Screenshot from Kaapittiaq's Instagram page

Five hundred kilometres north of the Arctic circle on Victoria island rests Cambridge Bay (population, 1966). It’s a sleepy hamlet, known for its good fishing - so much so that its name in Inuinnaqtun (the local language) is: ᐃᕐᑲᓗᒃᑑᑦᑎᐊᖅ- which translates to *Good Fishing Place*.

The area is largely inhabited by the Inuinnait, a regional group of Indigenous northerners also known as The Copper Inuit. Their language, Inuinnaqtun, has less than 600 fluent speakers and despite being one of the official languages of Nunavut and Northwest Territories. Alarmingly, it is predicted to be extinct in less than two generations (PI/KHS, 2021).

In 2018 members of Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq (known as the Kitikmeot Heritage Society in English) sat down to have a serious conversation. The non-profit is dedicated to the survival and revival of the Inuinnaqtun language and culture and was considering ways it might generate an income that was not dependent on external funding. Several ideas were pitched but as the group considered their options, someone noted that they were all drinking coffee (*Kappia* in Inuinnaqtun).

The joke in the community is that the answer was literally on the tip of their tongues.

The society’s social enterprise was incorporated in 2018 as Pitquhikhainik Ilihainik Inc. (PII). It donates 75% of its profits to the parent non-profit for cultural and language programs. Its first commercial offering is Kaapittiaq, (meaning “good coffee"), an Inuit-branded line of coffee that partners with Indigenous coffee bean farmers in South America. Currently, Kaapittiaq's supplier is an Indigenous women’s collective in Peru.

Screenshot, PII AGM, 2021

When PII was developing creating the company, they considered multiple governance models and while more conventional model of a company with a CEO and a board might have been an easier and more familiar structure for banks and funders, the organization opted to eschew European models and created a board of elders to be the living compass for the company, the final word on any business decisions.
The business is strongly rooted in the Inuit culture and an internal set of values, which it would not compromise for any short-term business gain.

Initially, the company intended to roast the green coffee beans from the south in Cambridge Bay, something they quickly realized would be financially ruinous. Instead, they partnered with a roastery in Barrie, Ontario, a company known for working with Indigenous growers in South America

It comes as no surprise to anyone that there's nary a single coffee shrub in the Arctic. It takes a temperature of 21-27 Celsius to make the coffee berries grow and thrive while Cambridge Bay's temperature frequently is -35 Celsius. Hardly the most hospitable climate for coffee shrubs. Yet an Inuit coffee company isn't markedly different from many other coffee companies.

Around the world, companies in the global north import beans, roast, brand and distribute them. There aren't any coffee plants in downtown Seattle but that did not stop Starbucks from revolutionizing the industry. Still, not all coffee suppliers are large companies: In recent years, there's been a trend for even small coffee shops to have their own white label brand.

The once humble bean is an economic juggernaut. According to the Observatory of Economic Complexity, In 2018, coffee was the world's 121st most traded product, with a total trade of $30.9B US.. Between 2017 and 2018 the exports of coffee grew by 1.49%, from $30.4B to $30.9B (OBE, 2018). Canada certainly is not immune to the seductive charms of the coffee bean. Canada is in the top ten consumers of coffee in the world, at 14.3 lbs per capita, annually. It is the only English speaking nation on the list. It is the most commonly consumed beverage in this country (OBE, 2018).

According to the Coffee Association of Canada (2021) the coffee industry in this country boasts:
160,000+ jobs (in restaurants, manufacturing, franchising and support sectors)
6.2 Billion total sales
4.8 billion sales in foodservice
1.4 billion in grocery/sales

There certainly is room for another brand.

In the fall of 2020, PII approached OCADU's MDes SFI program, hoping the programme would help them develop distribution and generate ideas and research for new products. I was on the team that worked with PII. As soon as I read through the documents provided by PII and learned how the organization was devoted to raising funds to support and cultivate preservation of their native tongue, it occurred to me that coffee wasn't really their offering.

Story was. Luckily, I thought, there was a model for how story, coffee and commerce can collide in Canada: Tim Hortons.

CHAPTER 4
GIMME MY TIMMIES AND NO ONE GETS HURT

Tim Hortons inspired t-shirt, MoonsmileProd, Redbubble .com

In Canada, where the creed of diversity is lauded as our greatest strength, the notion of what is truly Canadian remains a slippery one. However, in this nation that ranks tenth in terms of highest coffee consumption per capita (OBE, 2018) one coffee brand has managed to become synonymous with our cultural patrimony: Tim Hortons. The much-loved Timmie's coffee does more than warm Canadians' hands and hearts: It is the world's second biggest coffee franchise, dwarfed only by Starbucks. As of 2020, there were 3,802 Tim Hortons locations in Canada, meaning there's a store for roughly every 9,000 Canadians (Marsh, 2019).

Back in 1964, this coffee juggernaut was a humble coffee shop launched by hockey player Miles Gilbert Horton AKA Tim, the starting right-wing for the Toronto Maple Leafs. After 20 seasons with the Leafs, Horton was a hat trick All-Star , and saw his face reflected in the Stanley Cup four times. By any account, the man was a legend. But in the 1960s and 1970s, a career in hockey came with a much smaller salary than is garnered today, and thus many hockey players looked for alternate revenue streams for retirement. Horton's first venture was a used car dealership, where he met Jim Charade, a businessman who ran a doughnut shop. The pair fumbled through various businesses and conflicts and eventually, the enterprise evolved into a partnership between Horton and the first franchise owner Ron Joyce, a local beat cop in Hamilton who was dabbling in business.(Bateman, 2020).

Initially the brand was built on the reputation, images and even signature of its eponymous owner. Even in those early days, the company seemed to represent something that many Canadians were drawn to. As Johanna Faigelman, a cultural anthropologist and president of Human Branding told *Strategy Online,* "Many Canadians feel this connection to Tim Hortons because it has the values [humbleness, loyalty, perseverance] we do" (May 2, 2014).

Horton himself died in a car crash in 1974 - with 35 shops bearing his name. After his death, his partner Ron Joyce bought all the shares in the company for $1million. Joyce saw beyond the borders of Ontario, and was bent on turning the chain into much more than a humble coffee shop; his intentions were on building both a larger food service and a dominant brand. (Bateman, 2020)

In the 1970, the chain was quietly expanding along the Canadian/US border and by the 1990s, it was exploding, opening its 500th stores in 1993 (Bateman, 2020). Prior to the 90s, the brand's largest associations were with hockey, and the foundation's hockey camps. During that era, as the chain was exploding in popularity, there was nothing particularly "Canadian," about it, other than hockey itself.

But in the 90s that shifted.

The company did not just happen into its role as bearer of the maple leaf; this was the dividend of canny branding that explicitly cast the company as an avatar of Canadian values. In the mid-90s, the company's marketing team hired Trevor Collier Research to uncover what Canadians found so compelling about the brand (Buist, 2011). The firm undertook extensive research that involved everything from two-way mirror focus groups to interviews and ethnographic observation. Soon, Tim Hortons had their answer.

The research report was flooded with tales of how the coffee was a ritual for their customers, a companion, a conduit for their own narratives. The allure of the company wasn't the result of the brew or even just the name of a mostly forgotten hockey player. The power of the brand was, in a word, stories.

According to Douglas Holt, the L'Oreal Chair of Marketing at Oxford University:

> Customers buy [products] to experience the stories. [...] they are imbibing identity myths anchored in these drinks. An effective cultural strategy creates a storied product, that is, a product that has distinctive branded features (trademark, design, etc.) through which customers experience identity myths (p. 36, 2009).

Tim Hortons seized the opportunity presented in the Collier research, and quickly responded with the advertising campaign, "True Stories," which showcased many heartwarming tales, many geographically or symbolically bound to some codified hallmark of Canadian identity; kindness, hockey, snow, etc. One such story was about a woman named Lillian, from Lunenburg, Nova Scotia.

Figure 7: Screengrab from Tim Hortons' True Stories campaign, 2009

In the ad, we see Lillian (an actor) leave her home, headed for her daily coffee. As she and her cane make their tentative journey up a snowy hill, the town's denizens note her passing. In the light of a cold winter day, a grizzled fisherman wonders why she doesn't make her own coffee, presumably at home, a question symbolically answered by a staffer at the coffee shop: "I'd say Lillian's one of the family." In the dying beats of the commercial, a slogan affirms the relationship between the customer and the brand: "Tim Hortons. The coffee you can count on."

As Faigleman told *Strategy Online:*

> Many Canadians feel this connection to Tim Hortons because it has the values [humbleness, loyalty, perseverance] we do. But a company like Starbucks – while I might drink their coffee – I feel like it's foreign to me. It's not who I am. It's a bit too flashy, a bit too extreme. There's something humble about Canadians. And there's something humble about Tim Hortons (May 2, 2014).

S*imple, decent, and not too flashy.* That's the image of Timmie's and the image of Canada itself.

Neither are entirely accurate.

Screenshot from Tim Hortons True Stories campaign, 2009

Chapter 5
Oh, Canada
Maggi, Mass Graves and Mythmaking

Parliament Hill on the first National Day of Reconciliation, September 29. 2021. Author photo.

Despite the fact that I dislike Tim Hortons coffee, the manner in which Timmie's storytelling paired coffee with national identity was intriguing. As I reviewed KHS's documents and goals, I became convinced that stories of their community were the greatest resource they possessed; a renewable resource (somewhat) resistant to colonialism.

What if Kaapittiaq could harness storytelling and identity much like Tim Hortons had?

Armed with that question, I set about trying to evaluate what we would need to do to make Kaapittiaq a storytelling instrument of the Copper Inuit. After the semester ended, I continued working with the company, as a storyteller and advisor. Additionally, I began to mentor the organization's only full-time paid employee. Maggi. Maggi was what she proudly proclaimed an "Urban Inuk."

Adopted by a deeply loving Caucasian family in Barrie, Ontario, Maggi didn't know the language of her people, didn't have many connections to her bloodlines or her Inuit traditions. The job at the coffee company was far more than the means to make money. As with the traditional tattoos she'd had inked on her skin, it was a way to connect herself to her culture, to draw lines from her body to her own history.

We were working together to develop the story of the company, and for her, to reclaim and share her own Inuk narrative. Yet as I began my literature review, I felt an itch. The readings on business and narrative felt wrong. The tactics espoused by leading business thinkers like Stephen Dennings felt less illuminating or emancipatory than opportunistic. I pushed past, eager to commence the research and finish the degree.

Each time I sat down to write, my head was beset with voices, voices that warned of the dangers of story. I recalled speaking with Mosab Abbas, a Marxist sociologist and educator who was my contact in Israel /Palestine when I was volunteering with Doctors without Borders, and researching a film.

Mosab Abbas in the Muslim Quarter, Jerusalem, 2015. Author photo.

"Both sides are trapped by their stories," he said casually whilst wrapped in a cloud of cigarette smoke, the Dome of the Rock visible just outside his window in the old city.

I've never quite been able to shake that line. Again and again, it rose up like a plume of smoke from a still-smouldering fire, cautioning me.

I brushed it away and returned to my story building, with Maggi at my side. Her impassioned pursuit emboldened me. I was resolved to help. Maggi's tale ended abruptly when she was diagnosed with esophageal cancer, and died less than two months later. There was no denouement, no resolution, no closure.

In Maggi's last days, stories about small bodies exploded onto the homepages and front pages of media outlets across the land. Bodies of Indigenous children found in unmarked graves at Residential schools.

British Columbia

Remains of 215 children found buried at former B.C. residential school, First Nation says

Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc say ground-penetrating radar was used to locate remains

Courtney Dickson, Bridgette Watson · CBC News ·
Posted: May 27, 2021 9:58 PM PT | Last Updated: May 29, 2021

Screenshot from CBC.ca, May 29, 2001

As the grim arithmetic rose, the itch I'd felt previously was impossible to ignore. I watched as many Settler Canadians felt the cheery narrative of their own country torn from them, a narrative that concealed the wrong doing on the part of Canada, a narrative that kept many settlers from redressing the sins that placed them on this land.

Sins that allow *me* to be on this land.

It was with this in mind I shifted my focus from solely the promise of storytelling, but also to the *peril,* and how we might be able to harness the power of storytelling without letting it become a weapon that wounds those both within and without. But to better understand the peril, I needed to look more closely into the stories of both Tim Hortons and my own country.

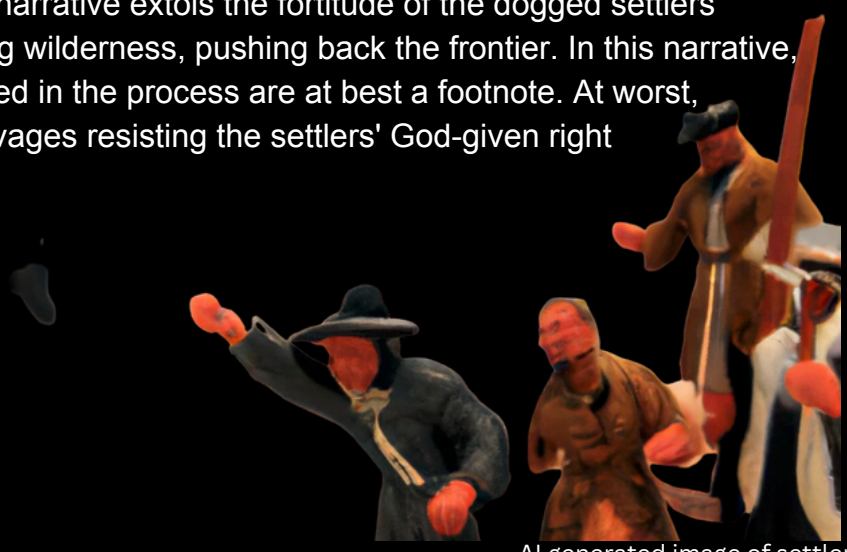
The tales we tell

When we think of stories, we often imagine them in a literary sense, or as fables or myths; things that entertain or transmit cultural and familial values down the line. We also understand that stories are frequently object lessons or instructive parables, as with the dharma tales of the Buddha, or tales from the Torah or Bible. But story's function as sense-making reaches beyond family or faith.

Stories are the stuff of nation building, and nation preserving. The history of any nation is one of active storytelling, both in terms of institutions and of the citizenry. Nations are made of myth - the word *myth* used here not in an exclusively literary sense, but in a broader sense as a system of communication. These myths are the "stories that we tell ourselves, and [they are] how they shape our lives" (Barthes, 1972, p. 109). Such stories, especially those around nationhood, are no simple histories, they are systems, fashioned with intent. Such tales "orient, balance and organize the structure" (Derrida, 1970, p. 109).

One of the great benefits of myth, especially in the context of nation building, is their elasticity. As Douglas B. Holt persuasively argues: "Myths are imaginative stories and images that selectively draw on history as source material, which function to continually re-imagine and revitalize the nation's ideology. Because myths are narratives rather than rational arguments, their ideological effect works through the magical elision of facts and ideals. Hence, myths serve a conservative political function, smoothing over contradictions and challenges to ideology (Holt, 2006, p. 366).

Consider the constructions of the great American myth of Manifest Destiny and the notion of a frontier. This is rooted in the characterization of settlers as persecuted people of faith who sought a new world. The narrative extols the fortitude of the dogged settlers pressing across the demanding wilderness, pushing back the frontier. In this narrative, the people killed and subjugated in the process are at best a footnote. At worst, they're cast as bloodthirsty savages resisting the settlers' God-given right to the land.



AI generated image of settlers

The notion of Manifest Destiny seems so embedded in the so-called American experiment that it seems as old as the original settlements in Virginia. But it wasn't. The term itself was first documented in 1845, specifically in reference to a plan to annex Texas. Newspaper editor John L. O'Sullivan (1845) wrote of the "manifest destiny to overspread the continent."

> She is no longer to us a mere geographical space [...] She comes within the dear and sacred designation of Our Country… other nations have undertaken [...] … in a spirit of hostile interference against us, for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness [...] allotted by Providence.

But the messy underpinning of the myth in no way limits its growth or power. For "even if a particular myth or narrative is conceived as a rationalization or an untruth, it can still serve as an organizing principle" (West, 2003, p. 2).

Even at the time of O'Sullivan's writing, the romantic notion of the frontier was largely viewed unfavorably. In 1835, former President John Quincy Adams disavowed his earlier support, and warned such actions would be unwise, especially given the likelihood that many of the people pushed from their lands would join forces against the colonizers (Gershon, 2021).

But, as cited previously, "*myths are narratives rather than rational arguments, their ideological effect works through the magical elision of facts and ideals" (Holt, 2006.*

Consider the narrative of Britain with the cries of Rule Britannia and the pomp and circumstance of the monarchy and the stories of Britain civilizing far off lands, all of which have little to do with the truly savage reality of colonization. Part of the way this action is legitimized is via the construction of the idea of Britain as ageless institution, with some divine right to the lands they claimed in the name of the crown; a spiritual authority affirmed via the union of the church and the monarchy. Consider the stories embedded in the convocation itself; the Archbishop of Canterbury placing the crown on the head of the monarch, their power, as with that of the American expansionists, *allotted by Providence*.

From *Rule Britannia* to America's Star-Spangled Banner, the creation and burnishing of these kinds of *(a)*historical narratives create a scaffold by which a nation can build itself and its identity, a way it demarcates between the citizens of the country and those outside - the *other*.

"National identities ... do not depend on the existence of any objective linguistic or cultural differentiation but on the subjective experience of difference" (Kramer, 1997, p 526). Strictly speaking, that conceit is not necessarily problematic. The very idea of nation itself is an act of demarcation, with physical borders being the literal manifestation of the idea. But in the context of the invasion and occupation of the Americas, the creation of an "other" has a different resonance. The creation of these narratives fortifies the legitimacy of the occupation, a way to stake a claim on a foreign geography.

It's a truism in Canada that our notions of identity are different to those of Americans. We didn't have the kind of rebellion they did; we're still yoked, albeit mostly ceremonially, to Britain and its monarch. As such, the notion of rugged individualism is not the stuff of our construction. Yet, we are guilty of the same manner of myth-making, perhaps less visibly, and with a slightly different flavour and outcome. Our myths may be different but they are myths all the same.

But even as a fledgling country, Canada shared some dark traits with its colonial cousin. The country's first federal prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald to distinguish itself from his neighbor to the south.(Wood, P. 2001). Ironically, Mcdonald had similar aspirations and expansionist notions as the US, as seen in his efforts to annex the North-Western Territory, Rupert's Land, British Columbia, and Prince Edward Island (Wood, 2001).

Of course, Macdonald was, to use the lexicon of settler culture, our country's founding father. His name, visage and form have long festooned the country, from schools, to bridges and parks. And like his American counterparts, his brand of fervent nationalism was characterized by a formal disregard for the nation's original inhabitants.

As the progenitor of the country's residential school program in 1883, Macdonald characterized Indians as "savages," and wrote that "Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thoughts of white men" (Carleton, 2017).

In truth, many of the most beloved Canadian stories are built upon misconceptions or flat out lies. Consider the pride Canadians take in being UN Peacekeepers. Lester B. Pearson won the Nobel Prize for formally creating the UN Peacekeeping force in response to the Suez Canal crisis in 1956 (McCullough, 2021). But a peacekeeping force existed before Pearson arrived at the table. And when people cite this as some measure of our goodness, it is in part based on a misapprehension of what UN Peacekeepers actually do. Indeed, there has long existed the idea of peacekeepers as benevolent mediators. This was true of pre-Suez peacekeeping, namely when UN participants were unarmed observers in 1948's Arab-Israeli war (United Nations, 2015). Yet this image is stark contrast with with the heavily-armed combatants that sport these blue helmets, a force with a long history of documented sins, e.g. The Somalia Affair or sexual misconduct in Haiti (Government of Canada, 2013).

UN Peacekeeping Forces in Site Solèy, Ayiti. (Cité Soleil, Haiti). Author photo.

The peacekeeping forces are not exclusively made up of soldiers; they also include police officers and members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). A beloved institution, the RCMP are closer to the FBI than any of the romantic renderings of them, e.g. friendly Dudley Do-Rights.

It would serve us well to consider the origin of the RCMP. Macdonald was inspired by the Royal Irish Constabulary, a paramilitary force the British created to subdue the Irish (Macleod, 1976). Yet Instead of the Irish, the proto RCMP -- the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) targeted the land's original inhabitants.

The job of the Mounties effectively, was to clear the prairies of Indigenous people, to move them onto reserves whether they were willing to go or not.(Carleton, 2017).
And yet, the Mountie remains a much-loved symbol for this country, ostensibly representing Canadian values - steadfast, honourable, perhaps a bit dull but righteous, in the most bland of ways.

Again, I return to Holt's assertion that myths are narratives rather than rational arguments, their ideological effect works through the magical elision of facts and ideals (Holt, 2006).

But for decades the story of Canada was greater than the evidence of genocide and louder than the voices of Indigenous people advocating for their own survival. And it is a story not simply created by Sir John A. Macdonald and those of his party. This is a participatory story we as a nation tell ourselves, that we reify and legitimize both through the telling and with our silence.

And we can see that story being told and retold in *our* Timmie’s.

Chapter 6
Not-so-true Stories

Author photo

From the wild success of the True Stories campaign to the media blitz that surrounded the delivery of Tim Hortons to Canadian Military bases in Afghanistan, the Tim Hortons has connected itself to patriotism, a dangerous game in a country that has historically found flag waving unseemly. But to buy a cup of coffee that casts itself as simple, sincere, forthright and not too flashy, well, that's the kind of patriotism that most Canadians can stomach.

That said, the company doesn't look much like its story, historically or currently. The man behind the brand, Horton himself, wasn't simply the victim of a tragic accident. After a game in which he played for the Buffalo Sabres against his old teammates of the Toronto Maple Leafs, Horton hopped in his car after a few drinks and headed home. When Horton sped through St Catherines at 4:30 am, a police officer gave chase, but by the time the officer caught up, the hockey player's car had flipped over the median and brought his story to a brutal end (*Montreal Gazette,* February, 21, 1974).

The company kept a tight lock on the particulars of his death, likely to protect Horton's image and by extension the brand, but in 2005, the *Ottawa Citizen* obtained the autopsy and reported that Horton had been driving at 160 kilometers an hour, that his blood alcohol was twice the legal limit, and that there were amphetamines found at the scene. (McGregor, 2014). Perhaps this is why today, Horton himself has become what author Douglas Hunter described as, "a ghost in the machine" (Jeffords, 2014) with his signature and face receding from the marketing. Even the name shifted - the company opting to drop the possessive apostrophe - transforming Tim Horton's to Tim *Hortons.* It no longer belongs to him - not literally, symbolically nor syntactically.

Additionally, the company regularly faces criticism for labor practices that seem inconsistent with its allegedly friendly, bland and respectful ethos. When the minimum wage in Ontario was raised, one franchise's owners in Coburg, Ontario found their own way to offset the expense. Documents obtained by the CBC showed the owners had issued a statement to their employees.

> Breaks will no longer be paid. A 9 hour shift will be paid for 8 hours and 20 minutes. These changes are due to the increase of wages to $14.00 minimum wage on January 1, 2018, then $15.00 per hour on January 1, 2019, as well as the lack of assistance and financial help from our Head Office and from the Government (Saltzman, 2018).

Unsurprisingly, the action spawned public outcry, one that grew even louder when it was learned that the franchise's owners were children of its founders -- and heirs to the Timmie's fortune: Ron Joyce Jr. and Jeri-Lynn Horton-Joyce.

And there are other reasons why the brand's star is fading. In 2006 it was quietly bought by Wendy's, and then acquired by Restaurant Brand International (RBI), which while technically still Canadian, has a Brazilian holding company as its majority shareholder. (Sturgeon, 2014).

Business

Tim Hortons heirs cut paid breaks and worker benefits after minimum wage hike, employees say

'I wasn't marching down the street asking for this pay raise. Now I'm worse off'

Aaron Saltzman · CBC News · Posted: Jan 03, 2018 11:59 AM ET | Last Updated: January 3, 2018

Jeri Lynn Horton-Joyce, daughter of Tim Horton, is served in the Shaikh Zayed Road location in Dubai. This photo was taken for a story published in the Gulf News, a daily English language newspaper in Dubai. (Asghar Khan/Gulf News)

Figure 13: Screeshot of Tim Horton's daughter being poured a cup of coffee by a worker at her franchise, CBC.ca, Jan 3, 2018

Of late, the brand is extending itself well beyond the coffee shop, now offering things like canned soup, which has little to do with its community moorings.

According to *Double Double* author, Douglas Hunter this all bodes ill for the brand.

> The moment Canadians stop identifying themselves with Tim Hortons [...] the brand has a problem. Because really, McDonald's makes a pretty good cup of coffee. Lots of places make pretty good cups of coffee. (Off, 2018).

Tim Hortons soup display in Walmart, 2022. Author photo.

Chapter 7:
Get *Grounded* -
The stories of Kaapittiaq

The summer and fall of 2021 was a fraught time in Canadian politics, especially for the Indigenous people of this country. In the media, cries were rising for justice. The one conciliatory calls for reconciliation had taken a different tone. Certainly the indigenous people of this country were rightfully demanding a reckoning, a cultural and political recognition of what had been done to their children, their culture and their world. But, possibly for the first time, many settler Canadians added their voices to the call.

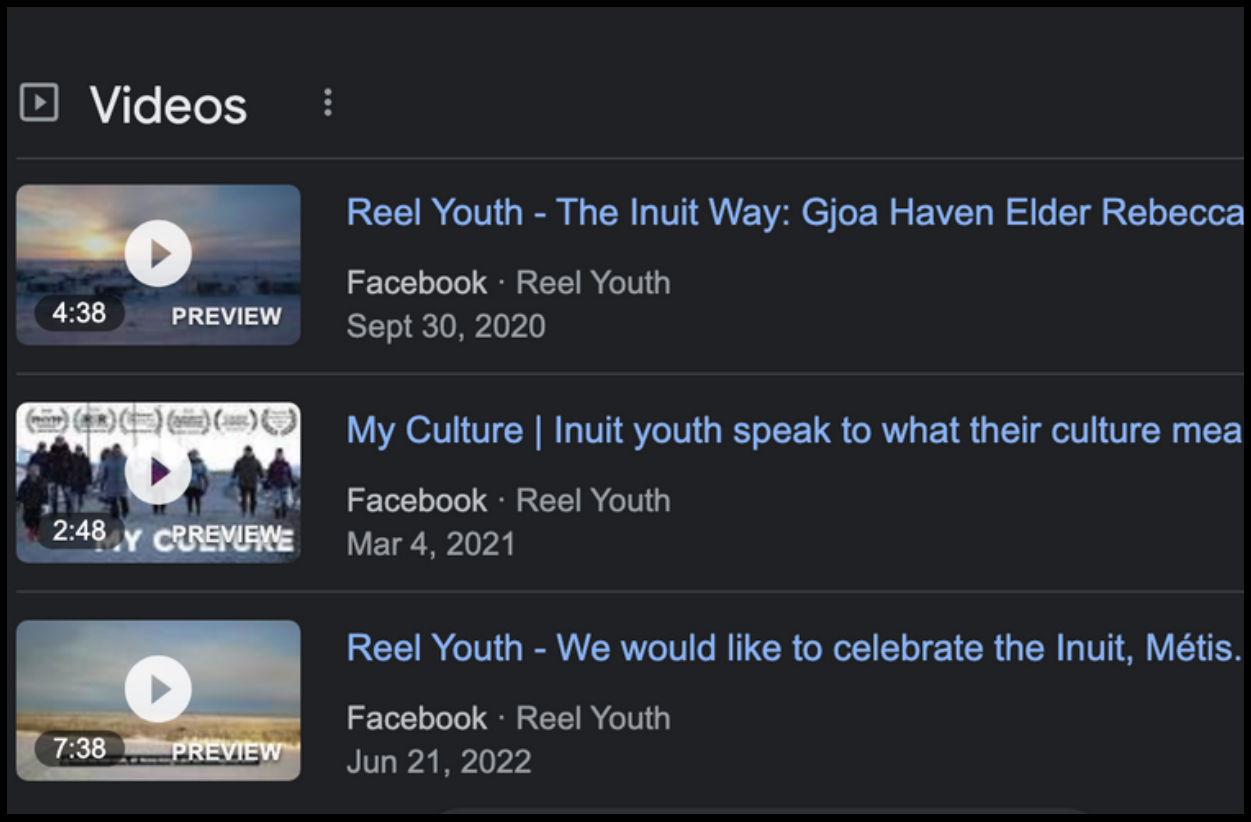
This was not the usual chorus of activists and academics. Many people who historically proclaimed they were *not interested in politics* began to speak, to consider their own culpability. It became clear to many that the sins of the past were the sins of the present if we did not redress what had been done under the aegis of a crucifix and a Canadian flag.

As the country grappled with the horrors of its not -so-distant colonial past, I was tasked to train another young Inuk woman, one who had replaced Maggi, to handle the social media and press for the company. (For purposes of this paper, we will refer to her as the Social Media Producer or SMP).

Even reeling from how our national storytelling helped perpetuate atrocities, I was still hoping to leverage community stories to generate more than just an income stream for PII.

As I considered strategies, I asked this question: What if the brand itself could expand knowledge of the local culture and language, and thus play a greater role in realizing KHS's larger goal? Armed with that question, I set about trying to evaluate what we would need to make Kaapittiaq a storytelling instrument of the Copper Inuit.

During my initial work with KHS at SFI, I'd learned that in previous years the Heritage Society had worked with a youth-oriented media organization that helped local youth make documentaries about their elders. In keeping with the *story as product* model I was hoping to develop, one of my first suggestions was that the company should create an attractive QR code for its packaging which would be linked to these mini documentaries. (The QR code will appear on future packaging.)



Screenshot of Kaapittiaq videos from YouTube

Rather than using a generic media strategy I recommended what I dubbed *The McBride Approach.* Story goes, that when McBride, the CEO of Nettwerk records, managed the Barenaked Ladies in the 1990s, he opted not to send them on traditional cross country tours. Rather, he religiously scrutinized college radio station playlists and should his musicians make an appearance on these lists, he'd quickly send them in to capitalize on the burgeoning audience and local champions (i.e. DJs).

Informed by the success of this strategy, I recommended we create a bespoke media and PR approach tailored to those who would be receptive to the particular story of the company (i.e. young media creators who were either Indigenous, wrote about Indigenous issues) or had demonstrated that they were allied with these communities. Further, I proposed the company lean deeper into Inuit stories

In the early summer I proposed relaunching the Kaapittiaq website on Canada Day with a d*ecolonizing* event in conjunction with the Toronto restaurant, The Depanneur.

However, in the wake of the bodies being found, to make Canada Day about a product -- even a decolonized one -- seemed at best, wrong footed. At worst, it seemed callous. Accordingly, the organization thought it wise to postpone the event. The narrative of why this coffee brand exists (preservation of culture) dictated that it not be re-launched at a time of collective grief. This was another example of how the narrative of this company dictated actions. If the company were simply about commerce – the launch would have trumped all other concerns.

A series of press releases were being written for a fall launch when it was announced that the fall would see both the country's first reconciliation day and a federal election. Any chance of that launch as we understood it sputtered out. The narrative of the country and the necessary keening of the indigenous people was far more important than that of a brand, even if the two stories were connected.

As we scanned the calendar for fortuitous dates, I was also attempting to develop a contest or giveaway for the coffee. The idea was to have a monthly Inuinnaqtun word that we would ask people to try to pronounce, record their efforts, post on social media, and tag the company when they did. At the end of each month, we would have a native speaker say the word correctly and they would award a bag of coffee to the person with the best pronunciation.

I had initially pitched this to Maggi who thought it was a good idea. Her approval was echoed by the head of the company, who was also a teacher of Inuinnaqtun. When submitted the idea to the new social media producer (SMP) as one of our first interactions . She did not share the others' view of the idea. She felt that it would be insulting if a settler won the contest. Why should her people be punished for not speaking a language they'd stolen from them, she asked. At first I resisted, reluctant to give up what I was certain was a good idea, one sanctioned by other Inuit. I suspect I bristled not simply due to my ego but because I felt like there was a tacit criticism leveled at me in her response, that my idea was, perhaps racist or at the very least, neo-colonial.

After I considered it for a time, I realized that she was right to oppose my idea. While the idea had been sanctioned by others, they didn't occupy her position, and she was the population that the social enterprise sought to serve: a silent speaker - a person of the community who did not fluently speak the language as a direct consequence of colonialism. Should she, or another in her position, compete with a settler in the arena of their stolen language, it was a kind of cold violence.

She was not wrong.

As time went on, I found myself writing many of the posts as *suggestions* which the Social Media Producer would then tweak. This caused a crisis of intention. If the goal of my participation was to help the company tell their stories, then what were the implications of me, a settler, writing those stories? I felt I was perpetuating colonial practices, regardless of my goals.

In the autumn, we moved forward with the plan to produce more Inuit-related content. As the content of the post became pointedly Inuit, the more the number of likes grew. When the social media campaign began in the spring, the amount of likes were often less than 30 per post (Instagram and Facebook). Once the content became more closely tied to Inuit culture, the average number of likes doubled, then doubled again. One post featuring an elder drinking coffee received over 500 likes.

The idea of the coffee as a conduit for story was bearing fruit.

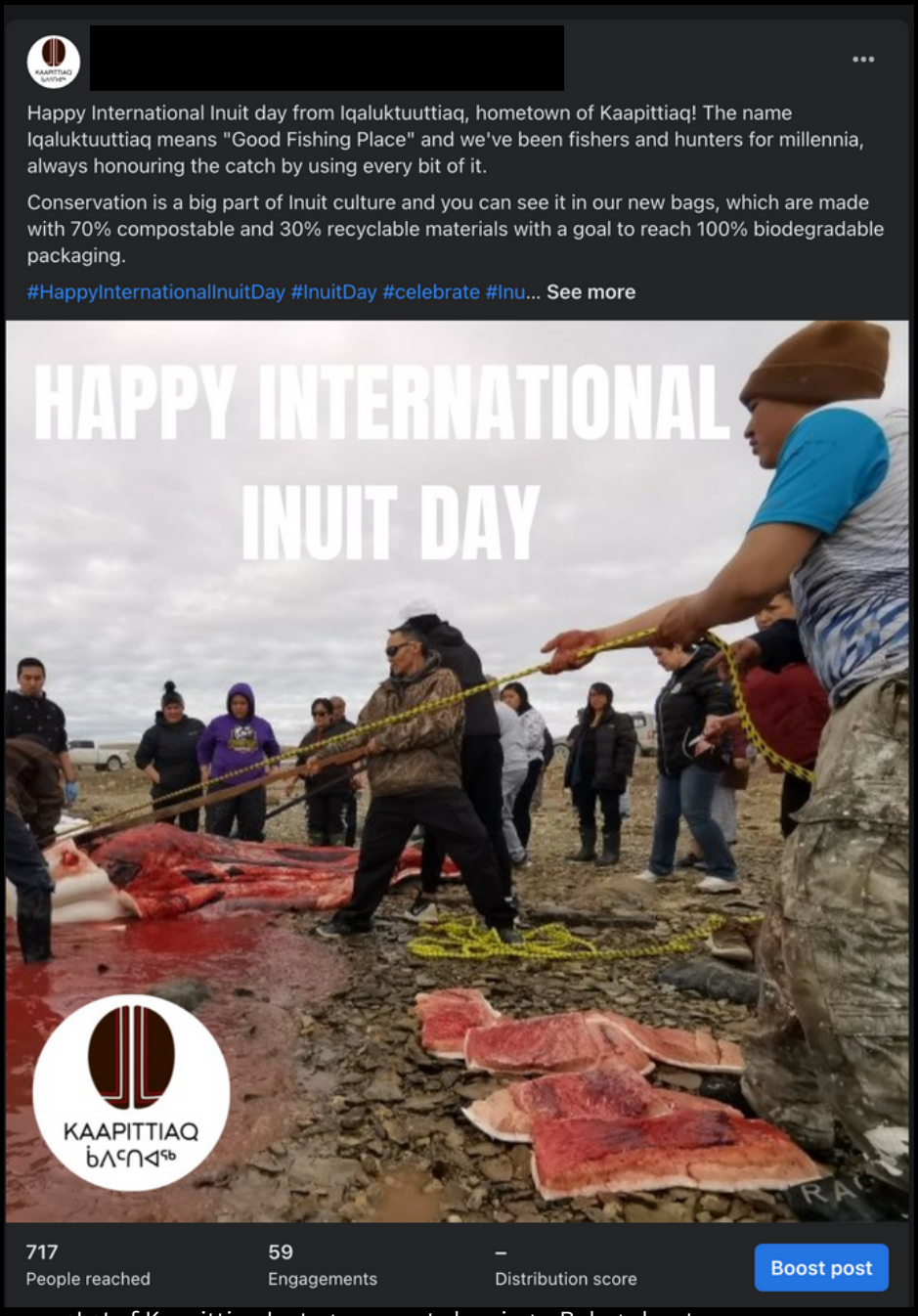
Screenshot of a Kaapittiaq Instagram post

But we soon faced another narrative crisis

For International Inuit day, the SMP prepped a post featuring a picture of a Beluga whale, with the community triumphantly gathered around the split body of the whale, the water in which it was partially submerged a blood red.

Happy international Inuit Day, proclaimed the text.

I blanched.



Screenshot of Kaapittiaq Instagram post showing a Beluga hunt

I told her this was probably a bad idea. Social media was not the place for dead creatures, that hunters were often vilified for posting pictures of their prey on social media platforms. I argued that if we were to build a following that would help us woo distributors and ultimately sell more coffee then this was not the way to do it.

But this is our story, our *actual* story, she said. You say that we are using the coffee as a delivery system for the story, right?

I agreed.

"But this is who we are as a people, this is how we live. If we can't tell this story on International Inuit day, then when can we?"

In what she said, I heard the words of Hillel the Elder:

"If not now, then *when?"*

Perhaps this is the challenge of narrative for organizations. To tell the story of a people or even an organization is to understand that it is a powerful, complicated thing. It is ever changing, messy, multifarious, and multifaceted. And when one uses story to serve a commercial purpose, at what point might the notion of an audience might unduly influence the story?

But story is a process, not an object. To view it as a product, especially in a consumerist capitalist sense, is tricky at best, and dangerous at worst.

So, where does that leave us, *dear reader*?

CHAPTER 8
THE FOOL'S JOURNEY

True Stories

Don't ask for the true story;
why do you need it?

It's not what I set out with,
or what I carry.

What I'm sailing with,
a knife, blue fire,
luck, a few good words that still work
and the tide.

The true story was lost
on the way down to the beach;
it's something I never had,
that black tangle of branches in a shifting light,
my blurred footprints filling with salt water,

this handful of tiny bones, this owl's kill.
a moon, crumpled papers, a coin,
the glint of an old picnic,
the hollows made by lovers in the sand
a hundred years ago: no clue

The true story lies among the other stories;
a mess of colors, like jumbled clothing,
thrown off or away,

like hearts on marble, like syllables
like butchers' discards.

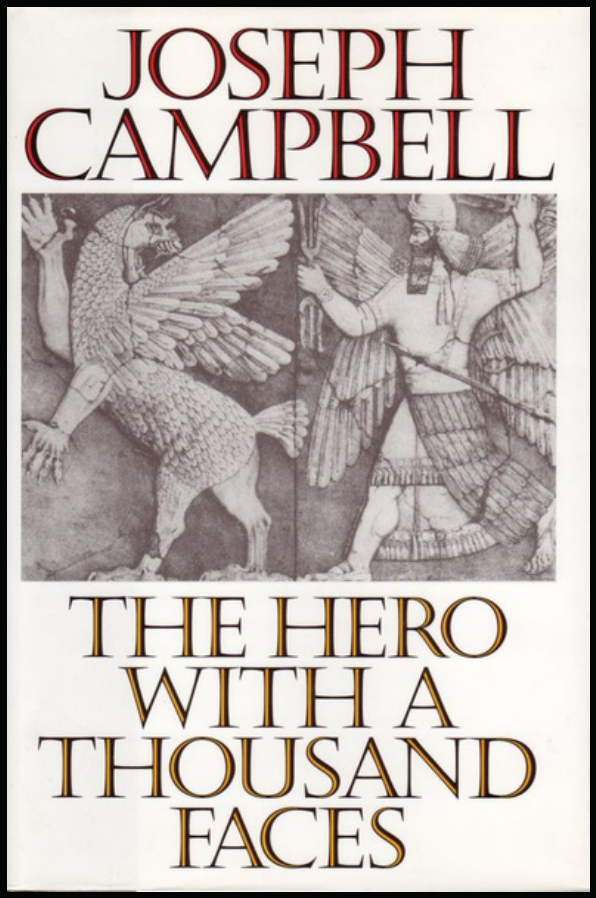
The true story is vicious
and multiple. and untrue
after all.

Why do you need it?
Don't ever ask for the true story.

(Atwood, 1981)

When I first began working with the idea of storytelling as an instrument of futures design for organizations, many people suggested the model of the Hero's Journey as a way to structure the paper. The Hero's Journey is a concept taken from Joseph Campbell's T*he Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The book argues that there's a monomyth present in all cultures, a structure that most stories follow, from origin tales to George Lucas's *Star wars*.

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man (Campbell, 1947, pp. 36-67).



The Hero's Journey

Call to adventure

Refusal of the Call

Returns with Elixir

Meeting the mentor

Normal world

Road Back

Crossing the Threshold

Unknown

Gets Gift

Atonement

Tests, Allies and Enemies

Initiation

Transformation

Approach

Death of The Mentor

Ordeal

Hero's Journey, Author's work

As I looked at the structure, I realized it didn't fit my journey. None of the stages aligned with my own path through the research. Yet the biggest stumbling block wasn't Campbell's steps of the journey ; it was the very notion of a hero with *power to bestow.* Additionally, the notion of the hero is one that seems very masculine. Indeed, one of Campbell's own graduate students bristled at this. When Maureen Murdock tried to remedy this with her *Heroine's Journey* and later showed her version of the journey to her former professor in 1983, Campbell reportedly said, "Women don't need to make the journey. In the whole mythological journey, the woman is there. All she has to do is realize that she's the place that people are trying to get to (Murdock, 2 016).

Yet when I read Murdock's book, with its shift to goddess culture and more so-called feminine ideals and iconography, it still didn't click. What was missing from these tellings was the notion of *failure.* When the hero completes their journey, they return with the elixir, a thing, or a power that is their triumph. But what if there is no triumph, no elixir? What if the journey ends in failure? And what is the yield of failure?

Perhaps there is another model to consider.

Author's work

In the Tarot, the Fool card shows a youth at the beginning of the journey, at a precipice and likely to fall off. This character doesn't seem to know where they are going but they move forward, eager to engage with what is before them.

I perceive the position of the Fool is analogous to the Zen Buddhist notion of *Soshin,* meaning beginner's mind. So perhaps the Fool's journey of storytelling isn't about h*aving* stories - it's about the process of telling stories. It's about holding *soshin* as one moves through the world. It's a world in which failure can have as much value as an elixir. For what if failure is a kind of creative destruction that can propel one into the future?

In my failure to create a simple process to help Kaappittaq tell stories I realized that there are always multiple, even dueling narratives, and that a devotion to one static story, such as the story of Canada, can lead to anything from the effacing of unpleasant truths, to the effacing of a culture.

Perhaps the real journey is not about the hero but the *fool?*

By adopting a *beginne*r's mind, I was able to see that I could not impose my views of storytelling on an organization and a people whose experience was so different from my own. My efforts to create a tool or process to help organizations tell stories had failed - the elixir was never in my hand. Yet the process had been an enlightening one, and when I stopped looking for a means to construct stories, both for the coffee company and for myself, it became clear that failure had a lesson for me: deconstructing stories is important as creating them.

Chapter 9

Untelling Stories

As I considered instruments to reveal multiple layers of a story I found myself returning to the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA). Developed by Sohail Inayatullah, the CLA is a strategic foresight method used to understand complex worldviews and metaphors (Inayatullah, 1998). This method analysis accounts for “various streams of causality operating in unison upon an issue” (Ramos, 2016). Often seen visually represented as an iceberg, the CLA allows one to explore the deeper levels of meaning that underpin a system, culture, or even an organization.

Given that our stories are a kind of palimpsest, with many layers the CLA offers inspiration for a new tool - one to help organizations not solely to create stories, but rather, take apart ones they have I started by taking the shape and the visual metaphor of an iceberg, as used by the CLA. Yet for my purposes, things are a little different.

Consider the compass rose, also known as a compass star.

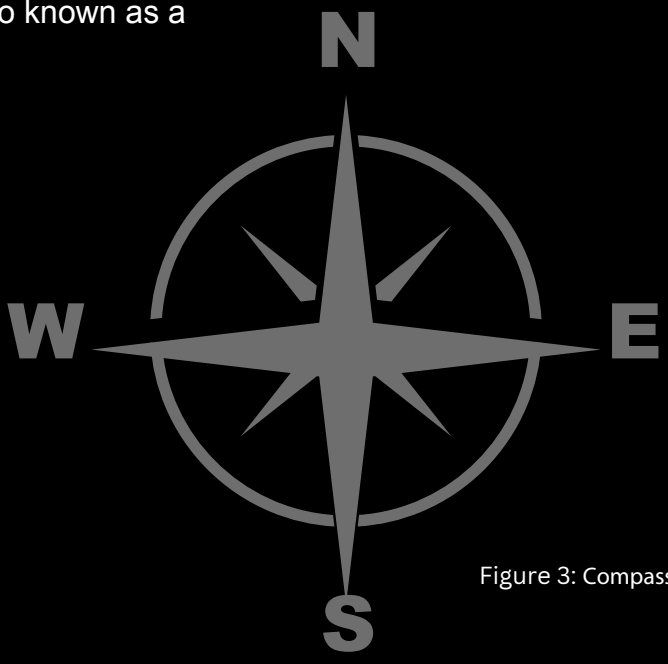


Figure 3: Compass rose

Traditionally, the compass rose symbolizes direction, awakening and discovery. The four primary/cardinal points, known as winds, represent infinite possibility, the present, the past and the future.

This, mixed with a CLA is the model for our storytelling instrument - the Exploding Story Compass (ESC).

Each ESC has four triangular tines, known as winds, each divided into four categories.

The Exploding Story Compass

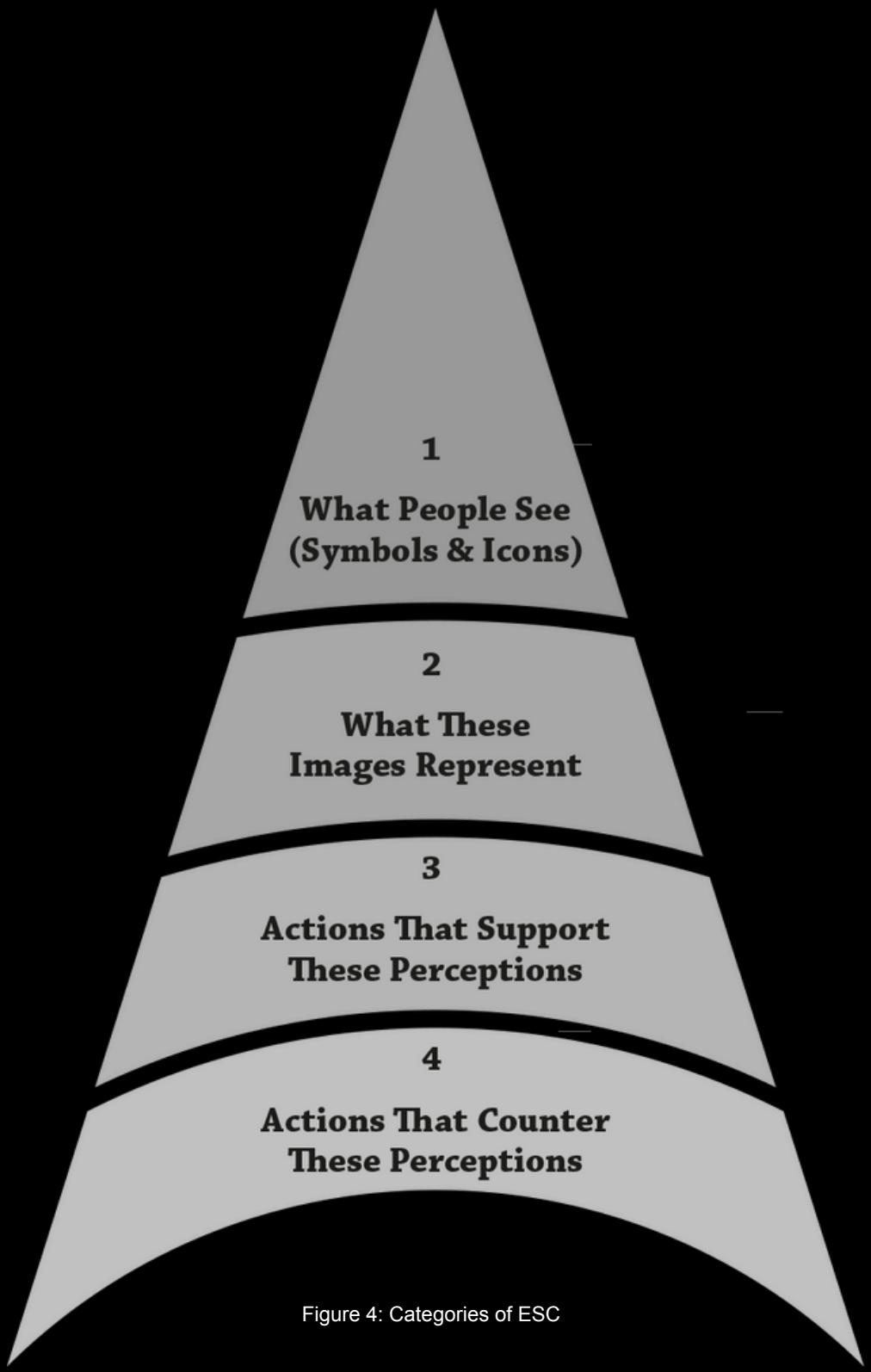


Figure 4: Categories of ESC

The south wind represents the organization's historical narrative. (In the absence of a historical signature narrative, it will be the most commonly known narrative about the organization.)

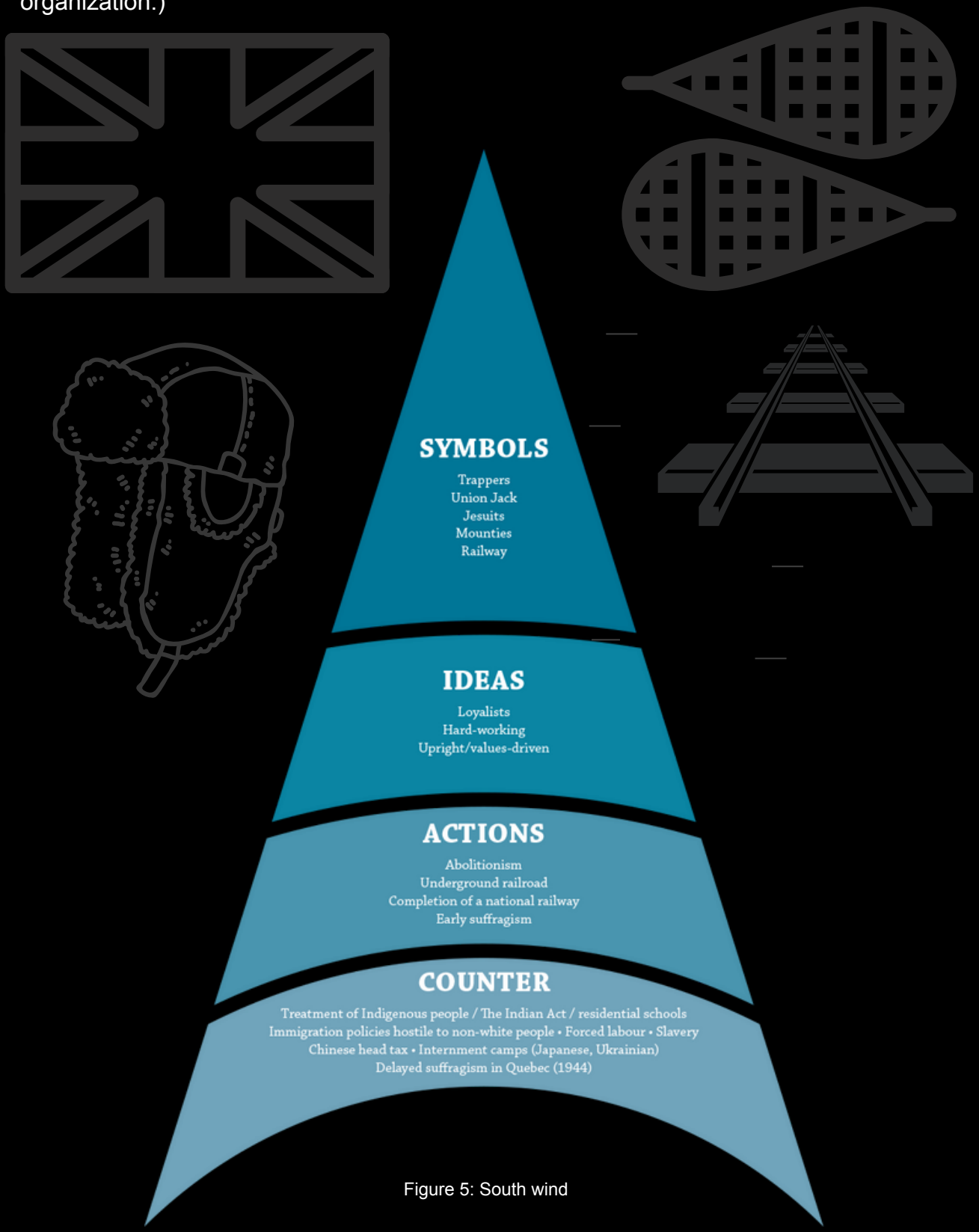


Figure 5: South wind

The east wind is the current story, the present.

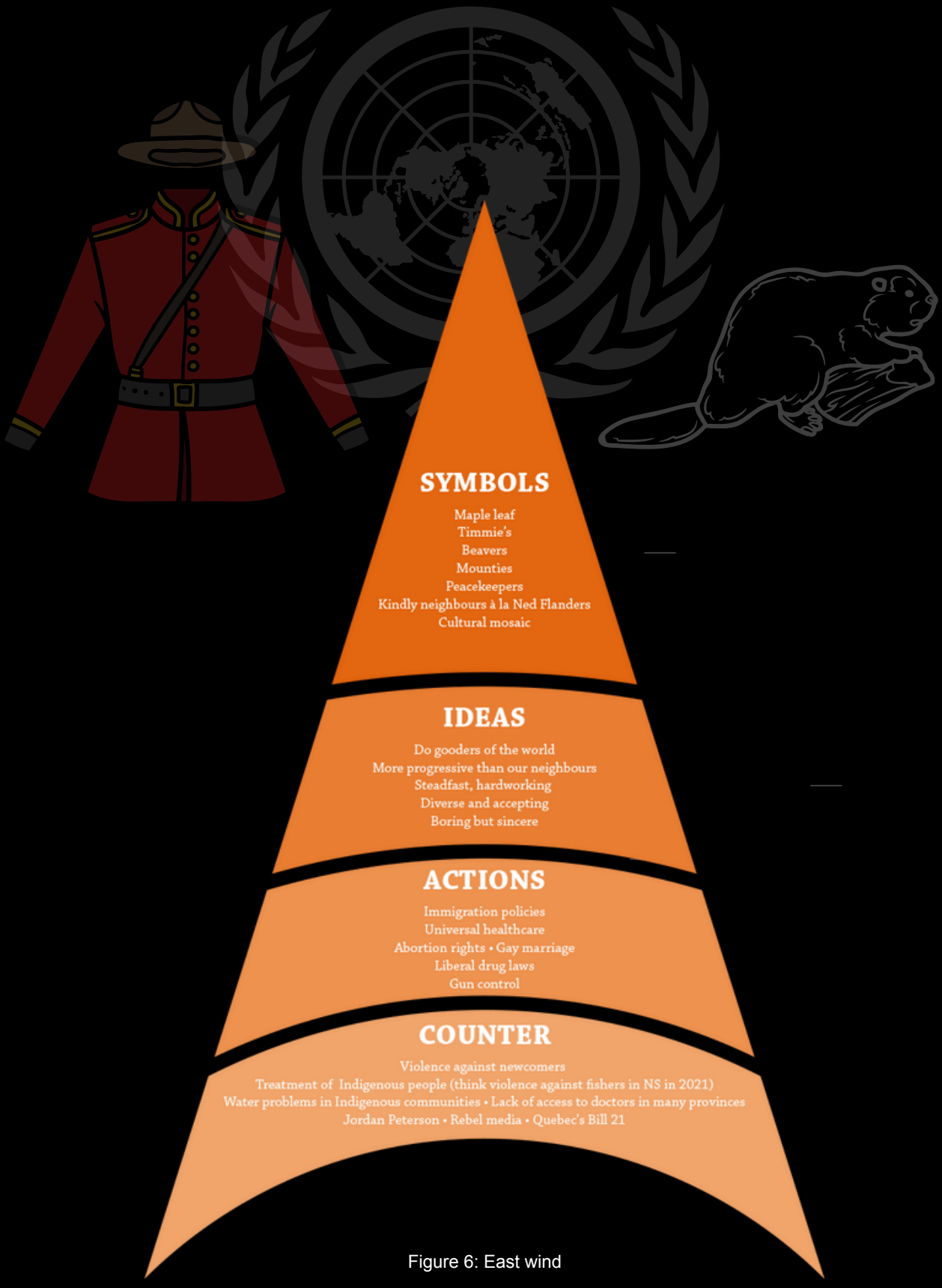


Figure 6: East wind

The west wind is the shadow narrative, a scenario in which current and past elements could play out in a negative way (it forces participants to recognize the seeds of negative development they currently (and/or historically) have cultivated, intentionally or not.

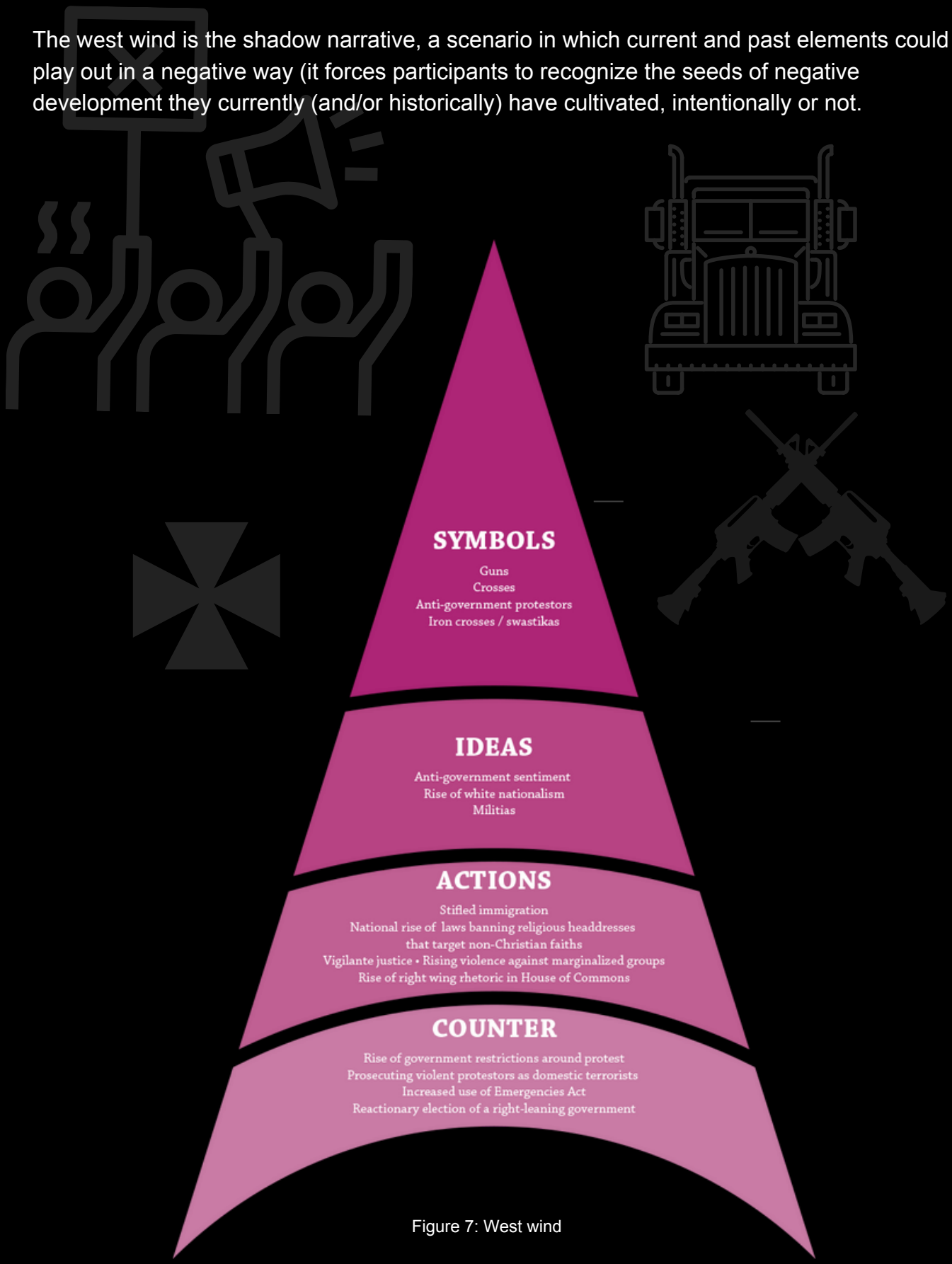


Figure 7: West wind

Once the E/S/W winds are filled out - the north wind can be considered.
The north wind is where the organization aspires to be. Based on a deep and unflinching analysis of the past, present and shadow versions of itself, an organization can better imagine how it should be.

Segments 1-3 are the same as in the other winds but as this is the ideal version of the organization, segment four isn't about contradictions - it's about cohesion, and vision. It is the culmination of categories; thus this space is for the mission statement, one that should be in harmony with all the other elements on the north wind

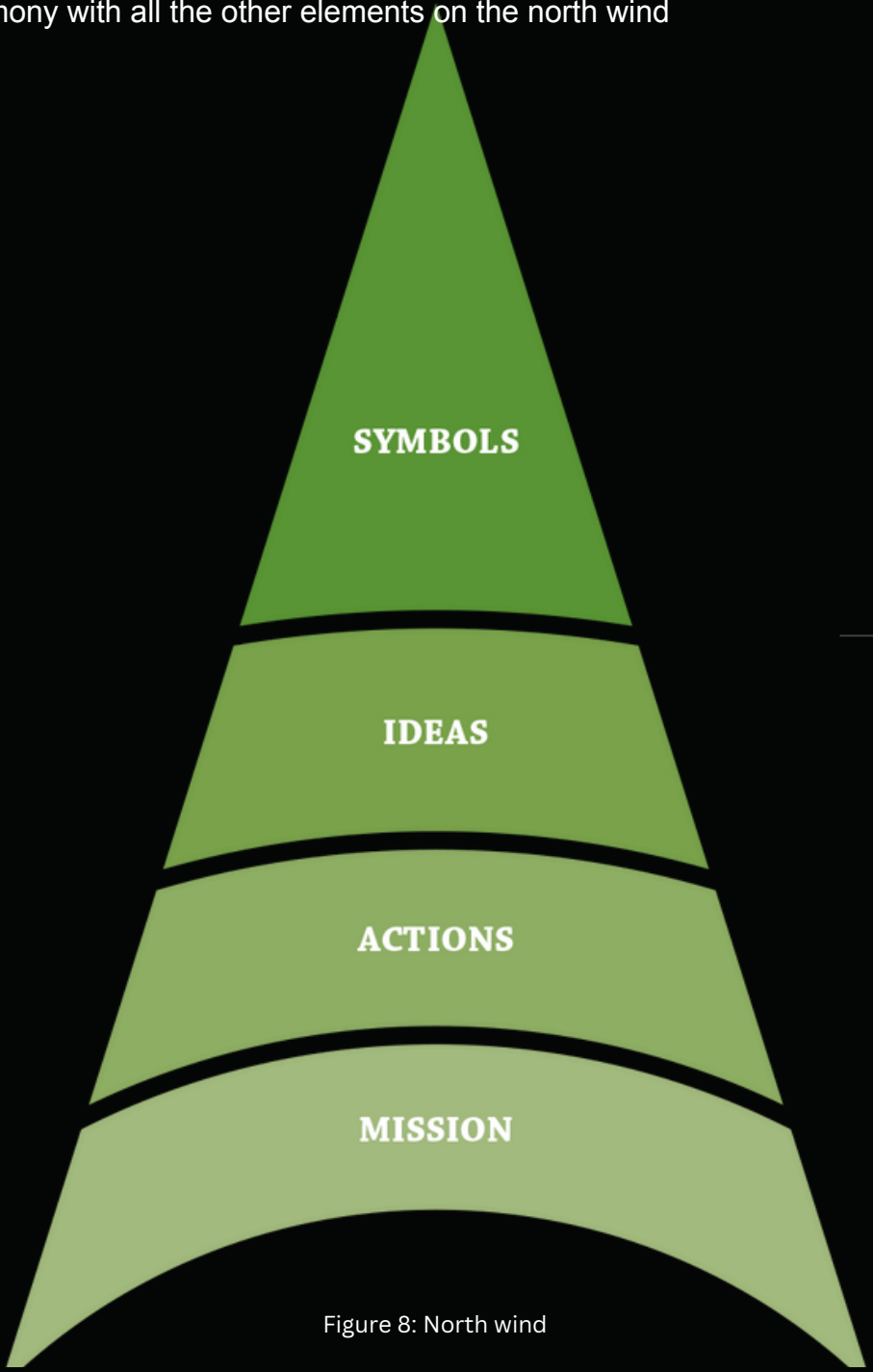


Figure 8: North wind

The very notion of north is a potent metaphor for organizations - for what is north? True north and magnetic north are two different things: The north that a compass needle turns to is not a fixed point - and shifts over time. That is known as the magnetic north. The true north is the northern axis of rotation of the earth - where all the lines of longitude meet.

When an organization, especially a non-profit undertaking a social enterprise, creates a single, signature narrative, it may be following the magnetic north of profit and growth - which will lead them astray, i.e. mission drift. But if one performs the analysis demanded by the ESC, then they can be guided to a truth north that is the convergence of symbols, ideas and intentions (the sum of the north wind on the ESC).

Figure 9: Full ESC

I propose using the ESC as part of storytelling workshops within organizations. The workshop would commence with a storytelling exercise I have named after the Akira Kurosawa film, *Rashômon* (based on a Japanese folk tale). The film describes the murder of a woodcutter from multiple contradictory perspectives: A bandit, the wife of the woodcutter and, via a medium, the woodcutter himself.

The film isn't just about multiple perspectives; it can be seen as an epistemological meditation.

Screenshot of the trial in Kurosawa's Rashômon, 19&2

The exercise asks participants to choose an event (related to the organization or not) in which there are more than three people involved and of which they know many details. They are then asked to write up a short story about the event. (It need only be a few paragraphs.) Once they have finished the story, they are then asked to tell the same story two more times --but from the perspective of two other people in the story.

Harnessing the *Rashômon* effect as a creative exercise serves to reveal an "epistemological framework—or ways of thinking, knowing, and remembering—required for understanding complex and ambiguous situations" (Anderson, 2016).

The goal of this exercise is to have workshop participants consider the frame of their subjectivity and to explore multiple perspectives on the same event. After the conclusion of the exercise, participants will form small groups and perform a ESC on their organization’s narratives.

Final Reflections

The experience of writing this paper has not been linear. As previously stated, it was less like Double Diamond and more like a Möbius strip of catalytic moments, which then prompted exploration around an inciting problem or challenge, then an encounter with an obstacle, and then a frequent return to the,discovery stage. Initially it seem' less my idealized version of a Fool's journey than a fool's errand. But this was not all in vain.

Part of the yield of this difficult work was what educator and philosopher Paulo Freire called c*onscientization*, the process of becoming aware of one's social reality via reflection and action (Friere, 1972). Indeed, there is certainly no proper exploration of narrative in this country without a consideration of the oppressor and the oppressed, the settler and the unsettled. As the process of writing this paper made me aware of the peril embedded in story (i.e. who tells *what,* to *whom* and *why*), perhaps the paper (and the ESC) possess what education scholar Patti Lather names *catalytic validity,* by which the value of research is measured by the degree to which the research process transforms participants (Lather, 1986).

In this case, the participant is the very person who is typing these words. With luck, maybe even the person reading these words.

As such, the purpose of the ESC, and indeed this paper, has evolved into something far different than my initial intention. Rather than an instrument to tell stories, the ESC allows organizations to deconstruct their own tales, opening themselves to real innovation, growth and self knowledge.

The goal is not to help us tell stories; it is to understand the stories we tell ourselves.

After having emerged from this process with a prototype , I hope to test the ESC in storytelling workshops and via the feedback, respond to the Double Diamond's call to *iterate, iterate, iterate.*

It is about the journey, after all. Nothing is ever *comple*

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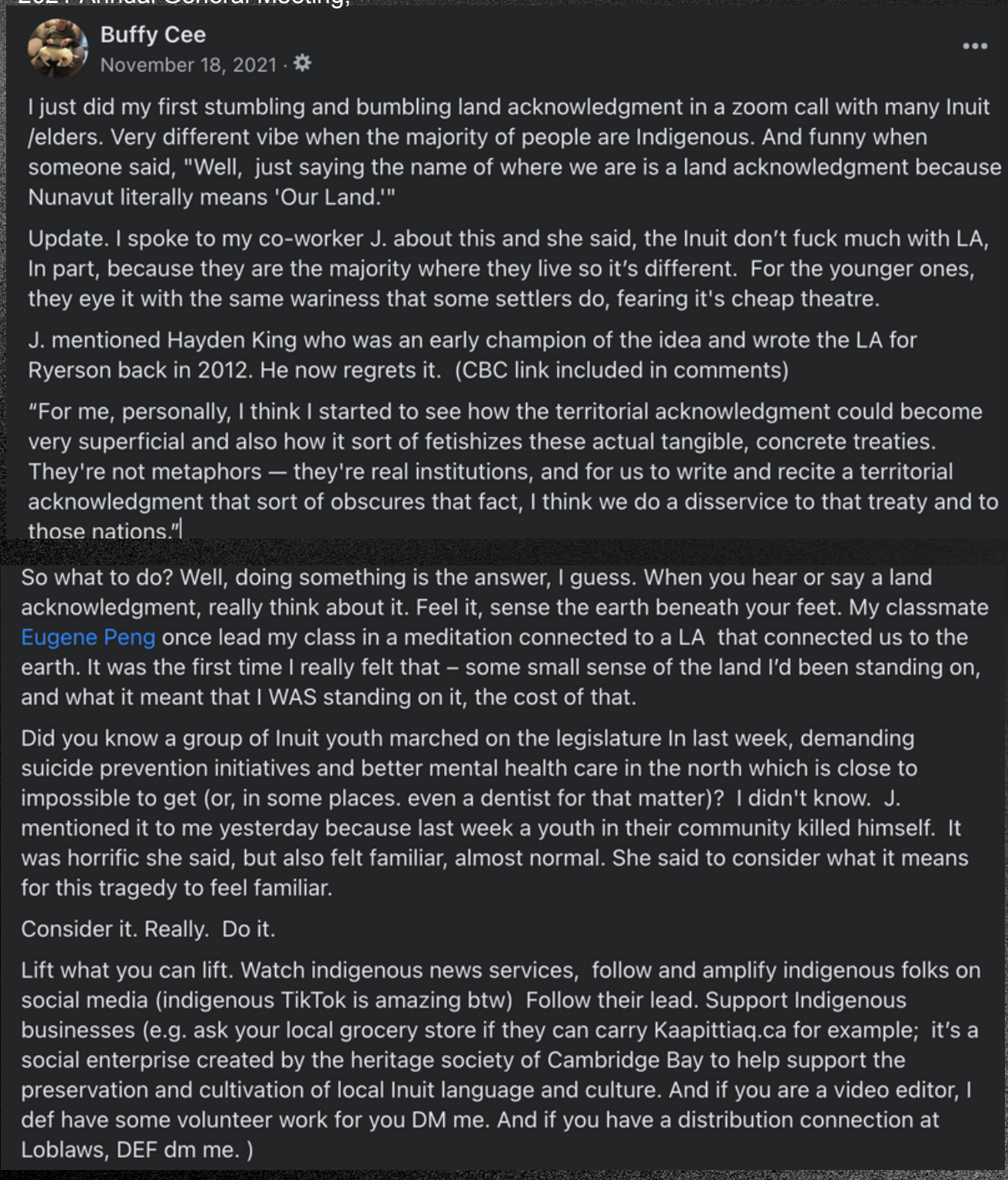
Appendix A

Screenshot of my Facebook post about my land acknowledgment given at Kaapittiaq's 2021 Annual General Meeting,



Buffy Cee
November 18, 2021 ·

I just did my first stumbling and bumbling land acknowledgment in a zoom call with many Inuit /elders. Very different vibe when the majority of people are Indigenous. And funny when someone said, "Well, just saying the name of where we are is a land acknowledgment because Nunavut literally means 'Our Land.'"

Update. I spoke to my co-worker J. about this and she said, the Inuit don't fuck much with LA, In part, because they are the majority where they live so it's different. For the younger ones, they eye it with the same wariness that some settlers do, fearing it's cheap theatre.

J. mentioned Hayden King who was an early champion of the idea and wrote the LA for Ryerson back in 2012. He now regrets it. (CBC link included in comments)

"For me, personally, I think I started to see how the territorial acknowledgment could become very superficial and also how it sort of fetishizes these actual tangible, concrete treaties. They're not metaphors — they're real institutions, and for us to write and recite a territorial acknowledgment that sort of obscures that fact, I think we do a disservice to that treaty and to those nations."

So what to do? Well, doing something is the answer, I guess. When you hear or say a land acknowledgment, really think about it. Feel it, sense the earth beneath your feet. My classmate Eugene Peng once lead my class in a meditation connected to a LA that connected us to the earth. It was the first time I really felt that – some small sense of the land I'd been standing on, and what it meant that I WAS standing on it, the cost of that.

Did you know a group of Inuit youth marched on the legislature In last week, demanding suicide prevention initiatives and better mental health care in the north which is close to impossible to get (or, in some places. even a dentist for that matter)? I didn't know. J. mentioned it to me yesterday because last week a youth in their community killed himself. It was horrific she said, but also felt familiar, almost normal. She said to consider what it means for this tragedy to feel familiar.

Consider it. Really. Do it.

Lift what you can lift. Watch indigenous news services, follow and amplify indigenous folks on social media (indigenous TikTok is amazing btw) Follow their lead. Support Indigenous businesses (e.g. ask your local grocery store if they can carry Kaapittiaq.ca for example; it's a social enterprise created by the heritage society of Cambridge Bay to help support the preservation and cultivation of local Inuit language and culture. And if you are a video editor, I def have some volunteer work for you DM me. And if you have a distribution connection at Loblaws, DEF dm me.)

I am def fucking this up all the time. I get angry and frustrated when misstep and get called out. I feel uncomfortable a lot but that's part of it. I guess. I can't be an ally without being uncomfortable. Our comfort is unearned. It feels bad some days but I am slowly learning to sit with that. It's not personal (usually). But I don't know what I am doing and am saying the wrong things frequently

That said, I am trying in my own bumbling way. And slowly, thanks to the generosity of some folks in the north, I am slowly getting a bit better. And some days, it feels amazing and I feel very lucky to have someone who will hold my hand and explain things, and share their experience and needs. I am grateful I can help tell their story, and help chart a path to the future, one that has them, as Carole Anne Hilton (who coined the term "Indigenomics"), "demanding the right to live in their own modernity (we can argue about perils of capitalism separately.)

Yeah, the acknowledgments are problematic. But at the same time, it's part of a shift, so maybe young settlers don't grow up thinking, like me, that Micmac was just a mall in Dartmouth ((Mi'Kmaq). I guess land acknowledgments are like when you say I am sorry. Ain't nothing unless you mean it and do something to rectify what you did wrong.

Reconciliation isn't just a government thing. Like it or not, it's my thing.

And yours, too.

Screen grab, PII AGM on Zoom, 2021