Dealing with Difficult Emotions: Anger at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

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Abstract: This article approaches the Canadian TRC and its aspiration for reconciliation from an emotions perspective, thereby acknowledging the significant role emotions play in constituting identities and political communities, as well as understanding emotions as central to how conflicts are generated, viewed and solved (Hutchison and Bleiker 2008). I explore Michael Ure's claim that TRCs are host to a fundamental tension between the competing imperatives of justice (and its prime emotion of anger) and reconciliation (2008:286). The aim is to understand how survivors deal with this emotionally tense process and make sense of the TRC in this context.

Keywords: Indian Residential Schools, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, emotions, feeling rules, reconciliation, healing

Résumé : Cet article aborde la Commission de vérité et réconciliation (CVR) du Canada et son aspiration à la réconciliation à partir d'une perspective axée sur les émotions, reconnaissant par là le rôle clé que jouent les émotions dans la constitution des identités et des communautés politiques, et considérant ainsi leur position centrale dans le cadre de la création, la perception et la résolution des conflits (Hutchison et Bleiker 2008). J'explore la prémisse de Michael Ure selon laquelle les CVR sont le siège d'une tension fondamentale entre les impératifs concurrentiels de justice (et son expression principale de colère) et de réconciliation (2008:286). Je cherche à comprendre le sens donné à la CVR par les survivants, ainsi que leurs façons de gérer ce processus si tendu émotionnellement.

Mots-clés : pensionnats amérindiens, Commission de vérité et réconciliation, émotions, règles de sentiment, réconciliation, guérison

Introduction[1]

The woman screamed from a place inside herself where there was so much pain that the air froze in the lobby of the Queen Mary Hotel in Montreal. "My daughter hung herself and nobody cares," she yelled over and over again. Quickly, staff from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) tried to catch her as she wildly ran for the doors of the Grand Salon where the welcoming ceremony of the fifth national event had just begun. She flung herself to the ground, still wailing and trying to get away from TRC staff members determined to stop her from entering the room. Inside the Grand Salon, the drums were beating so loud that this wild chase was kept from the media, keen on getting the images of the event opening.

I had just run into Ogi gwan abik,[2] an old friend and a survivor of residential school. We stood there in the lobby, interrupted in our reunion and feeling this woman's pain, while flustered at the insistence from TRC staff that we must at once enter the Grand Salon.

Such raw displays of anger mixed with despair were not commonplace at the Montreal TRC event. And yet, in contrast to retributive justice mechanisms, TRCs are known for encouraging emotional expression. Their victim-centred approaches provide platforms for people who have suffered devastating abuses to share their stories. The Canadian TRC creates both public and private spaces for former students to share their memories of residential schools, where over 150,000 Aboriginal children were sent for most of the 20th century, in over 139 schools spread across the country (Miller 1996; Milloy 1999). As is being uncovered, these schools, which were financed by the federal government and run by the churches, were not only places of sexual, physical, psychological and cultural abuse but also places where more than 4,000 children lost their lives. The survivors, as they call themselves,[3] were often unable to cope as they grew up and frequently reproduced dysfunctional

behaviour patterns in their own families as adults (Dion Stout and Kipling 2003).

The Canadian TRC is part of the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA)[4] that was implemented in 2007, in an attempt to address the intergenerational legacy of residential schools and the increasing numbers of class actions and individual cases that were being filed by survivors. The official spaces[5] created by the commission engage people's emotions through the giving and receiving of difficult stories. The transformative potentials and challenges of these spaces are important to consider in how they relate to historical renderings, healing and reconciliation. This article approaches the Canadian TRC and its aspiration for healing and reconciliation from an emotions perspective, thereby acknowledging the significant role emotions play in constituting identities and political communities, as well as understanding emotions as central to how conflicts are generated, viewed and solved (Hutchison and Bleiker 2008:387).

The opening story in this introduction suggests that TRCs (like workplaces) create emotional norms or feeling rules (Hochschild 1979:557) that specify in which ways emotions are to be felt, by whom and when and how they should be expressed (in their form and intensity). Adopting an approach that considers emotions in their sociocultural contexts,[6] this article explores Michael Ure's claim that TRCs are host to a fundamental tension between two competing imperatives: the imperative of fidelity to legitimate emotions stemming from injustice (such as anger, rage or sorrow) and the countervailing imperative to overcome these emotions for the sake of reconciliation (2008:285–287). According to Ure, victims in TRC settings are therefore actively encouraged, if not compelled, to banish their anger (2008:285).

From this claim emerges this article's main questions: If Ure's claim is applicable in the Canadian TRC context, how do survivors of residential school make sense of the TRC? How do they deal with this emotionally tense process?

Drawing from qualitative fieldwork with 21 members of the Mitchikanibikok Inik community (also known as the Algonquins of Barriere Lake) carried out before, during and after the Montreal TRC event, I analyze the voices of three survivors to try to better understand what prompted their participation in the TRC event, how they experienced it at the time and how they reflected upon it three months later. While this kind of person-centred approach cannot provide the statistics that a survey approach would, it aims for a thick description that embeds survivor emotions and experiences into their everyday life contexts and webs of meaning.

This article first approaches Ure's claim by drawing from the South African TRC experience to look at what shapes these countervailing emotional imperatives in the context of the Canadian TRC. Second, it draws from survivor experiences of the TRC to explore the feeling rules that, while encouraging survivors to express their suffering and emotions by legitimizing their experiences, also reveal the tension created by the aim to repair and renew personal and political relationships that calls for an "overcoming" or "healing" of difficult emotions for the sake of fostering a process of reconciliation. It shows how the way that survivors make sense of the TRC in this double-bind context reflects this tension. And finally, it looks at how some survivors' ways of dealing with "Ure's tension" via emotional transgressions led to productive action outside the TRC spaces.

On a final introductory note, readers should bear in mind that the work of the commission has been extended until June 2015 and that this article does not aim to draw general conclusions on the work of the TRC. Rather it is a personalized exploration of one TRC event as experienced by a handful of survivors in an attempt to try to better understand the emotions at work in such processes.

TRCs and Emotions

Truth and reconciliation commissions have been adopted as a way to deal with victims and perpetrators of collective atrocity in processes of national reconciliation. There have been over 30 commissions around the world since 1974. Most were created by the governments of the countries concerned and some by the United Nations, as well as by non-governmental organizations. Though they often differ from one another in their application, truth commissions share a common aim of moving away from retributive justice (criminal verdicts) toward truth-seeking and reconciliation. This does not prevent them, by definition, from cooperating with judicial processes, and the extent to which commissions are involved in facilitating prosecutions (e.g., by handing over perpetrators' names) or in granting amnesty is entirely dependent on their mandate. For instance, the well-known 1994 post-apartheid South African TRC had the power to grant amnesty from prosecution to perpetrators who testified of their politically motivated crimes. This is, according to Ure, the highly controversial way that the South African TRC tried to balance the antinomy between recognizing and repudiating anger and indignation (2008:286).

For Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a leading figure of the South African TRC, the future of the nation depended on securing social harmony—the greatest good. He

argued, "Anything that subverts or undermines this sought-after good is to be avoided like the plague. Anger, resentment, lust for revenge, even success through aggressive competitiveness, are corrosive of this good" (1999:34). The active encouragement to forgive perpetrators became a key component to deal with anger and other emotions perceived as dangerous and was made possible by the participation of perpetrators. It led to some cathartic moments: "No one could have predicted that day's turn of events at the hearing. It was as if someone had waved a special magic wand which transformed anger and tension into this remarkable display of communal forgiveness and acceptance of erstwhile perpetrators" (Tutu 1999:117).

Tutu's conflation of anger with danger reflects what Paul Muldoon describes as a Christian-inspired morality (also found in certain strands of the Graeco-Roman ethical tradition) that tends to regard anger as one of the biggest threats to the recognition and realization of our common humanity (2008:299). Following this commonly held view, anger can lead to disproportioned revenge and resentment. Thus anger becomes something to be feared and overcome. In the South African TRC's post-apartheid context, one of unstable political transition after mass violence, it is easy to understand how the risks of renewed violence and revenge were legitimate preoccupations and why anger was dealt with through the strongly suggested practice of forgiveness. In this context, Ure's claim points to an obvious emotional tension. But how does this claim extend to a TRC in a non-transitional political context like Canada, where there is no obvious risk of sudden exploding violence or revenge?

While it was made clear that the Canadian TRC was not modelled on the South African one (as stated by National Chief Phil Fontaine 2007) and that it did not consider forgiveness as a requirement (as clarified by Justice Sinclair 2011), the Canadian TRC has been designed with elements from the restorative justice approach that aims—just like the South African TRC did—to facilitate reconciliation. In its mandate and through commissioners' speeches, the Canadian TRC provides a wide (and arguably vague) framework for apprehending reconciliation: it frames reconciliation as part of a healing discourse and situates it as a long-term journey toward the restoration of balance in the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. In its mandate (Schedule "N", TRC 2013), the TRC extends the work of reconciliation not only to large groups (*national reconciliation* between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people) but also to individuals and their families (*interpersonal reconciliation*), as well as their communities. The primary means it puts forward to achieve national reconciliation is education (as explained in the condensed two-minute film clip entitled "Reconciliation" by commissioner Justice Sinclair on the TRC website). The task of education takes on an extra meaning when the TRC is considered within its non-transitional context. Indeed, the TRC is one of two commissions that have taken place in the absence of political regime change.[7] Its impetus was not war or civil conflict but litigation resulting in a settlement between the Canadian government, the churches involved in running the schools and the Assembly of First Nations and the plaintiffs (former students). This sets the Canadian TRC clearly apart from other TRCs. It means that it has not benefited from the same degree of national or international attention as have commissions in conflict-emerging countries and that it has to work actively to promote itself (Niezen and Gadoua 2014:23). Moreover, the fact that it is dealing with a largely non-recognized part of Canadian history has a major implication: it means it has to convince the general population of the truths it is uncovering (Niezen and Gadoua 2014:23).

This has resulted in what anthropologist Ronald Niezen (2013) describes as an essentialization of narrative emerging from the TRC events. He claims there is a consistent pattern in the statements presented to the commissioners in the public forums (called the Commissioner's Sharing Panel), in which emphasis is overwhelmingly placed on personalized traumas that unfolded in the schools and their continued effect in adulthood, often through addictions and parenting failures (2013:62). In his book, *Truth and Indignation* (2013), Niezen demonstrates how the commission encourages this master narrative through visual materials (e.g., selections of films in the compilations made available to the public online, or the images and slogans shown directly at TRC events) and cements its incontestability through the creation and repetition of sacred rituals at TRC events. He claims there is an emphasis on "the themes of loss and suffering, both within the schools and in adult lives broken by the experience, the heightened emotion of grief (but within certain bounds of self-control and composure) and, in closing narrative, a positive story of healing and rediscovery of that cultural heritage once slated for destruction through the schools" (2013:68).

Niezen's findings confirm the applicability of Ure's claim in the TRC context: despite its non-transitional feature and the lack of threats of sudden violence or retaliation in Canada, the TRC's effort to create a master narrative that insists on suffering and healing is bound to shape and control the emotional expressions it encourages and discourages. In this way, the Canadian TRC is faced with the very same emotional tension between its

prime goals as other commissions, and its participants—in this instance, the survivors—are urged to remember difficult stories that were the source of great pain, to tell and to heal. As in South Africa, the Canadian TRC intimately links reconciliation to the notion of healing. But if the South-African TRC attempted to erase anger through the promotion of (bilateral) forgiveness, the question can be posed as to whether the Canadian TRC attempts to "treat" anger through its healing discourse and symbolic practices, which implicitly suggest unilateral forgiveness[8] as the way forward. Anger may not pose a threat of violence and revenge, but it tracks feelings of injustice that are incompatible with the idea of working toward a reconciled Canada.

Motivations

When I asked Sheila[9] why she had decided to go to the TRC event in Montreal, she answered,

> I wanted to tell my stories. And I was curious about what the truth and reconciliation was. I had to go and see and hear for myself, that's why I went there. Because I'm not a very educated person so I have to actually see and hear to know what's happening. What it's about. If I just read it on paper I don't understand. I choose not to I guess [*laughs*]. But I do understand what I see. What I experience.

Ogi gwan abik's motivations were quite different. He wanted to denounce what he articulates as the Vatican's and the Government of Canada's lack of accountability. As for Helen, she was not really able to say why she came, but she wanted to "check it out."

Of the 53 residential school survivors from this small Algonquin community, 40 are still alive. While the regional Val d'Or event was left unattended by community members, about 20 people came for the national TRC event in Montreal in April 2013. They drove down from the Rapid Lake reserve (*Kitiganik*), one of two Algonquin communities located in the Verendrye Wildlife Reserve, which is on unceded[10] Algonquin territory located about 250 kilometres north of Ottawa. The wildlife reserve spreads over 13,615 km^2 of largely coniferous forest and over 4,000 lakes. While the majority (552 people) of Mitchikanibikok Inik community members live at the Rapid Lake reserve (AANDC 2012), over 160 people live off-reserve, in small settlements in the bush or in nearby towns and cities. It is one of the few Algonquin communities (there are nine in Quebec) where Algonquin is still widely spoken (in its local dialect known as Mitcikanâpikowinîmôwin) and where so-called traditional activities in the bush are commonly practised. This includes hunting, fishing, setting traps, harvesting medicinal plants and picking berries.

Sheila, Ogi gwan abik and Helen are from the same community, but they live in three different places and have different residential school stories. Sheila went to Saint-Mary's in Ontario, with the first generation of children sent off to residential school, while Ogi gwan abik and Helen were sent with the second generation[11] to the Indian Residential School of Amos, closer to home in Quebec. Sheila was schooled in English, Ogi gwan abik and Helen in French. Sheila and Ogi gwan abik went to school for many years; Helen only a few months. Despite these differences, and like many other survivors, their stories share the common leitmotivs of abuse, constant fear, submission and anger. It is for this "common experience" that they received a first IRSSA payment (the Common Experience Payment—CEP) as far back as in 2008. The CEP made survivors eligible for $10,000 (CAD) plus $3,000 (CAD) for every year they attended a residential school. Applications for the CEP closed in September 2011. According to its mandate, the TRC has the duty of providing a context and meaning for the CEP through its national events (TRC Mandate, Events, 10(c)). This constitutes an ambitious mandate to fulfil a posteriori.

Sheila, Ogi gwan abik and Helen also applied for an Independent Assessment Process (IAP) for sexual and physical abuse (this is the other IRSSA financial compensation measure, for which applications closed in September 2012). Though slightly less tedious than an actual trial in court, substantial proof and legal assistance were still required to file such a claim. For all three, it was a harrowing experience of having to recollect and tell their stories to an adjudicator, of expecting an amount of money and being attributed "points" for less (different types of abuse rank according to specific points, which add up to a sum of money). The process and payment did not bring about a sense of validation; rather, all three felt that parts of their stories were not believed by the adjudicating committee and they were angry after their hearing. It was particularly difficult for Sheila, who, after having gone through the whole ordeal, first received a letter confirming the amount she would get and then received a second letter saying she would not get anything. The reason she was given was that she had not reported the abuse to the caretakers at the time (she was sexually abused by another student). "But they knew about it," Sheila told me.

> Actually, to say they knew it, they saw it. And at the time, when I was telling that (in the IAP), I held back with some of my story. Thinking that they wouldn't believe me anyways, so I didn't actually say it. So they took it back. And I had bought some stuff for my daughter because I knew that I was going to receive that. And they turned around and didn't give

> it. So I'm in a hole. I have over three thousand dollars debt. And when this truth and reconciliation, when I went to this place, I said today they're still doing the same thing. That's another abuse.

This statement makes clear that Sheila entered the IAP with a sense of distrust, which she carried already at the time of her childhood abuse when the adults failed to protect her (from another student). This distrust in relation to this part of her life story was reinforced with her failed IAP application. So it is with this mind frame that Sheila came to the TRC event, with deep-seated feelings of injustice and a sense of distrust.

The ten survivors from the community who shared their experiences of the IRSSA payments with me, as well as the many interviews (58 recorded) I carried out with family members and people involved in community healthcare support, confirmed a general frustration with the money which was given to individuals and had no lasting constructive impact for the community. The financial compensations had a considerable impact on these survivors' apprehension of the TRC, and they received payments long before finding out about the commission (my data show that in 2011 most community members, including clinic staff, had not heard of the TRC). Scepticism was high after realizing the "killer money" (as it was rapidly called) did not go hand-in-hand with a healing plan for the community and was, instead, often given to fragile individuals. This scepticism following the allocation of financial compensations was reinforced by their legal implications: effectively, it is at that time that most survivors found out about the tripartite nature of the settlement and that "former students—and family members—who stay in the settlement will never again be able to sue the Government of Canada, the Churches who joined in the settlement, or any other defendant in the class actions over residential schools" (IRSSA Official Court Notice). For Mitchikanibikok Inik survivors, this resulted in "feeling tricked" and misrepresented by the Assembly of First Nations and plaintiffs representing former students. Survivors and their families felt the government and the churches subtly imposed the settlement and that, despite wanting to opt out of the financial compensations out of protest of what they deemed a "sell-out deal," they were too economically strangled to do so.

Another non-negligible factor which shaped Mitchikanibikok Inik survivors' disposition toward the TRC was the fact that logging operations had been intensifying on their territory since the previous summer. The logging of specific family territories and the differences in opinion as to how to deal with this—either protest to fully block the logging operations or try to push for a co-management (and resource revenue sharing) agreement—once again pitted community members against one another despite their common concern for the territory. It resulted in the arrest of two of Ogi gwan abik's siblings for obstructing the logging machinery and in a court case, which involved Ogi gwan abik and his family, as their territory was concerned. A few months after her release from prison, Ogi gwan abik's sister, Diana, suffered a stroke and died, one month before the TRC event in Montreal. For Ogi gwan abik, the struggle and the arrest had put a considerable strain on his sister, and he blamed them as factors contributing to her stroke. April 24, the starting day of the Montreal national TRC event, was the court date Ogi gwan abik's family had obtained for their hearing against Resolute Forest Products, the company clear-cutting on their territory with provincial permits. So as Ogi gwan abik headed to the Queen Elizabeth Hotel for the TRC event, members of his family were heading to court.

The IRSSA payments (their legal implications, as well as the allocation timing) and the logging struggle constitute important elements of the contextual bedrock crucial to understanding these survivors' TRC event experiences. As we will now explore, Sheila, Ogi gwan abik and Helen participated in the fifth national TRC event in three distinct ways, yet came home with the same conclusion.

Feeling Good

Scholars have argued that truth-telling can have a therapeutic effect on victims, thereby framing TRCs as restorative justice events that promote emotional healing by reflecting a practical view about human psychology that seeks to repair and build social connections. "Unlike retributive approaches, which may reinforce anger and a sense of victimhood, reparative approaches instead aim to help victims move beyond anger and a sense of powerlessness" (Minow 1998:92). By bringing emotions into the foreground, Martha Minow's claim makes a causal link between truth-telling and healing; by sharing their stories and breaking the silence around the taboos of multiple forms of abuse, survivors and their families can set off on "healing journeys" that imply emotional labour and are important components of national projects of reconciliation.

While the kind of normative moral imperative to dissolve anger implied by Tutu in his calls for forgiveness is not widespread at Canadian TRC events, the assumption that self-revelation is healing is ubiquitous. That anger is perceived as an impediment to healing and

plays into the residential school "syndrome" trope (James 2012) is mostly implied but is also sometimes made explicit in TRC-selected films (its "highlight reels" as Niezen [2013] calls them) and as, for instance, during one of the two public open-mic discussions on reconciliation at the Montreal TRC (entitled "Ça me tient à coeur"), when a Mohawk elder spoke out in anger, saying, "(Prime Minister) Harper and all government should be hung!" and the moderator answered that violence is not the way for reconciliation, brushing the man and his tears of rage aside. The conversation had, until then, focused on the undesirability of reconciliation in the light of unresolved land and treaty issues, not on residential schools, but it was implied that the attempted identity destruction through schooling was comparable to the destruction of identity via displacement of Aboriginal Peoples off their traditional territories and onto reserves. What the Mohawk elder was expressing and that the moderator failed to hear (and validate) was a deep ontological distress resulting from the impossibility of *being*, due to blockages resulting from government policies controlling the lives of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada.

Aboriginal cultures with oral traditions are known to place emphasis on emotion regulation in ways that make the public expression of emotions rare and embedded in protocol (Brant 1990), which includes, as has been found, for instance, in Cree, Inuit and Algonquin cultures, emphasis on respect and non-contradiction of elders (Bousquet 2008; Briggs 2000; Ferrara 1999). Though cultural codes of emotion and display rules evolve and change (especially when influenced by early childhood education and socialization into other cultural norms[12]), the Mohawk elder's public tears and visible unsettling revealed a sense of having been deeply insulted.

In the public places where survivors were to share their residential school stories, the atmosphere was more permissive, in the sense that speakers were not interrupted and testimonies usually succeeded one another without commentary or response on behalf of the commissioners. Grief and sorrow were the emotions that dominated throughout the testimonies, though what Niezen (2013) identified as indignation was also present.

Ogi gwan abik and Sheila both reported feeling good right after speaking out publicly. Sheila had chosen to do so in a Sharing Circle (consisting of a smaller audience and a survivors' circle with members of the Survivors Committee) and Ogi gwan abik at the Commissioners' Sharing Panel (consisting of a larger audience and a commissioner, in front of which the survivor testifies on stage, while being broadcasted live onto the TRC website), as well as in a private statement. Helen had decided to keep quiet.

Yet, though they reported feeling good, this had nothing to do with sharing their stories of abuses and being "freed" from them. Indeed, in contrast to the majority of survivors giving public testimony, neither Sheila nor Ogi gwan abik actually shared their residential school experiences with the public. In this sense, both departed from the conventional narrative template.

Speaking Out: Ogi gwan abik

Ogi gwan abik was the first to give testimony at the Commissioners Sharing Panel on Saturday morning. In front of a half-empty room, Commissioner Mary Wilson opened the session with a reminder of the agreements (*les ententes*): Survivors or intergenerational victims are to speak of their residential school experiences and their impacts, or of reconciliation. They should try to respect the 15-minute time frame. There is available health support for all. The tears witnesses "shed without shame" are healing (*c'est de la guérison*) and not garbage. Therefore, the tissues people use are not to be thrown away but collected and burnt in the sacred fire. She reminded the audience that this room is a witness of sacred sharings (*des partages sacrés*) and that the TRC is independent from the government. It is necessary, she also said, not to name an aggressor if this person has not been to court or if they are not dead.

As the body of testimonies makes clear, survivors usually take this rule as an implicit ban on naming and do not name their abusers. Ogi gwan abik began his testimony by defying this no-naming rule and, though he first made clear that he would not be speaking about his personal experience, he said, "I, and many of my peers, have been raped by Frère Brochu and he will not face justice; on the contrary, he has been praised for the great work he did with the Indians. How can we reconcile with that?"

Ogi gwan abik's tone remained controlled and factual throughout his testimony and his posture and bodily movements composed. He called attention to the collective harm of residential school by providing examples in support of the UN declaration of genocide and reminded the audience that the declaration states that conspiracy, attempt and complicity to genocide are all deemed punishable. "I have made peace with my past," he said. "But church and government leaders must not only recognize the wrongdoings of their agents and admit their crimes, they must also offer reparations for the genocidal actions committed against Aboriginal Peoples of Turtle Island."

Ogi gwan abik then continued with the idea that reconciliation is meaningful only if embedded in action and suggested that church-member abusers be excommunicated, even if dead. He also called on the Vatican to provide all information necessary to bring individuals to justice and asked the government to recognize the traditional territories of the First Nations because "the identity of my people *is* the land; to rid us of our territories is to rid us of our identity and our right to exist as Anishnabek."

Ogi gwan abik's testimony departs from the conventional testimonial template in several ways: first, in content, as I have just described—he moves away from telling a story of personal suffering to addressing issues of collective justice. Second, Ogi gwan abik does not represent himself as a traumatized and emotional victim; instead, he is keen on not showing grief (which—as the multitude of testimonies makes clear—is an acceptable and almost expected TRC feeling rule) or anger in relation to personal trauma. "I have made peace with my past," he reminds his audience and, instead, calls for justice—not healing—in relation to what he identifies as historical and ongoing injustices. Ogi gwan abik's call for justice and action is something that can be found echoed in the voices of victims of the South African apartheid who sought justice in township courts (*lekgotla*) outside the TRC (Wilson 2000) and, among others, in the voices of guerrilla "afectados" (the *affected*, as they call themselves) in Peru, who expressed the need for concrete actions (monetary and non-monetary reparatory measures or reforms, etc.) after their TRC testimonies (Laplante and Theidon 2007).

Ogi gwan abik had invited a Catholic priest who was attending the commission to witness his testimony. Three months after the TRC event, he told me he was still waiting to hear back from this priest, and that if no action was taken "to wake up and do something," this made him an accomplice.

According to Minow, restorative justice emphasizes the humanity of both offenders and victims. "It seeks repair of social connections and peace rather than retribution against the offenders. Building connections and enhancing communication between perpetrators and those they victimized, and forging ties across the community, takes precedence over punishment or law enforcement" (1998:92). Minow's claim, coupled with Ogi gwan abik's wish to have someone standing in for his perpetrator (and, therefore, the Catholic Church), reveals how, at the Canadian TRC, the task of healing and reconciliation rests disproportionately on the shoulders of survivors and their families. They are expected to repair social connections within their families and communities, but the possibility of doing so with perpetrators, the non-Aboriginal population and the government remains abstract: there are no "perpetrators" at the TRC. As Niezen (2013) shows, the absence of the government is silently accepted and the indignant churches mostly contest taking on the full blame. Hence, unilateral forgiveness through healing of the self is implicitly proposed as "the way forward."

Transporting the feeling rules of tribunal and court settings, which discourage the display of anguish and trauma to favour emotional control and cool rationality (Flam 2013:377)—and which Ogi gwan abik is more than familiar with as he has been in and out of court for the last decade over logging issues—Ogi gwan abik uses the space of the TRC to question and contest this very way of addressing the legacy of residential schools and the system they were a part of.

To be able to do this, therefore revealing the permissiveness of the TRC unfoldings, initially felt good for Ogi gwan abik. He did not censor himself nor follow the TRC narrative template and feeling rules, and this had no consequences.

Speaking Out: Sheila

Unlike Ogi gwan abik, Sheila provided the broad lines of her residential school experience. She did so in a smaller setting, the Sharing Circle, which was less intimidating to her than the Commissioners' Sharing Panel. Yet she also stayed away from her personal story of abuse and from the implicit feeling rule of exposing grief and sorrow. Instead, Sheila reported feeling good at having expressed her anger—in both tone and content:

> I forgave my grandmother (for sending me to school) but I won't forgive the government. There's no way in hell. The TRC is bullshit to me. I'm going to court to protect the land. I can't go back in the bush anymore because they put in an injunction. This is why it's a lot of bullshit with the government and the apology. Where is he? I will never believe that ... I'm still fighting for something that I believe in, the animals, the trees, the water—it comes from my heart. They destroyed my mind but not my heart.

Sheila felt good because she expressed her anger and was not rebuffed in her emotions like the Mohawk elder in the reconciliation discussion panel. The circle context enabled Sheila to express her anger, what she probably would not have dared to do at the Commissioner's Sharing Panel.

Three months later she told me, "Well, it made me angry when I was talking about it, but I felt good. And I wasn't holding back because it's the truth. It's exactly

how I feel. The words that I used, that's exactly ... I choose to use the words that I used. And I was mad. I was mad from the inside. And as of today, too, I still feel the same way."

For Sheila to be able to recognize her anger and express it is something she has recently learned from a trauma workshop organized by the community's wellness counsellor:

> 'Cause for me, I went to a trauma session. So it did help me understand about myself, no matter what I see today. Sure, I'm angry, I'm angry more than I ever was but I let it come out now. I don't hide anything.

For Sheila, who was socialized into Algonquin feeling rules before going to residential school, Algonquin cultural codes of emotions can be seen as an influencing factor in the regulation of an emotion like anger. Traditionally, and to some extent still today, emphasis was put on control of emotions like anger (Bousquet 2009:59). Another emotion-regulating factor can be related to the experience of sexual abuse as a child, which trauma scholars have linked with lasting emotions of shame due, partly, to the child having believed she deserved the abuse. For Sheila to be able to be angry and to allow herself to understand why, is something that the trauma workshop has enabled her to do and that she feels good about; as for many others, speaking out is self-affirming and important. But, as she made clear, Sheila differentiates the anger she holds (or held) in relation to specific individuals like her grandmother, and their actions, from the anger she holds toward systemic institutionalized injustice. She does not want to "treat" this latter anger for the sake of healing and reconciliation.

Keeping Quiet: Helen

Sheila and Ogi gwan abik were therefore atypical participants at the Montreal TRC event; both departed from the expected narrative template and its implied feeling rules. In so doing, they did not enable the subtle slippage between personalized stories of suffering and healing, where healing the self becomes symbolic for healing the nation (see Hamber and Wilson 2002 for a critique of the assumption of a national psyche that can be healed via a TRC). Yet, though their public participation shows how the TRC provides space for contestation, Helen's lack of participation is a reminder that Ogi gwan abik and Sheila were exceptions to the rule. Effectively, and to the other extreme, Helen did not feel she could share her story in public and also did not want to give a private testimony after her unsettling IAP experience, where she afterwards had felt alone in her reawakened pain. Despite the hefty consequences her short residential school experience had on the rest of her life (including the fact that she was never able to bring herself to study again, despite having a deep desire to obtain formal instruction), Helen did not feel her suffering was as legitimate as the others who had been to residential school for longer periods. So, she went to the TRC event, but stayed on its outskirts, not finding a place for her story within the narrative template. She did not go home with much disappointment she told me, as she had come with low expectations. She had also come wary of emotional exposure, the fear of another post-IAP breakdown being too real. Several months later, her understanding was that the TRC "didn't really do anything."

The Double Bind

Interviews carried out three months after the TRC with Sheila and Ogi gwan abik revealed that the immediate "feeling good" after their public statement did not last. Frustration and anger, which had been there all along (also for Sheila when "feeling good"), were strong, and "bullshit" and "expensive bandaid" were the qualifiers used to retroactively make sense of the TRC. The underlying distrust they came to the TRC with, reinforced by the IRSSA payments and the logging, was still strong. Ogi gwan abik felt angry about the Church's lack of recognition, and Sheila felt angry at the idea that she should not feel anger; in this sense, both rejected "healing and reconciliation" as put forward by the TRC.

Scholars have argued there is little evidence that testifying at TRCs actually helps victims in any way (Flam 2013:378; Mendeloff 2009:615). For instance, empirical research with South African apartheid victims has shown that many found the TRC process painful, disempowering and disappointingly filled with unmet expectations and promises (Byrne 2004). Going even further, Karen Brounéus's 2008 research in post-genocide Rwanda showed how survivors can also be harmed by testifying in public: the women she interviewed who testified in the *gacaca* village tribunals (initiated to enhance reconciliation) not only experienced intense psychological suffering but also were faced with new threats of violence by perpetrators still alive and displeased with the public disclosures.

While recognizing that victims' responses to truth-telling are highly individualized and idiosyncratic, Mendeloff's review of the few existing TRC-related empirical studies concludes that "there is very little definitive evidence that supports the assumption of truth-telling's psychological benefit. What little we do know casts doubt on that claim" (2009:616). Mendeloff further

mentions the evidence of victims' diverging opinions when it comes to the question of whether justice has been served, and asks, "Is victim dissatisfaction with the truth-telling process the result of faulty truth-telling institutions or is dissatisfaction inherent to the search for justice after mass atrocity?" (2009:622).

Sheila's and Ogi gwan abik's experiences add complexity to "Ure's tension" in several ways that are important to consider in the light of this question. Ogi gwan abik's call for justice reflects the style of upbringing the residential schools endorsed, one that called for punishment as a norm and that was at odds with Algonquin traditional education.[13] In his statement, he said, "These people should be pursued in an international court of law, as groups and as individuals." This directly clashes with the TRC's restorative approach, which is said to resonate with Aboriginal conceptions of justice (Llewellyn 2002, 2008; Ross 1996, 2004). According to this view, retributive justice is based in western principles that are incompatible with Aboriginal ways of thinking and feeling. By constantly reminding the audience that it is a "survivor initiative," the TRC implicitly de-legitimizes emotions related to injustice (like anger) felt by some of its participants, such as Sheila. It throws back the responsibility of "healing and reconciliation" to survivors, by grouping them together as "the survivors" who initiated the process in its restorative format, whereas Mitchikanibikok Inik survivors and their families actually felt excluded from the IRSSA design and implementation process—in their view the legal implications behind the financial compensations, among other factors, discredited the settlement and its (much later) TRC. Sheila's and Ogi gwan abik's TRC-related emotions reveal that survivors are *emotionally bilingual* (in the sense that they are familiar with both Algonquin and settler-Canadian feeling rules) and that they do not exist as a unified group.

Sheila's and Ogi gwan abik's participative contestation also reveals the way the TRC itself tries to negotiate "Ure's tension" by making use of symbolics and ritual. "The mere fact that we're in the Queen Elizabeth Hotel makes me feel like they're laughing at us." Ogi gwan abik continued: "The Church and the Crown are the two major actors to blame for the genocidal actions committed against my people." Although Ogi gwan abik might be the only survivor who brought in the role of the Crown in treaty relationships with Aboriginal people in his TRC testimony at the Montreal event, the number of survivors who came to thank him for what he said points to the possibility that he was not the only one made uncomfortable by the site name and what was interpreted by some as symbolic settler-control at the TRC. A prime example by Sheila was her interpretation of the Bentwood Box, commissioned by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and carved by Coast Salish artist Luke Marston.

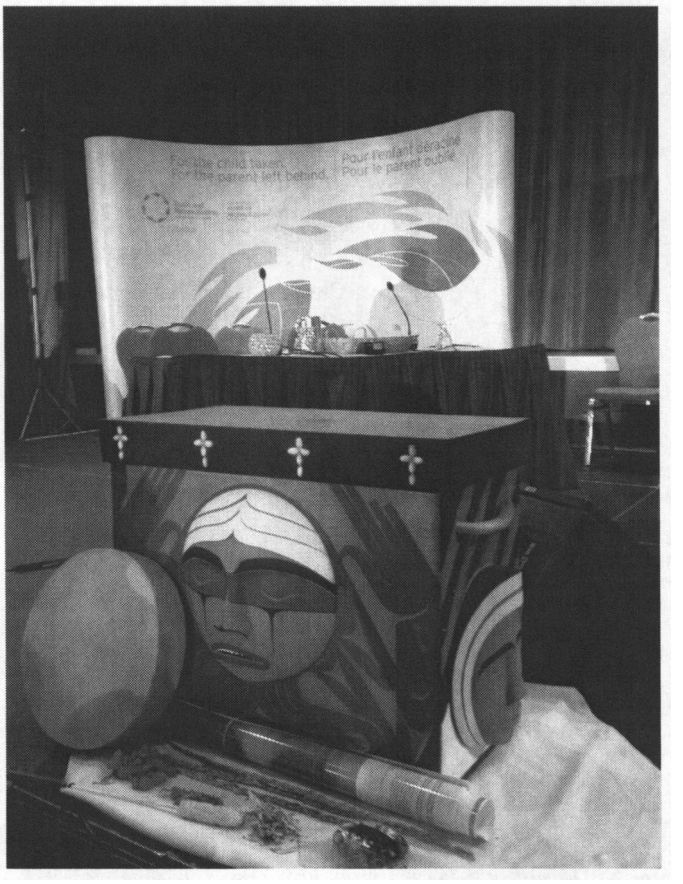

Figure 1: Bentwood Box, by Coast Salish Artist Luke Marston. Photo by Anne-Marie Reynaud.

Brought to all TRC national events, the box is meant to reflect the strength and resilience of residential school survivors and their descendants, honour the survivors who died, and receive offerings that commemorate personal journeys toward healing and reconciliation (TRC 2009). As Niezen shows, the box's repository function (of material testimony, books, documents, DVDs, etc.) has taken on a sacred dimension, and the box acts as a ritual vessel that connects commissioners with participants (2013:66). It is with great reverence that things get put in the box, and its meaning (the story of the carver's grandmother featured on the box, a story of suffering with lasting effects) is retold at each event before the first "offering" is made in what Niezen coins a "ritual of deposition" (2013:67). For Sheila, the box embodied a subtle way of exerting control through ritual. "I don't believe in it," she said. "Everything the

people had to say, they put it in that box. Did you see that box? It had tears coming down on it. And they put everything in that box. And they're going to seal it now."

Niezen argues that, while drawing attention to the box's meaning, the ritual of deposition also "brackets the testimony within a kind of ontological invulnerability. There can be no contestation of opinion, no alternative historical narrative with any broad power of persuasion when it runs up against the perceived infallibility of sacralized truth" (2013:67).

Sheila's tone and words revealed both her anger and her fear; all those emotions that had finally started coming out, after years of being "boxed-in," could very well be sacralized as truth, but Sheila feared they would also be sealed away forever.

Back Home

The TRC characterizes the place of emotional tensions described by Ure (2008): on the one hand, encouraging emotions, such as anger, resulting from suffering and injustice and, on the other hand, expecting people to "move on" or, at least, control themselves. Indeed Ogi gwan abik's, Helen's and Sheila's somewhat unconventional participation revealed that if "the struggle to feel" is viewed as paramount in the regeneration of selves and communities (Million 2009) and TRCs provide a place for that, they also are very controlled, non-lasting places.

Ogi gwan abik and Sheila dealt with "Ure's tension" via emotional transgressions of either not showing expected emotions (Ogi gwan abik) or by showing emotions like anger, which trespassed TRC feeling rules (and, for Helen, with a lack of availability to emotions). Their distinct participation styles at the Montreal TRC remind us that the past is a site of struggle, not condensable into one "essentialized" story that the TRC tries to affirm (Niezen 2013). Ogi gwan abik's wish to have a representative church member present at his public testimony, and his frustration in not knowing whether this had prompted this person to action after, point to the fact that the Canadian TRC partially fails to fully provide the "process of dialogue with one's former enemies" described by Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela (former coordinator of the South African TRC public hearings) as an inherent feature of truth commissions (2008:335). To recognize the TRC as a site of narrative and emotional struggle acknowledges that there are a variety of emotions at work. These emotions in turn are the communicating agents of "healing and reconciliation" and remind us that, for some survivors, reconciliation in this way is not desirable and anger is legitimate.

Following Martha Nussbaum's understanding of anger as underscoring as well as manifesting our shared vulnerability to suffering (2001, 2004), Paul Muldoon argues that

> anger should not be regarded as something antithetical to the cultivation of humanity which should be eradicated at any cost.... To become indifferent to the worldly attachments that lead to anger would be to simultaneously take away the basis for compassion and this, perhaps more certainly than any of the excesses of anger, would certainly put an end to the hope of reconciliation. [2008:310]

Not only does Muldoon's argument rehabilitate Sheila's anger, but also it calls for attention to how important it is in the wake of reconciliation projects. While many scholars argue that when fear and anger remain unacknowledged and unaddressed, they can easily re-create a culture of anxiety and resentment (Hutchison and Bleiker 2008:391), Muldoon further cautions against this presumption that anger necessarily descends into resentment and revenge. "It is possible to be angry without succumbing to a violent rage that wreaks havoc in an entirely disproportionate and indiscriminate fashion" (2008:309).

Sheila, Ogi gwan abik and most other survivors I spoke to from the community described being angry, but none voiced a desire of vengeance against their abusers or against the government. They mostly demanded land restitution and control and to "be left in peace." Yet this "being left in peace" was not articulated as a desire to ostracize anyone—which could have made more sense than a desire for revenge, as ostracism was a traditional Algonquin conflict resolution tool (see Bousquet 2009:58)—but more out of a sense of wariness and out of desire to control their own internal community affairs.

For Sheila and Ogi gwan abik, going home angry did not get fuelled into revenge and resentment but into an "Idle No More" initiative prompted by youths, who called upon the "Traditional Council of Grandmothers," which Sheila is a member of, to visit all the Algonquin communities in Quebec and speak to as many grandmothers as possible to work toward unity within and among the various communities (the Algonquins are divided between two tribal councils). "And this is what we were working on with the grandmother talk," Sheila explained. "We have to unite as one to stand and fight as one. Protect the mother-earth there from all this destruction that's going on. And to stand up to the government and say: enough is enough."

These community visits resulted in seven grandmothers (*kokoms*) from various Algonquin communities

coming together to organize the first bush camp specifically for Algonquin youth in July 2013. Children and teenagers camped out together in the bush for several days, and elders (including Ogi gwan abik) shared spiritual teachings and stories, following the seven "grandfathers": courage, wisdom, respect, love, honesty, truth and humility. On the day of the teaching on truth, Sheila brought her carved staff to the sacred fire where the teaching would take place. After we had all purified with smoke, she explained the story behind her staff and what was on it. She showed us a red ribbon tied to the top, which was there to remember residential school and had been given to her at the Montreal TRC event. There was no anger in her voice as she continued, by stressing the importance of unity among Algonquin people and how this was about doing things together in the bush. "Because everything is in the bush and you have to teach the kids. This is why we brought them here. To do that," she later told me.

> They destroyed the people, their self-esteem. So let them [youth] get back their inner spirit and this is where it is. It's in the bush, it's in the territories, where they all have their skill. Everything is in the bush. This is where our language is. This is where our culture is. Everything. It's in the bush. This is why they're doing this. They're cutting up the trees now. They're going to do mining. They put dams up. They're going to destroy everything that mother earth provides. And this is where we do our survival. This is where our teaching are, everything. A lot of things are in the bush to teach the children today. This is why we're doing what we're doing now. Nobody's recognizing that and certainly not the government.

"Kokom's camp" and the new offer of trauma workshops for Mitchikanobikok Inik survivors and their families via the reserve clinic constitute important healing spaces outside the TRC. They are locally understood as *mino mamwi sewin* (gathering with good intent), which is also how Sheila, Ogi gwan abik and Helen translate "reconciliation" into their language.

Conclusion

As this article has shown, Sheila, Ogi gwan abik and Helen provide us with three examples of distinct yet similar (in their non-conventionality) ways of participating at the TRC. By refusing to abide by TRC feeling rules, their participation highlights what Ure described as a fundamental emotional tension inherent to TRC projects. Via emotional transgressions, Sheila and Ogi gwan abik contest, in their own ways, "healing and reconciliation" as proposed by the TRC. Following Muldoon, this article has outlined that survivors' anger has legitimacy and points to the need for dialogue when it comes to the scope of justice in dealing with residential schools and the system they were a part of. The way Ogi gwan abik and Sheila dealt with their emotions reflects their desire to move away from a strictly interpersonal approach to reconciliation and points to outstanding structural issues. Yet the frustration and anger they came to the TRC with and took back home did not translate into revenge. Kokom's camp serves as an example of the work being done away from the eyes of the commission in the hope of fostering healing via cultural affirmation and, most importantly, of fostering unity to obtain recognition from the government.

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Notes

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2 This is Algonquin for "face in the rock," a pseudonym chosen by the participant.

3 The term *survivor* should be understood here as an appellation that former students have adopted, for the most part, as reflecting the reality of what they have overcome. Not dissociable from the language of trauma, the term *survivor* serves as a reminder that the psychological syndrome seen in survivors of rape, domestic battery and incest is essentially the same as the syndrome seen in survivors of war (Herman 1992:32). In this context, the term *residential school survivor* offers recognition of the impact of repeated abuse and trauma that children experienced in the schools, which were used as instruments of a larger colonial assimilative apparatus. The term *survivor* sounds more proactive than the term *victim* and, for this reason, former students have more readily adopted it. As this article will put forward, pending processes of national remembering and history-making, such appellations also run the risk of presenting humans in tightly unified groups.

4 In May 2006, the Canadian government, the churches involved in running the schools, the Assembly of First Nations and the plaintiffs (former students of Indian Residential Schools) agreed upon what would soon be known as the largest class action settlement in Canadian history: the IRSSA. The settlement is divided into five measures, two of which offer direct financial compensation to survivors (the *Common Experience Payment* and the *Independent*

Assessment Process) and three in the form of healing and education programs for the communities, including a *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, a *Commemoration Programme* and additional funding of the *Aboriginal Healing Foundation*. Survivors had until Christmas 2006 to object to the IRSSA proposal. Once it was through, there was an opt-out period until spring 2007, at which point the settlement came into force (with a five-year mandate) and former students were able to start applying for payments. Those who chose to go ahead with the settlement lost their right to ever go back on the issue. That means they lost their right to bring the government or a former abuser to court. According to AANDC (2014), 1,074 former students opted out.

5 The TRC offers three kinds of event spaces: National Events across Canada (seven in total, the last one in 2014), Community Events and Individual Statement-Taking/Truth Sharing.

6 Anthropologists interested in emotions have recently moved away from the polarizing discourse that for so long pitted universalists and cultural constructionists against one another. In the quest for an integrative solution to a long-standing debate, Röttger-Rössler and Markowitsch (2009) came to the following interdisciplinary definition of emotions: emotions are complex bio-cultural interaction systems that develop and change over the course of time. This approach recognizes

> that the emotions felt by an individual in a given situation depend on several factors: the particular social context and the corresponding cultural models of interpretation and behavior, the biography and psychological structures of the single individual, and innate physiological processes anchored in human biology ("bodily reactions") and their subjective perception ("feeling"). The latter, in turn, is partly shaped by culture, just as the expression of emotions is molded by culture specific display rules. [3–4]

While endorsing this definition that acknowledges physiological processes, it is the specific sociocultural shaping this article focuses on.

7 The other non-transitional commission was the 1979 Greensborough Truth Commission that unfolded in North Carolina and inquired into the deaths of five anti–Ku Klux Klan demonstrators.

8 Unilateral forgiveness has been defined by Trudy Govier as not requiring acknowledgment or repentance on the part of the wrongdoer:

> He or she may be absent or even dead or may be present and unrepentant. When forgiveness is unilateral, the victim forgives not as a response to acknowledgment by the perpetrator but for other reasons of her own. These often include a sense that, for the victim herself, it will be best to overcome feelings of anger and resentment so as to cultivate a more constructive and healthy attitude to the world and move ahead in life. [2006:101]

9 To respect participants' privacy, all names in the article are pseudonyms.

10 This means they have never surrendered their rights and title to this land.

11 According to interviews with survivors, two generations of children from the community went to residential schools: the first was sent to two schools in Ontario in the 1950s and the second to the Indian Residential School of Amos between 1955 and 1973. Located at Saint-Marc-de-Figuery, the Indian Residential School of Amos was one of four schools in Quebec that was run by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a Roman Catholic community of missionary priests and brothers.

12 For more on the links between child-rearing cultural norms, practices and the development of socializing emotions (as tools that enable children to adjust their behaviours in culturally appropriate ways) see Quinn (2005) and Röttger-Rössler et al. (2013).

13 Mitchikanibikok Inik children until then had been brought up on the land, following a semi-nomadic hunter-trapper way of life. Traditional education, rooted in the valorization of respect, self-control, patience and endurance, encouraged learning through observation and letting children try things autonomously (Bousquet 2012). As has also been observed in other Aboriginal groups (Anderson 2007; Briggs 1970), correction happened indirectly, usually through humour or mockery.

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