

**Transcript for Multiple Means of Connection: A Decolonial Approach to UDL
2024 ETUG Spring Workshop: Digital Literacy Today – Day 2, May 10, 2024
Educational Technology Users Group
Presenters: Simone Hausknecht and Jasmine Feather Dionne**

FACILITATOR:

So I'd like to introduce our next two speakers. So we have Simone Hausknecht who is an instructional designer at Royal Roads University and Jasmine Feather Dionne, who's also an instructional designer at Royal Roads University and a PhD candidate at the University of Victoria. So they're gonna be talking about Multiple Means of Connection: A Decolonial Approach to UDL. So I'm gonna hand things over to them. You can hear us. Yeah. Okay. That's closer.

JASMINE FEATHER DIONNE:

Hi, everyone. Welcome to our presentation titled Multiple Means of Connection: A Decolonial Orientation to UDL. We're here to highlight how our team merged different theories, ways of knowing, and different educational practices together in an effort to reorient our use of universal design for learning. We, Simone and I, work on and occupy the lands of the Lekwungen-speaking peoples of the Esquimalt and Songhees. First Nation. Today we're sharing our work with you on the unceded lands of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish Nations to which we visit in minimally invasive and reciprocal ways as best we can. I always remind folks in my land acknowledgments that we need to critically engage with our involvement in reifying and affirming colonial property regimes, land tenure, economic privatization, and displacement. In order for us to be here today, a genocide had to occur. I implore you to think about your relationships to those concepts and to settler state violence as we discuss connections today, to self, community, and environment. I hope that by the end of this presentation, you'll see how all of these come together.

Our team extends beyond the two of us that you see in front of you today. In this project, we've been working alongside Val Cortez who's associate faculty at RRU. Val's educational approach focuses on Corazonar, to heart, to think together as well as relational pedagogies and intercultural learning. And Donna DesBien, an instructional designer at RRU and the co-chair of the Diversity Action Group at RRU. I, Jasmine Feather Dionne am Nîhithaw [...] and Métis from Northeastern Alberta, the Nîhithaw [...] and place name for where I'm from is Nistawâyâw, which you might commonly know as Fort McMurray, Alberta. I was brought into the work of the academy as a result of the missing and murdered crisis in my territory where the extractive industry of the Athabasca oil sands is only 40 kilometres away from my childhood home. And we have about 109 man camps surrounding 110 kilometre radius of Fort McMurray. And I felt as though there weren't enough answers as to ending this type of extractive violence. We're all pretty well aware of the missing and murdered crisis. So I went into this looking for answers to end it, and then life happened, I did comps and then I was like, hey, maybe I'll apply for an

instructional designer position at Royal Roads. And I currently work and support the Indigenous Education Department over at Royal Roads. And that's where I currently find myself.

SIMONE HAUSKNECHT:

Can you hear me? Oh, yeah. And I'm Simone, I'm a settler Canadian. My parents were first-generation immigrants from Australia and Ireland. I came to this work, I have a PhD in educational technology and learning design focusing on digital storytelling with diverse groups as well as working as an instructional designer currently at Royal Roads and in a few other universities that are here, I've been to, but now I'm at Royal Roads.

JASMINE:

All right. So we invite you today to explore and be a part of today's sessions starting with an activity that will be connecting you through, throughout. We're gonna ask you to keep working on your little activity that we'll give you and think about it. We will talk about the UDL and the guidelines that are there, the theories we are drawing on, multiple means of connection. And then the practical applications and examples of how we've used this. And then final reflection activity.

So in front of you, we've got a sketchnoting activity in front of you. You have some paper and some coloured pens. You can use pens, you can use pencils. I don't know, you can use whatever you like. This is a sketchnoting activity. So it gives you an opportunity to doodle. I am a doodler. So any opportunity to doodle. But throughout while you're thinking just draw, add words, whatever you want around the concepts, whatever you're feeling, just draw a blob for all that matters. It's about connecting to your own thinking through art and through different ways and well.

Yeah. okay. And here's an example of sketchnoting from a course that I taught, co-taught just to give you an idea of you can use words, you can use symbols, you can use anything you want that connects you.

JASMINE:

Self-location is increasingly taken up by several scholars that we've seen not only in Indigenous studies, but in the fields of education and social work, political science, and so much more. Self-location is the act of identifying your social, economic, cultural, and political positionality in relation to your work and who your work impacts initially. Absolon and Willet advocate for identifying and locating the voice of the self within research and education at large. Once, positionality matters to knowledge, production, and dissemination, they are of the opinion that neutrality and objectivity do not exist because knowledge production is observed through an epistemological lenses. Kovatch asks for learners to identify their self-location story because it will identify their responsibilities to themselves, their communities, and those whom the impact of their work will reach. The purpose of sharing this story is to contextualize many things. Contextualizing your life, positionality, privilege, systemic disadvantage, place kinship, ceremony, language, and purpose. All of these things come to inform how we've come to know.

These contexts are directly rooted in relationships to knowledge production. How we come to know tells us who we are, what we know, and what we want to change as a result. Focusing on the subjective role that comes from self-location has become integral for learning and meaning making as it effectively combines both epistemological and actionable functions of decolonization. We invite you to think about yourself specifically your positionality as perhaps an educator, researcher, academic, designer, facilitator. Your relationships to different systems of oppression through your relationship to knowledge. Sketchnote your pondering to these questions.

What is your relationship to knowledge? Is your knowledge influenced by a dominant or mainstream source of knowing? And what is your relationship to yourself and how you know? We're gonna give you a minute of pause to work on this and sketchnote.

SIMONE:

Okay. You can keep sketching as we talk. We're fine, but we'll move on to the next kind of slide. Many of you in this room are quite aware of universal design for learning. Universal design for learning originated from architectural design work in that universal means designing environments that anyone can use. In the case of learning, this means everyone can be able to engage with the learning environment free of free, free, free of... Anyway, anyone can be able to engage no matter who they are. It's an accessible space where everyone can come in and be a part of the environment. That makes it a valuable tool for accessibility and inclusiveness for diverse learners. There have been a wide range of studies showing it increases accessibility and with this often increasing inclusion because the more people who can access your course and the learning, the more inclusive it can become. Yeah. Universal design for learning often discusses three main areas that's multiple means of engagement. These are different ways that students can engage with your class, maybe through sketchnoting or through a discussion. We'll have one of those later. We'll have, you know, different ways that you can engage with the content and the work, multiple means of representation. This is where you have ways that you're representing the content such as some visuals, such as speaking, such as words, such as lots of different ways that knowledge is being represented. And then multiple means of action and expression. This has been valuable and challenging some of the traditional, here's an essay, here's an exam and that's what you do. You're starting to think about how, what are other ways that students and everyone can represent their understanding and be actionable. It tends to be just my little brain there. The guidelines, particularly the Katz model tend to be very cognitive focussed in their, in the way that they're discussed.

So our group actually came together as there was a call for a book chapter. because one of the criticisms of universal design for learning guidelines is that it has lacked, lacked in the inclusion of Indigenous epistemologies as well as views from the global South. So our group got together to kind of think about these ideas. Another criticism that kind of comes up within the research is that occasionally when researchers or different people are looking at universal design, then they go about it by trying to fix a problem. That problem is a student who doesn't fit into the norm. Of course, we want to avoid that as educators, but it can happen when you're

operationalizing these pieces. Another sort of criticism around, just kind of where we were looking at to fill the gaps, was around, are related to it, needing to expand beyond barriers of ability, but also focus on barriers created by others' biases such as race, gender, age, or culture. To name a few because these are things that cannot, if you have these not addressed, then not everyone will be included, even if you've done all the right architectural design, if we want to call it that. Oh, it's okay. Go ahead.

JASMINE:

We'll now go through the conceptual background of those theories and modalities that brought us to our contributions. Simone said that we sort of got together to think about these things. And so these are the things we thought about. Decolonization. You know, you, you hear it a lot get thrown in with Indigenization and oftentimes reconciliation. But these terms get thrown around a lot in the academy without their very distinct and very political definitions attached to them. So, for the purposes of this, and how decolonization relates to education, I'll give you a bit of that background. So decolonization as a practice of decentring colonial epistemes and removing oppressive power hierarchies has monentally shifted the field of education from a space of purely objective and solely cognitive function towards spaces that are relational and reflective. Decolonization pushes for subjectivity by showing the learner how they're connected to different systems of power that their learning should ask them to engage with. And part of that engagement includes engaging with others, with communities, with lands, with things beyond themselves. Decolonization is also a discursive move that critiques the limitations of the dominant voices, cultures, ideologies, and they're totalizing colonial nature to sort of purport and maintain this Eurocentric narrative. Indigenous interventions on decolonial education, advocate for land-based learning and community-led work and community-led learning, which is often service-based to the host nations. Within the literature, we note that decolonization combines the roles of knowledge and action in the work of liberation, ultimately helping us understand the world and our place in it by assessing our relationships to the self, to knowledge, power privilege, land, water, sovereignty, and communities. So naturally, also because of my background in Indigenous feminism, it felt like we should turn to the work of Dian Million's "Felt Theory." And she, this comes from an Indigenous feminist lens and she seeks to emphasize how Indigenous Peoples educate relationally and subjectively by centring their emotions and by embodying their histories and their knowledge. She identifies the need for learning from historical literature by Indigenous women. Noting that we feel our histories as much as we think them. A call for increased subjectivity in things like historical narrative analysis and inquiries and within Indigenous education at large has been her push. So "Felt Theory" really acknowledges the importance of emotion within education, and those emotions actually inform the context through which we're learning about oppressive systems and allow us to discern what we ought to do with our education, knowing the context we're living in.

Our colleague, Val Cortez brings with her Latin American relational knowledge, connection to Indigenous epistemologies of the global South were important in our work. She brought forward the concepts of *corazonar*. *Sentipensar*, pluriversalities. And these all inform the learning spirit, I'll define those now. *Corazonar* is the active reasoning within the heart in

collectivity, which allows for going beyond and beyond analytical reasoning. And it interrogates emotions and our sensitivity for a more holistic approach to learning. Sentipensar is about the connection between logic and emotion in education. Nasa people remember by thinking again with the heart and see themselves as *sente pensantez*, thinking with the heart and feeling with the head. This connection further grounds the learner in their environment and connection to land. Because *sentipensar con la tierra* is to feel think with the Earth. Pluriversality is acknowledging many worlds and ontologies outside of your own And that we should be encouraged to think in pluralistic ways that contribute to our critical skill building. The learning spirit is derived from the work of Marie Battiste. It seeks to engage those inner capacities of the self to improve engagement with learning events, teachers, other learners, and put all of these within the context of education. So all of these approaches to knowledge production connects people to the Earth, which challenge hegemonic and objective reasoning at the core of Western education because it reflects the complexity of felt and lived experiences within the educational content. Otherwise, through those hegemonic and objective reasonings that we often see with Western education, you'll see that they tend to tokenize and flatten the experiences of marginalized people by using them instead as examples or issues or topics of study, problems to be solved, rather than treating their lived and felt knowledge as knowledge that connects us all to a pluriverse of knowledge.

SIMONE:

So, this kind of brings us to our addition to the UDL guidelines. And so we came up with multiple means of connection. instead of just kind of that more cognitive, we were really thinking on a holistic level. We've mentioned the word pluriverse. So, pluriversality, sorry, and that recognizes. pluriversality recognizes many ways of knowing and existing that can be interconnected. And that's very important to the way we see things. Again, vowels thing with *Corazonar* and connecting to self and feelings and emotions within your learning experiences, the community, everybody's bringing with them, you know, we go into a learning environment but we're bringing all these communities, all these cultures, all these different ideas with us when we come into that environment. So kind of really acknowledging that within the work as well as the environment. I wanted to mention a lot of these from yesterday's sessions. It was great to see some of those such as Luke with the empathy mapping, really kind of connecting to those emotions in the work that he was doing. Gwen had a great resource on community-based learning, which is bringing community inward and outward in the learning as well as Amanda mentioning the environmental, just to name a few connections that we already have that people are working in the important environmental in going forward in digital literacy. And that is for people who would prefer worded pieces. We have this as our ideas of connecting to self, community, the environment. And those incorporate a few different ideas in there. Oh yes. We will give you another minute to kind of take in. We've just given you a lot of information coming from different directions. So give you a moment to kind of sketchnote some of your thinkings in there and connections maybe to self, community, and environment as you're thinking about this.

JASMINE:

Corazonar is the act of reasoning with the heart in collectivity. So with community which allows for us to go beyond analytical reasoning. It integrates emotions and sensitivity for a holistic approach to learning. Sentipensar is about the connection between logic and emotion in education. So that quote from Val's work, "Nasa people remember by thinking again with the heart and seeing themselves as Sentipensar," Sente pesantez, thinking with the heart and feeling with the head. This connection further grounds the learner and their environment and connection to land. because sentipensar con la tierra is to feel-think with the Earth. So the actual direct translation for Sentipensar is feel-think. Pluriversality is acknowledging that many worlds and ontologies exist outside of our own and that we should be encouraged to think in a pluralistic way as this contributes to our critical skill building and the learning spirit seeks to engage inner capacities of the self, to improve engagement with learning events, teachers, other learners and to put all of this in the context of education,

SIMONE:

Keep going as your sketch. I mean, that's fine. As I said, our next thing is we're gonna talk about some courses that we've maybe taught or co-designed or a little bit of both in practice and how we also, along with the theories, we also looked at our own courses and, and thought about the way that we were engaging what's as both by iteratively initially to think about these concepts, but then also backwards to say, oh did we there courses we were already working with doing this?

So this one is Val's. I'll just give a quick rundown, but we wanted to include it here. This is Val's course on the Collective Leadership course. The four movements rubric invites learners to connect to self: mind, body, emotions, and spirits. The course content and learning community towards positive change. This fully online program aimed to prepare Indigenous learners for careers in project administration. The course was designed and taught with love. It was a great example of corazonar. This is from Val, and she says, "We held and affirmed our own culture as well as the culture of learners within this." The final iteration of the course was organized into four units or movements inspired by Mexica Cosmo Vision and Anishinaabe, sorry, teachings and other Indigenous knowledge systems. Just a student quote from this course. "There was just something about the very first course, the collective leadership and the sense of community that we had so quickly and the dignity and respect everyone had for each other." So just this pluriversality coming in there in that corazonar. I won't go too much into the course. But in Val's courses, she has the learning outcomes and assessments. We have very specific guidelines at Royal Roads, but she also includes the aspirations to add that level.

In my own work, I'll cover two courses. One I co-designed and co-facilitated with Meredith Fenton at UBC, An Introduction to the B.C. K–12 School System and Professional Standards for Educators. So it's a very long title for the course. Within this example, teachers were coming from all over the world, they were already experienced educators. But when you come here, you also have to do more education because that's the way our system is. And when we were designing this course, we wanted to make sure that we respected the communities and the

cultures they were coming from as well as their student identity, sorry, student, identity, teacher identity, because they have that experience coming through. So within these, we were connecting previous communities already said that and understanding of self and future communities. So we had to kind of take those communities and respect those with reflective activities. And then bring them into thinking about the communities. They were going into the K–12 school system here, which is very different than a lot of others. New Zealand is similar but others, not as much and also new lands and new cultures that were here. So, as said we did a lot of reflective questions and exercising trying to connect these ideas, connect who they were and then bringing that forward into the professional standards at the moment and the values.

We did things such as sketchnoting. So this is an example of a couple of sketchnotes from the students that we are working with.

Another example. This one is an Intergenerational Community Digital Storytelling project that I was involved with. It was community participatory design. And learning, we worked with the Nak'azdli Health Centre, Nakal'bun Elementary School, the Nak'azdli Elders Society, Nak'azdli Whu'ten Youth Council, and all of these was a collaborate effort. The Health Centre had come and was concerned that some of the knowledge was disappearing as the Elders were passing on. So they wanted to have a collaborative approach or something that they could bring into the schools and different stuff. I was brought in for the digital storytelling aspects but collaborated with everybody on making it work for the community there.

So here you can see the Elders came and told stories. Both as a large group and in smaller groups. The students recorded these stories. There was bannock made and the, and the students served the Elders with juice and bannock. Yeah, they recorded the stories. Some of the Elders spoke in Carrier, their own language. The language teachers then worked with the students in the translations as well as looking at those things. At one point, we gave the students cameras and they went out into the community and took photos. That was a little chaotic. It was grade 7 and 7 students after all, but it still gave them an opportunity to go and connect with technology, but also connect with nature and everything. They would take, you know, some videos of their feet walking down the trails or other different pieces. So it gave them a chance to connect to the natural environment as well as the community. Because in digital storytelling, you layer images, sound, you can use video, you can use quite a lot of different things. The Elders actually wanted to come in and sing songs as well. So those were recorded. So if the students wanted to use these. The end of these pieces then were shown to the community. So the students were also then, Oh my work is gonna be shown. This is great. And when we brought the Elders in, some of the students didn't realize they were connected family wise. And they're like, "Oh, this is my, my great-grandmother did this," and it was just a really rewarding project. And an example of that interconnectedness coming between community environment and self and thinking.

JASMINE:

To build off of that example of digital storytelling During the first year of COVID, I was involved in a project pretty local to Victoria. I don't know if anyone knows of Open Space, but they're sort of like a community-led art gallery. And they create a lot of resources for Indigenous youth. And so Open Space did this online on the land because they recognized that people were not able to gather in large groups outside as much as they wanted to and had missed that. So they recorded different Knowledge Holders on different parts of WSÁNEĆ land with different land-based materials. And so the part of the project I was involved in was supporting the cedar weavers, who at the time were there to strip cedar off the tree because it was that change of season and you can only do that when the sap runs down the tree. And there was a lot of conversation about that, but mostly it was a recorded video that was designed to mobilize Indigenous knowledge in a time where the traditional modes through which you do that were not possible. And so the point of these videos is not just to share that knowledge and to do that, but connect that knowledge to broader, more politicized themes of community self and, and land. So, a lot of the conversation was about those Indigenous philosophies, about the politics of consent. So the politics of consent for accessing WSÁNEĆ land, some of the Knowledge Holders were not WSÁNEĆ but had to create relationships WSÁNEĆ people to participate. There was also conversations about the passing of time and the significance of that in terms of the sap running down the tree and how you know that, that you know, that by connection. and also, you know that through your conversations and relationships to other people in the territory. But this kind of also led to a conversation about the precariousness of the bark and cedar in general with climate change. And so a lot of conversations about how this kind of community-centred work is important because a lot of academic institutions like to monopolize and mistreat Indigenous knowledge TEK, traditional ecological knowledge. And so talking a lot about the criticisms of how extractive academia is and that is not necessarily the most appropriate route for this kind of knowledge sharing. So this sort of third digital space of recording people almost allowed people to feel like they were gathering with these people while watching and created a great opportunity for conversations that are growing.

So before I continue to share about some of my course development, I want to remind you to sketchnote about your relationship to environment, land, water ecosystems. Ask yourself if you're still struggling with colonial land tenure in this relationship. Does that create barriers and how you connect to land and connect your students to land? I'll give you a minute. So keep thinking about that. Keep sketchnoting, do your thing.

I will tell you now a little bit about some of the work that I do as an instructional designer for Indigenous education at RRU. I've been asked to develop, and this is still a developing thing. It's been quite a slow process but I am working on a land-based diploma program that will bridge both adult learners and recent high school grads from local Indigenous communities into post-secondary. And it's a two-year diploma program in which they can enter, third-year entry into some of our bachelor programs. But it's designed to address a lot of the issues that come up with being Indigenous in the academy. So there's a lot of disconnect that Indigenous students feel in terms of not feeling like the work is even connected to their own communities and their

own knowledge systems. So this program radically only uses literature from BIPOC scholars and thinkers and critics, and it's sort of designed so that the first year has a foundation in the theory that they'll need for entry into some of those programs, but also just decolonial theory at large. And then the second year is all land based in an effort to revitalize the lands and waters that our campus sits on. We've had a lot of really informative meetings with our Heron People who are our Elder Circle at, at Royal Roads. And there were two issues that were brought up that the health of the lagoon is, it's terrible. There's not enough eel grass and there are no salmon going up the fish ladders. And so the priority was to have these students engage in service-led learning and revitalize the lagoon because all of this information will be important for how these students engage in revitalization in their own communities. But it's the act of sort of offering that knowledge through education, the education that they're receiving and paying for and then having that available to them for the rest of their lives that that's actually what's more important, especially based off of all of the, the data we've collected from the people that we're seeking to serve. So in our efforts to do that, we're kind of teaching them that if the change they hope to build within Indigenous communities really needs all skills. It needs storytellers, analyzers, gardeners, cooks, eel grass experts, fish protectors, data collectors, and more. So we're trying to create such a diverse set of skills. And in terms of our assessment and thinking about how to do this in a very Indigenous way, we're using a lot of Indigenous tools for comprehension. So I'm sure folks might have heard of Alex Wilson and she's done a pretty cool thing. Her students have to read the entire "Queer Theory" text. And so each student is sort of given a different chapter and they write a screenplay, and then they act it out. They're very embodied in this learning. And then so each group only really presents one chapter of the book, but you are technically reading the entire book by watching these screenplays sort of be act out, acted out and using technology to record these things and engage with them beyond the classroom. So we're planning to do that type of assessment for our Introduction to Indigenous Thought: Colonial Impact and Decolonial Theory. And so an example text I have in that syllabus right now is Ann Stoler's "Duress." And if anyone has read that, you know, how painful it is. So, trying to introduce these concepts in ways that are very embodied. So this program is really engaged with multiple means of connection by connecting community re revitalization needs to the environment of the lands on which the campus sits. That sort of connecting to yourself through embodiment self-discovery because they're quite literally using their bodies to revitalize the land and water and serve community needs. And so they're also employing that decolonial politic by connecting all of those.

SIMONE:

So we're just kind of gonna finish our session by getting you to go back to your sketchnotes. Kind of take a little look at what you're doing, maybe finish a couple of little things and maybe talk and, and just talk about some of these ideas with your new little community that you have at the table. Actually, it might be new. They might be communities that you already have lots of integration with, but just give you an opportunity to kind of connect those ideas together and thinking around that and we'll give you a few minutes and then we'll take some questions after that.

JASMINE:

We will take your questions for the next three minutes.

FACILITATOR:

So we've got about three minutes for questions. So somebody is waving at me already.

PARTICIPANT:

Thank you. So, oh, wow. Thank you so much for this presentation. My heart is overflowing with gratitude for everything you've shared. I would like to challenge the ETUG administration to, if you're willing come back and give us a two-day replay of everything you presented because I feel like I only had a little glimpse of what you have to offer and I had so much to learn and I would really like more time to practise some of the concepts here you're presenting. If we do not spend at least equal time on the Indigenous and decolonizing information you're sharing, as we do on digital literacy, we are failing our job at coming into true reconciliation. That's just where my heart is at. Having said all of that, could you give us guidance on how we may or may not share some of the information you've shared today? For example, I'm still gonna go back to my sketchnotes. Sentipensar and corazonar are beautiful concepts. I would like to start talking over every meal about these two concepts. But is it ours to receive as a gift to grow from? And or is it exclusive knowledge where we're not really meant to use these. We're meant to learn from but not speak these words? If you could just give us guidance, that would be great.

JASMINE:

Yeah. Thank you for that question. I appreciate that question because it's not asked enough. Sometimes people are like, Oh cool, Indigenous academic. Hello? Yes. Yeah. okay. So two things, the common criticism I've come across in just I started out in poly sci so I'm very that kind of brain, so I have to actually switch sometimes. But in terms of using Indigenous knowledge, the criticism tends to be, you're removing it from its context, depending on the situation you might be in when you're using it or teaching about it. But some of these concepts could be extremely useful depending on the context you're engaging in. And so the hope is that like depending on the context, say it is a reading for students or something, the work that Val has produced that I provided those definitions from are public academic resources written by a Latin American scholar that that, you know, that work is out there for us to engage with, but that we're also speaking about that, knowing that we're removed from that context. So also highlighting that when you use it. And then I don't know if you have...

SIMONE:

I'll just give a plug to our book chapter that we will be finishing and we'll let you know when it's available, but just figured it was a little plug.

JASMINE:

Thank you. But I think localizing knowledge as much as you can as well. I know that those concepts are extremely valuable but depending on the context you might be using it in, there are local Indigenous folks that are engaging with similar ideas and concepts and it's important

that we're honestly paying the folks whose lands were on. And so bringing in those people to sort of share in a reciprocal way and highlight how that knowledge about maybe feeling and thinking are connected as a broad spectrum and bringing in folks like that.

FACILITATOR:

Yeah, it would be great to have more questions, but I think we need to wrap up unfortunately. So I'd like to say a big thank you to Simone and Jasmine for their presentation.