

Apology Dice, a collaborative performance

December 7, 2017

Hello Teaching Practices Colloquium selection committee:

We, artistic collaborators David Garneau and Clement Yeh, are responding to your call for presentations that consider the themes of “Reaching Through Teaching” and ‘reconciliation’.

The Apology Dice is an interactive art performance that engages small groups in conversation—about Indian Residential Schools, colonialization, and possibilities of reconciliation—through the rolling of large, custom-made cedar dice.

Each die is cast one at a time, and in order, to form a sentence. The words on the faces of the first die read: “I am” / “We are” / “They are”. The second die reads: “so” / “fairly” / “really” / “not” / “somewhat” / “deeply”. The words of the third die display “sorry” on five sides and “tired of this” on the remaining side. The participant reads the sentence aloud and interprets its meaning, in the context of First Nations reconciliation in Canada, and in light of what has happened (or not happened) since the official apology for Indian Residential Schools offered by Harper’s Conservative government in 2008. Combinations may include: “I am / so / sorry”; “We are / not / sorry.”; or “They are / really / tired of this”. Who is the dice speaking for? The government, the churches that ran the schools, First Nations peoples, or the non-indigenous public? Do official apologies matter, even if they are not followed up with concrete actions?

Apology Dice is an artistic effort to stir emotional response, to help participants discover, educate, heal, and express their feelings about this history. For ambivalent participants, rolling the dice may prompt more certainty. To those feeling decided, play may reinforce their beliefs or perhaps unsettle them.

-David Garneau and Clement Yeh

*Please note that only Clement Yeh will be available to attend the colloquium.



Apology Dice, David Garneau and Clement Yeh, 2013.

Materials: cedar, danish oil, laser-cut text, blanket, participants. 3 editions of 3 dice; 5 1/4" x 5 1/4" x 5 1/4" each.
- Performance of Apology Dice at the Art Gallery of Algoma, Ontario, June 2014, with former Shingwauk Indian Residential School students

More images and text on the project are available here: www.makerbros.com/Apology-Dice 1

Since its creation in November 2013, Apology Dice has been presented in the following venues:

Galleries

Art Gallery of Algoma, June 2014. Joint exhibition between David Garneau and Clement Yeh.

Universities

"Aboriginal Art, Trauma, and Healing" fine arts course, Algoma University and Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, March 2016.

Creative Commons lectures and workshops, held in the Aboriginal Gathering Place, Emily Carr University, Vancouver, BC, February 2016.

"The Land We Are" book launch, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, BC, October 2015.

"Word and Image: Graphic Novels, Adaptations, and New Media" English 383 course, Simon Fraser U, Vancouver, BC, October 2015.

Publications

"**The Land We Are: Artists and Writers Unsettle the Politics of Reconciliation in Canada**", edited by Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill & Sophie McCall, Arp Books, 2015.

Profiles:

David Garneau (Métis) is Head of Visual Arts at the University of Regina. His work focuses on painting, drawing, curation, and critical writing. He often engages issues of nature, history, masculinity, and contemporary Aboriginal identity. His paintings are in the collections of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, The Canadian Parliament, Indian and Inuit Art Centre, the Glenbow Museum, the Mackenzie Art Gallery, and many other public and private collections. He has curated several large group exhibitions: *The End of the World (as we know it)*; *Picture Windows: New Abstraction*; *Transcendent Squares*; *Sophisticated Folk*; *Contested Histories*; *Making it Like a Man!*; *Graphic Visions*; *TEXTiles*; and *Looking Forward, Never Forgetting* with Michelle LaVallee.

Garneau has recently given talks in Melbourne, Adelaide, New York, San Diego, Sacramento, Kingston, and key note lectures in Sydney, Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver, and Sault Ste Marie. He is currently working on curatorial and writing projects featuring contemporary Indigenous art and curatorial exchanges between Canada and Australia, and is part of a five-year, SSHRC funded curatorial research project, "Creative Conciliation." He is also touring *Dear John; Louis David Riel*, a performance piece featuring a Riel sculpture interacting with John A. Macdonald statues across Canada.

Clement Yeh is a Canadian of Chinese ancestry. He holds a BFA in Drawing from the Alberta College of Art and Design and an MFA in Sculpture from Concordia. He has exhibited his work in drawing and sculpture at various venues across Canada and the United States. In 2013, he served as Studio Technician for a group of mid-career artists working with Indigenous themes at a residency called "Reconsidering Reconciliation", held at the Centre for Innovation in Culture and the Arts in Canada, Thompson Rivers University (TRU), in Kamloops, BC. This experience, coupled with the many social challenges faced by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in Canada, ignited a desire for him to participate in that conversation of healing and education, which is how the *Apology Dice* collaboration began. He lives and works in Kamloops with his young family, and teaches sessionally in Visual Arts at TRU.

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