

Institution: Loughborough University		
Unit of Assessment: D32: Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: Influencing national education policy in Canada to increase visibility and leadership of marginalized Indigenous women in Stó:lō Territory		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2001-2013		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Prof Marsha Meskimmon	Professor of Transnational Art and Feminism	1998 – present
Dr Marion Arnold	Lecturer in History of Art and Design	2002 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>In 2015, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission called for universities to 'embrace indigenization', and in 2019, its National Enquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, emphasized the arts and education in empowering marginalized Indigenous women to become community leaders and change makers in order to reduce social, economic and physical violence against them. Research insights from Loughborough University on women, nation, citizenship and photographs led to a partnership with the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) to create an Indigenous feminist art curriculum in unceded Stó:lō territory, generating the following impacts: 1. Influenced national education policy in Canada ('Indigenizing the Academy'), and 2. Enabled Stó:lō and other marginalised Indigenous women to reclaim connections to place and culture, enhancing their personal empowerment and community leadership.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Women's contributions to the arts have been undervalued and under-researched for generations, a situation even more acute for Black, Indigenous and other women of colour. Changing this situation requires more than locating and documenting 'lost' histories of women's art. Rendering visible the rich and varied work of women in the arts requires deconstructing art's iniquitous gendered power relationships and decolonising its Eurocentric practices and institutions. This problem was addressed by the long-standing transnational feminist arts research that motivated the collaboration between Marion Arnold and Marsha Meskimmon that came to be called <i>The Lens of Empowerment</i>. Three research insights underpinned the impact claimed here: a) feminisms and the visual arts are key to rethinking concepts of 'nation', 'citizenship' and 'sovereignty'; b) feminist art practices and pedagogies simultaneously support women's personal empowerment and facilitate their community leadership; c) making marginalised women's stories visible and audible is crucial to changing dominant cultural narratives.</p> <p>Meskimmon and Arnold met in 2001, shortly after Arnold had resettled in the UK from South Africa. Their research shared core concerns: Meskimmon was completing <i>Women Making Art</i>, [R1] supported by research fellowships in Australia and the United States. In this book she established a transnational feminist approach to reading global women's art cross-culturally. The volume also marked the author's first engagement with contemporary Indigenous women's art, both from the Antipodes and North America. Arnold, well-known for her pioneering work on women artists before, during and after Apartheid, was then co-editing <i>Between Union and Liberation</i> [R2], which explored the power of women's art practices, pedagogies and activism to effect political change in a country where citizenship had been denied and 'nation' was contested. In 2006, Arnold contributed an essay on South African women artists, diaspora and nation to <i>Women, The Arts and Globalization</i> [R3], co-edited by Meskimmon and Dot Rowe (now Price). Concurrently, Meskimmon was</p>		

researching the intersections between gender, nation, 'world citizenship' and the arts for her book *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination* [R4].

In 2009, Arnold and Meskimmon brought their decolonising feminist perspectives on global women's art together with their examinations of nation, migration and gendered citizenship. This led to the founding of the international research network at the heart of this case study, *The Lens of Empowerment: Women, Nation, Photographies* (2009-12). The particular insights of their transnational feminist arts research determined the intellectual focus and form of the network; [a] to explore the interconnections between women, nation/citizenship and photographies, through [b] transnational feminist projects on art, pedagogy, community activism and women's leadership that would [c] facilitate marginalised women's stories to challenge dominant cultural assumptions.

Partners were invited to the network from places where gender politics and concepts of nation/sovereignty were contested: Palestine, South Africa, Taiwan and Canada. Working collaboratively, network partners each developed projects that applied and extended the central research insights locally. The network facilitated annual meetings, an artists' residency, exhibitions and an international conference, held at Loughborough in 2012. At the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV), the network partners' project was a radical experiment in 'Indigenizing the Academy' through the development of a decolonizing feminist arts programme named for the network: *The Lens of Empowerment*.

Having attained University status and adopted a strategic plan, *Indigenizing Our Academy*, in 2008, UFV was in an ideal position to test the potential of the *Lens* research insights. These were applied through creative curriculum development designed to make a difference to the lives of Indigenous women in unceded Stó:lō territory and to shape policy developments in Canadian Higher Education. The teaching programme's success in demonstrating the potential of transnational feminist arts research to transform curricula and empower Indigenous women within their communities forms the centrepiece of this Impact Case Study.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1:** Meskimmon, M, *Women Making Art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics*, London and NY: Routledge, 2003 (supplied by HEI on request)
- R2:** Arnold, M and B Schmahmann (eds), *Between Union and Liberation: Women Artists in South Africa, 1910-1994*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005; Routledge reprint 2017: (supplied by HEI on request)
- R3:** Meskimmon, M and D Rowe (eds), *Women, the Arts and Globalization: Eccentric Experience*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013 (supplied by HEI on request)
- R4:** Meskimmon, M *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, London and NY: Routledge, 2010 (supplied by HEI on request)

The above outputs have been peer-reviewed and published by major international publishing houses. **R1** was also supported by competitively-awarded AHRC Research Leave (2001-02) and two international research fellowships: CASVA (Centre for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts) at the National Gallery, Washington, DC (2001) and the Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University (2002); and **R3**, by conference funding from the V&A Museum, London (2006).

4. Details of the impact

Long-standing research on transnational feminism and the arts led Arnold and Meskimmon to establish the *Lens of Empowerment* network. The *Lens* network extended the global reach of their insights into gender, nation, citizenship and photographies [R2, R3, R4] and developed **pathways to impact**. University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) network members, in partnership with Stó:lō elders, applied these insights in the development of a ground-

breaking undergraduate programme (also called *Lens of Empowerment*) that combined Indigenous learning with feminist arts pedagogies. The programme ran at UFV in 2011-12 and again in 2014-15. Its success in empowering Indigenous women in unceded Stó:lō territory to tell their stories of nation and belonging through documentary film and photography led to the following impacts.

1. Influenced national education policy in Canada

Following Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action* in 2015 [S3], Universities Canada, the most prominent national organization of Higher Education Institutions in the country, recognised Indigenous student education as one of its seven core priorities, calling for universities to 'embrace indigenization', and acknowledging the central role of the Liberal Arts to 'Indigenizing the Academy' (ITA) [S3]. UFV was an early champion of ITA [S4], coming to national prominence in 2012 by convening the conference *S'iwes Toti:lt Q'ep* (Teaching and Learning Together) [S3]. Widely hailed as 'the first of its kind' [S4], the event attracted over 275 delegates from 33 leading Canadian post-secondary institutions to UFV and showcased the success of the inaugural *Lens* programme and its student cohort as an exemplary instance of ITA, firmly placing the significance of Indigenous women's leadership and the arts on the agenda.

The early impact of UFV's *Lens* programme on national-level indigenization debates was continued and extended following the programme's second run in 2014-15, when it focused on 'reconciliation'. In 2016, as Canadian education policy at national level turned towards reconciliation, UFV was again seen to be ahead of the pack. UFV's Senior Advisor on Indigenous Affairs and member of the *Lens* network, reported at the Post-Secondary Truth and Reconciliation Summit convened by the British Columbia Ministry for Advanced Education in Vancouver, that every programme at UFV had an Indigenous focus. [S4] In 2018, Universities Canada featured women's documentary production at UFV on their Indigenous Education pages as a leading example of reconciliation through storytelling in Stó:lō territory. [S4] By 2019, when UFV hosted a special session on Indigenizing the Academy at the fifth annual National Building Reconciliation Forum in Ontario, changes made in the wake of the *Lens* programme and *S'iwes Toti:lt Q'ep* event were cited as a turning point for UFV – from integrating Indigenous students into the University, to transforming the University to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing. [S4]

The success of the *Lens* programme connected women's leadership with the visual arts, especially documentary filmmaking, and fostered a deep commitment to Indigenous empowerment. [S4] Four women at UFV played key roles in developing the inaugural *Lens* curriculum as partners within Loughborough's *Lens* research network: The Dean of Arts, the Senior Advisor on Indigenous Affairs, and two instructors in documentary film and photography. When the programme was extended in 2014-15, the initial team were joined by two additional women scholars, one an expert in the field of Indigenous storytelling and the second, the inaugural academic appointment in Indigenous Studies at UFV. Later in the same year, UFV installed its first Indigenous woman Chancellor, whose story had featured in her daughter's film, made during the *Lens* programme's second run in 2014-15.

The impact of the *Lens* programme on Stó:lō, other Indigenous, and non-Indigenous women leading the wider indigenization strategy at UFV was palpable. As its first documentary film instructor wrote of the programme: '*UFV's Lens Project was an extraordinary experience in bringing us together for a common purpose; we looked at our role as educators and our teaching methods with fresh eyes...*' [S2] The Dean of Arts further articulated the programme's effects on indigenization at UFV as '*helping to form community both in and out of the classroom... faculty and students became co-learners in collective dialogue and reflection.*' [S2]

Loughborough's transnational feminist arts research was a catalyst for indigenization at UFV, providing a distinctive research focus for the curriculum that established the clear and

articulate presence of women's leadership, cross-cultural storytelling [R1] and the visual arts within the national ITA policy agenda. As UFV's Senior Advisor on Indigenous Affairs wrote of the legacy of the *Lens* programme:

The stories of every woman in Stó:lō territory have an impact on nation. The telling of these stories through photography and video strengthens connections and nurtures awareness for coming generations because storytelling connects us to the land, and to each other' [S2]

2. Enabled Stó:lō and other marginalised Indigenous women to enhance their personal empowerment and community leadership

Through the *Lens* network, Loughborough's long-standing transnational feminist arts research on women, nation and citizenship addressed deep issues concerning the marginalization of Indigenous women in Canada. UFV was, and is, well-placed in this endeavour: at 5.3%, UFV's Indigenous student population mirrors that of Canada (4.9% nationally; 5.9% in British Columbia); by contrast, BC's oldest University, the University of British Columbia, reported 2.7% in the same period, and nationally, only 11% of Indigenous Canadians hold University degrees. UFV's pedagogical innovation, based on the research insights of the *Lens* network and strong partnerships with Stó:lō elders, created an arts programme that reached Stó:lō and other Indigenous women, empowered them to tell their stories of nation and belonging through film and photography, and enabled them to become leaders of social change and action through community organisations, hubs and socially-engaged art practices, as demonstrated in the following examples.

Lens students produced documentary films and photography that articulated Indigenous women's personal narratives - stories of racism, poverty and status cards, suicide, missing and murdered women, but also of community, land, matrilineal sovereignty and women's knowledge. Students' testimonies of development through the *Lens* programme are striking, many attesting to its empowering impact:

...when the [Lens] project began, my whole world changed. ...After years of questioning where my true roots lay and my identity as an individual, the discovery of my Aboriginal heritage has been an empowering journey. [S2]

Personal empowerment encouraged social mobility and engagement: *"I signed up for Lens of Empowerment as a woman struggling to position myself within the feminist movement and greater social justice issues in Stó:lō territory...The program was truly transformative and has shaped my life and work significantly over the past ten years."* [S2] In the decade following the *Lens* programme, this former student attained an MA in Actionable Postcolonial Studies in Experiential Education (2016), developed an international profile in creative education and social justice, and worked for three years in settler/Indigenous community education in New Zealand before returning to Canada in 2020 to join Simon Fraser University's social innovation hub, RADIUS. [S2]

Telling Indigenous women's stories through documentary film led many students from the second cohort to community leadership roles. One who used her *Lens* film to examine her late mother's devastating experience in the Indian Residential school system, became a counsellor with the Stó:lō Aboriginal Support and Critical Incident Response Team (ASCIRT), dealing with the effects of suicide on the Indigenous community. Another, whose *Lens* project explored matrilineal learning and women's self-governance in Stó:lō territory, later became Director of the Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society (FVACFSS). [S1, S2] For one feminist filmmaker, known for her work with young Indigenous women at risk, the *Lens* programme marked a change of direction from psychology to the arts:

I chose film production after taking an introductory program called Lens of

Empowerment at UFV. I was... aiming to work with Indigenous youth in the school system. I ended up making my first short documentary and I fell in love with the art form. [S1, S2]

Long-standing feminist research from Loughborough forged the *Lens of Empowerment* network; network partners at UFV used it to create the *Lens* teaching programme. The programme's success in telling Indigenous women's stories through film and photography has empowered individuals, benefited communities and influenced national education policy in Canada.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Evidence: Alumni and Alumni destinations

S1: Lens of Empowerment student films, 2014-15: *Tel i'tsel Kwe'lo* (I Am From Here): <http://sag-ufv.ca/exhibits/show/lens-of-empowerment-2015/about> [PDF]

S2: Cohort destinations, testimonials, interviews, correspondence: [PDF]
 FVACFSS <https://www.fvacfss.ca/board-of-directors/>; Stó:lō ASCIRT <https://wisepractices.ca/practices/stolo-ascirt/>; RADIUS: <https://radiusfu.com/>
 Vimeo profile Theresa Warbus: <https://vimeo.com/user38027605>; IMDb information on Indigenous filmmakers: <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm8102589/>;
 Interview with member of student cohort, ASA Student Spotlight (2017)
 'Women's citizenship and identity in Stó:lō Territory: a collective essay from the University of the Fraser Valley's Lens Project' in Arnold M and Meskimmon M (eds), *Home/Land: Women, Citizenship, Photographies*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016
 Email correspondence between Meskimmon, Arnold, members of cohort/teaching team

Evidence: Indigenizing the Academy

S3: National statements and events: [PDF]
 S'iwes Toti:It Q'ep (Teaching and Learning Together), Conference Report <https://blogs.ufv.ca/indigenizingtheacademy/2013/09/27/ita-final-report-and-brochure/> (June 2013) [PDF]; The Truth and Reconciliation Committee of Canada: Calls to Action http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf (December 2015) [PDF]
 Universities Canada, 'The Future of the Liberal Arts: a global conversation' <https://www.univcan.ca/media-room/publications/future-liberal-arts-global-conversation/> (March 2016) [PDF]; Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/> (June 2019) [PDF]

S4: UFV cited in national reports on Indigenizing the Academy: [PDF]
 Robbie Liscomb, 'Turning the wheels of change: Indigenizing the Academy', University of Victoria News 04.10.12; Dessa Bayrock, 'Stó:lō stories help for a transformative experience: Lens of Empowerment project returns to University of the Fraser Valley in Chilliwack' Abbotsford News, 23.07.14; Anne Russell, 'UFV Lens of Empowerment project returns with focus on women's experience in Stó:lō territory' UFV Today 09.07.14; Moira MacDonald, 'Indigenizing the Academy', University Affairs, 2016; Michael Bopp, et.al., 'Reconciliation within the Academy: Why is Indigenization So Difficult?', Teaching Commons, Lakehead University, 2016; Kelvin Gawley, 'Indigenizing' The University of the Fraser Valley', Abbotsford News, 13.11.16; Dan Smith, 'Reconciliation and the Academy: Experience at a Small Institution in Northern Manitoba', Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, no. 183, 2017, pp.61-81; 'Indigenous reconciliation: The land is the basis for everything', video feature on UFV's Indigenous documentary film work, Universities Canada, 29.08.18: <https://www.univcan.ca/media-room/videos/indigenous-reconciliation-the-land-is-the-basis-for-everything/>; Laura Beaulne-Stuebing, 'Collaboration and community key to universities' reconciliation efforts, say conference speakers', University Affairs, 23.10.19