Evan Christian

Dr. Isabeau Iqbal

EDUC 403

The Progress Café

 For this assignment I decided to create a painting asking the question: how is progress measured? Howis ‘progress,’ as a central tenant of society’s goals, represented within popular culture, media and other forms of ‘official truths.’ For this project I drew upon the Parsons and Beauchamp article for inspiration. In this article the authors seek to answer the question where does knowledge and ways of knowing come from, especially within our “current, predominantly Euro-centric based schooling systems” (Parsons et al. 106). Despite the fact that knowledge is a creation of all past historical events, passed down through generations, collected in writings and oral accounts, the idea that knowledge can be created, debated, or destroyed, is a concept that needs further exploration.

 The piece that I created contains two images. The scene to the left represents an untamed landscape; an overgrown forest, untouched and unspoiled nature. This visual representation is meant to depict Indigenous knowledge systems, as disseminated through oral, experiential, holistic, and spiritual beliefs (Parsons et al. 108). Through this lens, one may begin to understand that ‘knowledge’ does not necessarily come from a book, a teacher, or a traditional classroom. Knowledge can also come from nature itself, through experiences, and can be passed to others in a multitude of ways.

 The image on the right shows a 1950’s style diner adorned with neon lighting and the word “progress” clearly printed on top of the café. The purpose of this text is not to make the viewer feel as though progress is *only* gained through the transformation of landscape from natural to developed. Rather it is meant to ask the question: how is progress measured, and how does gained knowledge fit into this equation? In my opinion Indigenous knowledge systems play a larger role in our lives that most of us give credit for. For example, many of the medicines we now take for granted come from plant medicines discovered by Indigenous cultures from around the world.

Society is progressing at an ever-faster rate. In our current age of expansion, knowledge and belief is consistently being challenged by new scientific discoveries, new forms of technology and the constant ‘evolution’ of society itself. We must always challenge status quo “truths” and ask ourselves where knowledge and beliefs originate. Furthermore, we must be conscious that what is modern, new and ‘advanced’ is not always the best way to learn or to pass on knowledge. In short, this piece is meant to challenge the current Euro-centric view of progress, and question altogether whether progress means moving forward, returning to older systems, or perhaps a balance in between.

Bibliography:

Parsons, J. & Beauchamp, L. (2012). *From knowledge to action: Shaping the future of curriculum development in Alberta* (see Chapter 3: Ways of Knowing). Alberta Education, Planning and Standards Sector: Edmonton, AB.