

## Collaborating

Clement Yeh is a maker of things. I make things too, but my objects are mostly paintings and texts, which are less thingy than his sculptures. While I mostly think in pictures and words, I sometimes have tangible ideas but lack the skills to realize them. The appeal of working together began with the selfish hope that a skilled craftsman could materialize my imaginings, but it soon evolved into a more collaborative relationship when I found myself thinking with Clement, having physical ideas that I would not have had otherwise. In that mode, we knew our work would combine words and wood, and that it would be performative—something neither of us do much or are comfortable with.

We decided to develop this project shortly after having been part of a month-long residency in Kamloops, Reconsidering Reconciliation. Sponsored by the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre at Algoma University, the residency was held on the campus of Thompson Rivers University and hosted by Ashok Mathur, it gathered Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists who worked individually and collectively to consider what role art might play in reconciliation. After watching Peter Morin and Ayumi Goto's affectively wrenching "Hair" performance, I felt that one path through to that which is not-quite conciliation might be empathetic and inconclusive aesthetic exchanges across the Indigenous/non-Indigenous divide. The possibilities of this sort of relationship are embodied in a gesture from "Hair." Responding to Morin's grieving the suffering endured by Indian Residential School children and their families, Goto cuts her beautiful black hair. Her reformed body resembles both a shorn Aboriginal child and a traditional Japanese woman whose hair/culture is reshaped by Modernism.

The Morin/Goto partnership disrupts the Indigenous/Settler binary that assumes the Settler position to only be occupied by European bodies. This wordless dialogue, between a Tahltan man and a Japanese-Canadian woman, occurs in the margins of the colonial script. It has us wonder not only about how similar and dissimilar each is formed under their various empires, but also how they empathize, console and counsel with each other, beneath empire.

Clement identifies as Canadian with Chinese ancestry, his family arriving in 1979. I am Métis, with more European than First Nations inheritance. Perhaps precisely because neither quite fit the Indigenous and Settler profiles, we wondered if we might be well suited to devise creative ways to stimulate conversation about issues of conciliation among all sorts of people living in these territories.