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Heads Above Grass

Edgar Heap of Birds

Many Tsistsistas (Cheyenne) were killed during the fight. The air was full of smoke from gunfire, and it was almost impossible to flee, because bullets were flying everywhere. However, somehow we ran and kept running to find a hiding place. As we ran, we could see the red fire of shots. We got near a hill, and there we saw a steep path where an old road used to be. There was red grass along the path, and although the ponies had eaten some of it, it was still high enough for us to hide. In this grass we lay flat, our hearts beating fast; and we were afraid to move. It was now broad daylight. It frightened us to listen to the noise and cries of the wounded. When the noise seemed to quiet down and we believed the battle was about to end, we raised our heads high enough to see what was going on. We saw a dark figure lying near a hill, and later we learned it was the body of a Tsistsistas woman and child. The woman's body had been cut open by the soldiers (Hoig, 1979).

Quote from *Moving Behind*, a fourteen year old Tsistsistas woman, survivor of Colonel George Custer's massacre of the Tsistsistas people at the Washita River November 27, 1868, near what is now called Cheyenne, Oklahoma.



As that high red grass of the violent Oklahoma prairie offered shelter and seclusion for the young Tsistsistas woman, she lived to see many more mornings. That brave young person would grow up to become a respected elder, matriarch and tribal leader. We are blessed to have had those moments of protection extended to Moving Behind. Perhaps that time of danger had passed in order for her to become a mother, to nurture and teach the children of the future, as well as facilitate the writing of these words.



Today it is imperative that we acknowledge the brutality, intolerance and biased actions of the past. Thus by lifting our heads above the tall grass we can move forward to personal affirmation and progress. This progress can be represented by the educational and artistic exploration of complex issues of our society. In the field of art education we can articulate the progress by welcoming the creative activities of all vectors of youthful life and culture. Through this acceptance a wealth of experiences can be deposited to actually create more understanding and an enriched learning atmosphere. Once the multi-form stories of life are truly received we must then reverse the flow and generate an out-pouring of concepts, emotions and offerings back to society. The return of these artistic gifts may be in the form of workshops, lectures, critiques, dance, theatre, music, public art, visual art exhibitions and other boldly inclusive expressions.



In life the act of hiding or being purposely hidden by others may have once had its place in terms of surviving troubles of the past. This tactic, as an act of preservation, is useful no more. To confront collectively our shared histories in total and exchange the truths of this nation, by artistic means, will generate a fresh and healthy beginning. Just as the prairie grasses are renewed green each spring such openness of the academy shall serve to see us all safely through many more seasons together.



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Canceling the Queers: Activism in Art Education Conference Planning

**Dennis E. Fehr, Ed Check, Future Atkins and
Karen Keifer-Boyd**

A rural junior high art teacher responds to an urban school administrator's threat that cancelled a "Sexual Identities and the Art Classroom" panel session at a state art education annual conference:

It also breaks my heart to hear of such things happening. Just when you think that you are making a difference and moving attitudes in the right direction of awareness, something like this happens—and you are thrown back into the "dark ages." It is a good reminder to all of us that our jobs of educating people will never be finished—we have a long way to go.

A homophobic administrator, fearful of what would be taught in a session described as: "Individual presentations combined with panel discussion exploring Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) issues in the classroom" mandates that principals in his district "not allow" their art teachers and students to attend the state's art education association conference held in their town for the first time in about twenty years. Additionally, he decides to eliminate previously planned district support that consists of audio-visual equipment and paid teacher leaves.