

A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO NLAKA'PAMUX CHILDREN'S RESPONSES
TO ONLINE DIGITAL CURRICULUM
FEATURING NLAKA'PAMUX PARENTS AND ELDERS

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By

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Abstract

In this narrative inquiry, I posed the following question: How will Salish children respond to digital curriculum featuring Salish parents, community members, and elders? Non-Aboriginals have predominantly directed Canada's Indian residential, Catholic, and public schools; curriculum resources used within these institutions have largely been void of Aboriginal ways of knowing. This research demonstrates that Aboriginal people and educators can create curriculum resources that are directed by Aboriginals, serve Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children, and meet Canada's provincial educational mandates.

I chose narrative inquiry as my research methodology. My research design originated with my Aboriginal father, Elders, Chief, Council, and parents both on and off the landscape of my First Nation. Students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who I have taught since I started my teaching career in 1996 have also had significant influence upon this work. It went on to include professors and fellow graduate students from the University of Saskatchewan. I created curriculum resources by initiating, designing, and delivering them with Aboriginal people and in respect to public school curriculum outcomes. The medium I used to design and deliver these resources was a web-based interactive platform capable of incorporating rich media. Paper resources were used sparingly.

What I discovered is that children from our nation engaged strongly with curriculum resources created by our Elders, Chief, Council, parents, and myself, all members of our nation. The children expressed how much they liked seeing people they knew within curriculum and how they preferred using digital technology over solely paper based resources. This work demonstrates that First Nations can design curriculum for their children from an autonomous

position while meeting current outcomes and indicators within Canadian provincial curriculum mandates.

My research was also guided by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators, principals, superintendents, curriculum writers and professors. From these conversations I discovered the potential for further research and received requests to utilize the curriculum resources developed from my First Nation.

Acknowledgments

This study required a collective effort. I am grateful for those from my First Nation who contributed story content that provided the basis of all resources created for student use. I acknowledge my Chief and Council who listened, guided, and supported my work within our community. In particular, I acknowledge my father and elders who shared from an educational place shadowed by the former Indian residential school in our territory. May this work assist in turning that page, enable healing and a look forward for the benefit of our children and all our relations.

I thank Dr. Debbie Pushor, my thesis supervisor, for supporting and inviting the inclusion of my father's Aboriginal people within this research. Debbie, you enabled the scholarly world to connect with the world of the classroom and the Euro-Canadian world to meet the Aboriginal world. Without you, this work would not have been.

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Terminology

In accordance with the Indian Act of Canada, I am a status Indian. When I speak with my father and elders from my nation, we use the title Indian in reference to ourselves, and I am most comfortable with that term. This title, though, is problematic in contexts outside of my First Nation, and many prefer the title First Nations, Indigenous, Native, Aboriginal, or the name of their own specific nation such as Okanagan, Dene, or Innu. I thought of creating my own title with a mix of all the above and have come up with “Infinabinal.” For obvious reasons I do not believe this moniker will catch on, and hope it does not, but am reminded of a conversation I heard a number of years ago between an elder and young person.

“What are they calling us at the university?”

“I think it is Native, Uncle.”

“Not Indian?”

“No, that is politically incorrect, Uncle.”

“They are always changing our names.”

For the sake of clarity, and within this context, I will predominantly use the term Aboriginal in reference to Indians under the definition of the Indian Act in Canada.

Chapter One

Introduction: Round Dance in School – Possibilities

I have few memories of my early school years in British Columbia but one stands out clearly. I was in Kindergarten in Quesnel, British Columbia, and our class was seated on the floor of the school gym. Instead of our regular classroom teacher leading us into an activity, we were waiting for someone to come. There was a mild hum of activity typical of any school setting, and then they entered. The activity that took place within that gym has remained firmly etched within my memory to this day. An Aboriginal drum and dance group entered the gym. The drum was laid on the floor, and the drummers took their positions around the drum. The dancers prepared their regalia and assembled in a line. They were slightly different from other drum and dance groups I had seen because this group was from another Reserve. They were familiar enough that I knew what was going to happen. Time seemed to stand still as the drumming, singing, and dancing carried me into my father's world on our Reserve. Aboriginals, like my father, had entered a place in which I had not expected them – my Kindergarten.

During that time, the school became a place in which relationships between Aboriginals, my Kindergarten teachers, and fellow classmates shifted in ways I had not experienced before; our worlds were meeting and in unison. In another way, I sensed that my family and home setting, consisting of an Aboriginal Father and English Canadian Mother, had entered my school. As it was in my home, so it was in my school. As the dance progressed, one of the dancers, a woman who reminded me of my Aboriginal cousin, Lois, danced over to me and extended her hand. As our eyes met, we both knew something; we were of the same people, and she knew I knew the dance. My hand immediately extended to embrace hers, and I joined in. Other dancers extended the invitation to other children and teachers, and, for the next few minutes, Aboriginal

dancers, White teachers, and predominantly White students danced together to the sound of the drum. In that moment, I was glad Aboriginal people had come to school; it felt good to not be the only Aboriginal person there. For a brief moment, my school was a place like my home; Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals were together, sharing their lives in my school.

Looking back now, I am acutely aware of how rare such an occurrence was, and, as I progressed through public school, like Young (2005), I became aware that “the existence of my people (Anishinabe and other Aboriginal people) was not part of the curriculum” (p. 23). Were my father’s people only to make brief appearances in my school? I wonder now if it would be possible to have Aboriginal people come to school more often? How would Aboriginal students respond if they saw their own people more regularly within the school setting, embedded directly within the everyday curriculum?

Narrative Beginnings

My father left his Indian Reserve around the age of 24, following the advice of my Uncle Robert Samuel who told him that there was no industry on Reserve, no jobs, no future. My father set out seeking employment wherever he could find it. His search eventually took him to Prince Rupert to commercial fish, and it was there where he met, courted, and married my mother, a White prairie girl who had recently started her nursing career in the rainy west coast town. Soon after their marriage, my sister and I were born, and our family visited my father’s relatives on Reserve. Though infrequent, I knew where my father came from and who my grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles were on the Aboriginal side of our family. These visits, however, stopped at the age of seven years old when we moved to Saskatchewan to be closer to Mother’s side of the family. In the summers, when we would go to British Columbia for holidays, I thought we would go back to the Reserve to visit but it never happened. From this point on, it

seemed like my father's Aboriginal family started to become invisible. In spite of this, the knowledge of who they were, our Reserve, and where they lived was firmly etched in my mind. Even though we never went back to our Reserve, I knew where my father came from; he was Aboriginal and therefore, I was Aboriginal.

It was not until many years later when I began my teaching career that I started to receive questions from Aboriginal students. They asked me how to speak a certain word in my Aboriginal language and queried other things related to my nation. I redirected these questions to my father who, most times, gave answers reluctantly. I always felt the tension whenever I brought up an issue about our Reserve. Why was my father so reluctant to speak of where he grew up? Could it have something to do with where he went to school? Whatever the case, the reactions of my Aboriginal and Métis students to almost anything related to our identity was clear. They listened more closely when their identity was revealed and reinforced within the classroom.

My father was a student of St. George's Indian Residential School, and, as I have come to understand the residential school experience through readings, conversations with Elders, relatives, and residential school survivors, I am often conflicted about bringing up this issue with him. I do, however, understand to some degree why my father is reluctant to speak of his upbringing. For many Aboriginal peoples, including my father who went through Indian residential school, growing up meant being separated from parents, grandparents, siblings, relatives, and Elders, essentially all the ones they loved most in life. Could this be why my father stopped going back to our Reserve when we were young and why he became so reluctant to speak of it?

“Dad, were there any Indian teachers at your Indian residential school when you were growing up?”

“No.”

“Did grandpa or grandma ever visit you at school?”

“No.”

“Did you see any groundskeepers, secretaries, or any Indians who were in any way connected to the Indian residential school?”

“No.”

(F. Rowluck, Personal communication, September 14, 2011)

This conversation with my father captured some of the loss he experienced at residential school. I wonder if my father's way of dealing with this loss was by severing contact with his home Reserve and relationships with surviving family members? He does not like to talk about where he came from and how he grew up. I have equated his life to a book with a lock, high up on the top shelf of a library. On rare occasions, the book is taken down and unlocked, a short passage is read from the book and then locked and put back on the shelf. What I have only recently come to realize is that I have rarely seen him do this in the presence of my mother and never among my mother's side of my family, the White side. My father, through many years of practice, has developed a persona that he shows to most of the world. My sister and I, however, know that there is much more to him. Though I have struggled greatly with wanting to know more of who I am in regards to my Aboriginal ethnicity, home Reserve, and relatives, I am coming to accept that my father may never share much regarding who he is as Aboriginal, which was shaped by the years he attended Indian residential school. Much of my journey into who I am as an

Aboriginal man has been, and will be, without the very one who binds me to being Aboriginal, my father.

In spite of my father's resistance to share who he is, I did not cease asking him how to speak our language, where he hunted and fished on Reserve, and about Grandma's cedar root baskets. These baskets mean a lot to me and represent a way of design that I did not know about. The baskets were a common part of my childhood: I stored my Lego and toys in Grandma's cedar root baskets and spent hours playing around them; always there, silent and purposeful, a testimony to the identity and skill of my Aboriginal Grandmother. I always wondered how she used the pointed deer bone to make the baskets. My father told me that he never made baskets but only helped Grandma collect the cedar root for them. Every summer, he and Grandma would drive up to Botanie Valley and camp at Botanie Lake to collect cedar root. Each year, they would go back to the same trees, and Grandma knew just how much root to take from each tree. I asked Dad how they did it. He said that they would dig through the soil down to the roots and then cut thin strips of bark off of the roots. After the bark was taken, the soil was gently placed back over the roots. He told me that they only took what they needed, and this process ensured that the trees would be there for following generations to take root when they needed it.

When my father finally took me to Botanie Lake to show me where he had picked root with Grandma, some 50 years after he had left the Reserve, he was greatly dismayed to find the cedar trees cut down and a dull, gray, concrete dam standing in the place where the cedar trees used to stand. The irony is that the water level in the lake had dropped so much that the dam was useless. The lack of trees added to the soil erosion in the area and was also a reason for the drop in the water level of the lake. Anyone who has done even a cursory study of the effect of trees on moisture retention knows that trees help maintain moisture in an area. It was not what we had

hoped to see, and I wondered if this was just another reason why my father had resisted bringing me back to the Reserve; it seemed as if it was equated more with death and loss than enjoyment. I must admit that I always hoped to put my hands upon one of the trees from which Dad and Grandma had drawn cedar. Someone decided that removing the trees would improve things; time seemed to show that things got worse after they were removed. I wonder if it would be possible to plant new cedar trees where the old ones had been cut down?

In spite of my father's resistance to speak our language and share our history, my curiosity only grew, and the few old black and white photographs from our Reserve were like stories waiting to be told. I asked my father all sorts of questions about them. My curiosity started when I was a boy and continues to this day. I can easily recall the times when my Dad spoke to me in our language. The sound of his words had a strong impact upon me, and, when he spoke our Aboriginal language, it was as if my father was transforming himself back into who he really was, an Aboriginal man. The sound of my father's language always had a calming influence on me; it slowed me down. I wonder if this is how my Aboriginal students feel when I speak my Aboriginal language and theirs, consciously including our people within the school setting. I have witnessed many times how the presence of parents, language, and culture have both directly and indirectly influenced Aboriginal children within school; they become quieter, listen more closely, and are always more calm.

Though my father conformed and learned the language of White society, and the many cultural norms associated with greater Canadian society, he always remained so different, so unique. His life was a constant testimony to me that there was another life or side that was hidden, a life that I was not content to leave latent. To me, he had so many stories waiting to be told. I now wonder if my father's school, St. George's Indian Residential School, was one of the

reasons why my father was so silent about who he was as an Aboriginal person. I know that school for Aboriginal peoples in my father's day did not allow for curriculum that represented parents, family, community, culture, and language. Some argue that it is no different today. Hampton (1995) stated, "For most Indian students, now as in the past hundred years, Indian education means the education of Indians by non-Indians using non-Indian methods" (p. 6). Are we still hidden?

My early story of the presence of an Aboriginal drum and dance group in my school and my father's own reticence about talking about the past has led me to wonder how Aboriginal children experience school today. In both cases what I understand is that the lack of Aboriginal representation through curriculum, pedagogy, and resources in schools for Aboriginal children has a significant impact. I remember how good I felt when I saw Aboriginal people in my Kindergarten, of being invited into the dance, and the serenity of hearing my father speak our Aboriginal language. I also remember when I started to drop out of school in middle years. Schools, I concluded, were for White people not Aboriginal people, as there were no Aboriginal teachers, language, or culture there. As an Aboriginal person, who through unusual circumstances became a teacher and re-entered the school landscape, I have also witnessed significant change in Aboriginal and Métis students when I connected with their parents, caregivers, culture, and language both on and off the school landscape and incorporated them in the classroom. From these experiences, I have concluded that I do not know how to teach without forming relationships with the community and inviting parents, Elders, culture, and language into the educational experience of their children. It seems to me like a rope with three strands as opposed to two; the rope is much stronger.

As an experienced educator and one who is acutely aware of how Aboriginal parents and Elders have been removed from schools and curriculum in the past and present, I am now asking myself “why parents are mostly absent in the curriculum of teacher education” (Pushor, 2011, p. 220). Would Aboriginal, Métis, and Inuit children engage more strongly in public schools if their parents and Elders were more present within their school landscape experience? I feel that as an Aboriginal teacher I am well suited to search out the answer to that question.

Curriculum Overview

The notion of curriculum is typically defined as written documents fashioned by non-resident developers, policy makers, and scholars for a public school classroom. Kelly (2009) summarized it in the following way by stating that it is “the content of a particular subject or area of study” (p. 9). This content, including various amounts of assessment, is typically thought of by the majority as curriculum. Parents, children, teachers, and community members are typically not included as sources for content within this definition of curriculum and usually never in relation to the development of curriculum. In spite of this, there are those who have been interested in shifting the emphasis of curriculum from expert outsiders to those who are more locally connected to children. In recent years, Clandinin and Connelly (1992) became interested in the idea of teachers as curriculum makers. In a basic sense, this shift located the act of curriculum making in the teacher’s work alongside children. Building upon this idea, later work considered teachers and children in relationship as they composed curriculum together (Clandinin, Huber, Huber, Murphy, Murray Orr, Pearce & Steeves, 2006). Pushor’s (2007) work goes further by exploring the dynamic of teachers, students, parents, and community members together within the educational experience of students. Pushor moves away from the notion of a predominantly school-based educational model revolving around a scripted curriculum imported

from an external source to one in which parents become more engaged in the educational experiences of their children on the school landscape. This understanding of curriculum, coupled with my background as an Aboriginal teacher having considerable experience with parent and community inclusion in children's educational contexts, leads me to my research question: How will Salish children respond to online digital curriculum featuring Salish parents and elders? I now look to the work of Joseph Schwab (1978) to consider direction for my research question.

Joseph Schwab

Joseph Schwab, a former University of Chicago professor of education and natural sciences, came from an educational background which, in many senses, was truly liberal in that he gained a broad exposure to multiple disciplines. He received degrees in English literature, zoology, and genetics and then went on to teach and write prolifically in the area of curriculum, which became his main academic pursuit and one for which he is widely known. His background influenced his view of curriculum in obvious ways. At the apex of his career in the 1960s, Schwab (1978) wrote a scathing denunciation of the curriculum field within America by stating, "The field of curriculum is moribund. It is unable to continue its work and contribute significantly to the advancement of education" (p. 287). He went on to suggest a remedy to the situation by providing an outline of necessary elements that must be given equal consideration for the curriculum field to fulfill its educational purpose.

Schwab (1973) put forth five bodies of experience, all needed in the pursuit of adequate curriculum. These bodies of experience are subject matter, learner, milieu, teacher, and curriculum specialist. Subject matter deals with "the scholarly material under treatment" (p. 366), learners are "the children who are to be the beneficiaries of the curricular operation" (p. 366), milieu refers to "classroom, parent, family, community, religion, class, and ethnic

backgrounds” (p. 366), the teacher, with a focus upon “the knowledge of teachers” (p. 367) and, finally, the curriculum specialist whose primary purpose is to “remind all others of the importance of the experience of each representative to the (curriculum-making) enterprise as a whole” (pp. 366-377). What is most conspicuous about Schwab’s five bodies of experience is the absence within the curriculum making on many school landscapes of attention to or inclusion of parent and community milieus. In most public school settings today, or school landscapes, parents and community are not usually considered necessary parts of the curriculum on the school landscape, nor are they given serious attention. The milieus that receive the majority of attention are those of the school and classroom. The bodies of experience receiving ample attention within Schwab’s platform on public school landscapes are teachers, subject matter, learner, and curriculum specialist. The teacher’s value is largely measured in how well s/he administers subject matter in accordance with the school division’s timeline and her or his effectiveness in terms of how well s/he assists students to achieve mastery of the subject matter mandated and tested by a local, provincial, or national Ministry of Education. In addition, subject matter, learner, and curriculum specialist are all taken for granted as essential, and thus given considerable attention and resources in the pursuit of most modern public education. It is fairly common knowledge that three of these bodies of experience, namely teacher, subject matter, and curriculum specialist, have little to no educative contact with the milieus of family and community. Though there is social contact, albeit a minimal amount, between teacher and parent during parent teacher interviews, there is little to no engagement of the family and community within the teaching and learning on the school landscape. The work of teachers and curriculum specialists can take place with little to no regard towards the family and community milieu. The learner, after spending a large amount of time within the context of the school landscape,

gradually comes to accept that their family and community milieus are separate from their school and classroom milieus. My research is primarily concerned with this absence. I will inquire into what takes place when family and community milieus are elevated within the school landscape. First, it is important to consult another prominent scholar regarding the absence or inclusion of a learner's entire experience – John Dewey.

John Dewey

John Dewey, a predecessor and mentor of Joseph Schwab, was a firm believer in what some call a liberal education, or a broad exposure to multiple disciplines and learning strategies. Dewey witnessed the loss of influence of this form of education within institutions of higher learning during the twentieth century but did not passively accept this. He was a strong critic of forms of education and curriculum which relied too heavily on only one experience or discipline to the exclusion of others; this was, possibly, a reaction to an increase in specialization in the twentieth century in Western society.

The work of Alexander Meiklejohn (1932) and John Dewey (1933) in the 1920s and 1930s gave rise to the concept of a student learning community. Increasing specialization and fragmentation in higher education caused Meiklejohn to call for a community of study and a unity and coherence of curriculum across disciplines. Dewey advocated learning that was active, student centered, and involved shared inquiry (What is a Faculty, 2009). Dewey (1931) did not refrain from challenging the status quo of the education of his day when he asked, “What is the value of the accepted and generally current classification of subjects – meaning by ‘subjects’ such titles as appear in any program of studies in any high school and in any college catalogue?” (p. 4). The majority of teachers, like myself, never ask a question such as this when it is assumed

that an educational model based upon subjects in a program of studies is the only way to conduct education.

I started to ask similar questions while I was a student in public school around middle years. These questions that started to emerge pointed directly to experiences located in my home and community outside of the school classroom. One of my most pressing questions was, “How does this relate to my life outside of school?” Looking for connections between my school experience and life experience outside of school, I was often disappointed to learn that they seemed to be two very different entities that had little relation to one another. When I became a teacher, I continued to see this lack of relationship between school and home in my work alongside learners.

Dewey (1931), like Schwab, and in response to an educational model largely devoid of home and school milieus or the entire experience of the learner, did not simply criticize the existing model of education but offered ideas on what education could look like. Dewey believed true learning included a number of factors relating to each other, not just facts taught in isolation such as algebra from 10 to 11 a.m., on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Dewey (1931) stated, “The physician may study ‘medicine’ in the medical school, but in practice he studies many other things, such as his patient and how to succeed” (p. 12). A modern day physician, Smith (2003) stated what Dewey said, in another way, “Medicine is not only clinical work but is also concerned with relationships, team work, systems, communication skills, research, publishing, and critical appraisal” (p. 1). Dewey stated what was obvious to anyone who has experienced any form of education or form of knowledge transfer on a typical school landscape. In the context of education, we are related to people and we are related to things outside of the public school and classroom milieus. Schools that operate in a fashion that ignore these realities

because they do not fit within the narrow classification of a single subject designed by a non-resident specialist and taught by a single teacher within a specific time frame within a classroom are bound to achieve limited success. Simply put, because it is not written in a mandated curriculum document, guided by professional development into pedagogy, and enacted through curriculum resources, does not mean it is not related to a child's education.

Dewey (1938) framed his work on education in relation to experience. He saw experience as essential to education and suggested careful attention to this in the work of teachers. He claimed a set of criteria for experience framed by continuity and interaction in situation. The implication for this is that every experience builds on past ones and shapes future ones. All experiences happen in interaction and are situated in places, often with others. Dewey stated, "The principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (p. 27). Within his theory, Dewey claimed it was necessary for the teacher to understand students' "past experiences in order to effectively design a sequence of liberating educational experiences to allow the persons to fulfill their potential as a member of society" (Neil, 2005, p. 2). Dewey's words hold weight for me as my experience in public school reinforced the idea that those who had gone before, namely all my Aboriginal community, were not allowed to exist within my public school milieu. With the exception of fellow learners, I never interacted with or was taught by an Aboriginal person, never encountered my Aboriginal language, and never engaged with written curriculum that in any way reflected who I was as Aboriginal. I slowly came to conclude that there was no future within the public school milieu for myself as an Aboriginal person.

Did Dewey ever speak of a form of education on the school landscape that was absent of a child's past experiences? He did and his conclusion as to the results such a system would produce were demonstrated through Canada's Indian residential school system through the forced education of Canada's Aboriginal population from the late nineteenth century until the late twentieth century. Dewey (1897) spoke about a form of educational practice revolving around written curriculum documents absent of a child's home and community life and stated, "Much present education fails because it neglects this fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life" (p. 292). There have been few educational experiments more devoid of community life than the Indian Residential school system in Canada and the results of this have been clear. More will be said about this later but I now turn to the work of two scholars who have moved towards Schwab and Dewey's ideals of recognizing and including the entire experience of the learner, both off and on the school landscape.

Connelly and Clandinin

Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (2000), curriculum scholars who use the methodology of narrative inquiry, which in turn is built upon the work of both Schwab and Dewey, declared, "Educators are interested in Life. Life, to borrow John Dewey's metaphor, is education" (p. xxii). In contrast, Webster's Dictionary (2002) defines curriculum as "the whole body of courses offered by an educational institution or one of its branches" (p. 557). Those who view education as only happening on the school landscape and primarily within a classroom would not support a view of education as happening within the home and community milieus. Lagemann (1997) stated that "a culture of schooling in which testing, tracking, and vocationalism were often more highly valued than teaching, common learning, and intellectual growth" has prevailed within Canada's public school landscape.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) conclude that viewing education as aggregate courses and periodic assessment is inadequate in terms of understanding how vast curriculum and education are. Curriculum, according to Clandinin and Connelly, vitally includes experience and is the primary medium of all education; education is not comprised of isolated subjects spanning a time-limited course of study in a school or college. When speaking of experience in this manner, curriculum expands to include the learner's life outside of the public school setting and vitally enters the landscape of home and community. Thus, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) consider curriculum to coincide with the origin of the Latin term *curriculum vitae*, meaning "the course of one's life" (Webster's, 2002, p. 557).

When approaching curriculum as "the course of one's life," experience comes to shape a new understanding of curriculum. Experience inextricably comes to include people and events outside of the school landscape and outside of the well-worn path of schooling and curriculum that primarily considers the school landscape as educational. This contrasts with the grand narrative view of school (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and curriculum portraying the teacher as a distributor of information called curriculum and the learner as one who memorizes information called curriculum. It also contrasts with the model of education introduced into the lives of Aboriginal people of Canada that, according to Dewey (1897), "failed because it neglected this fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life" (page number needed or if its form isn't paginated, np goes here). I now look to the history of Canadian education in Canada, which not only neglected the family and community life of Aboriginals but also legislated their exclusion on the school landscape and in the lives of children.

Positioning Aboriginals in Relation to Canadian School Landscapes

I spent more than half of my teaching career teaching in situations with a majority of Aboriginal and Métis students. Through this experience, I came to understand that the inclusion of parents within the school landscape and in curriculum had a significant influence upon how First Nation and Métis students participated on the school landscape. I would commit to say that if parents became involved with myself as a teacher and in the process of their child's education that the child would not only meet provincial standards but usually exceed them. What I also discovered was that parents and children were often amazed that I would seek out relationships with them off of the school landscape. To understand why this was, a thorough understanding of the history of Aboriginal, Métis, and Inuit education with the federal and provincial governments in Canada is required.

Charles Bagot and First Nations in Canada

Education for Aboriginals in Canada that attended to their family, community, language, and ethnic milieus was, for the greater part of the twentieth century, either completely removed or distorted to the detriment of not only Aboriginals throughout Canada but by all who would come to reside within the country's borders. The Bagot Commission, initiated in 1842 by Governor Charles Bagot, set the initial educational course for Aboriginal in Canada (Milloy, 1999). Under the commission's recommendations, schools were to be set up with the goal of civilizing Aboriginals in Canada and "in such schools, under the supervision of non-Aboriginal teachers and isolated from the influence of their parents, pupils would imperceptibly acquire the manners, habits, and customs of civilized life" (The Bagot Commission Report, 1857, as cited in Milloy, 1999, p. 13). This Commission set not only the educational foundation for the establishment of the Indian residential school system in Canada but the Indian Act as well, a document of which former Canadian National Chief Shaun Atleo (2011) stated, "This 19th-

century relic continues to hold us back in delivering better lives for our people” (p. 1). Though there has been change in educational policy for Aboriginals since the abolishment of Indian residential schools, the current educational experience administered by Canada’s federal, provincial and territorial governments of Canada is still largely devoid of Aboriginal, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing. Educational policy has also been situated remotely from the curricular commonplaces in relation to what Schwab (1973) defined as the family and community milieus. To more adequately understand the importance of the family and community milieus in relation to Aboriginal educational experience in Canada, it is important to consider Canada’s government policy in removing family and community from the lives of Aboriginal children through the Indian Residential School system. The results of the Indian Residential School system in Canada speak clearly to the futility of thinking that anything beneficial can come from separating children from their parents, elders, and culture.

Residential schools in Canada were initiated in the 1830s. However, the Government of Canada commenced a more active role in the development and administration of Indian Residential Schools in 1883. One year later, in 1884, “the Indian Act was amended to include compulsory residential school attendance for status Indians under age 16” (Miller, 2012, p. 1). At the peak of the residential schools system, around 1931, there were about 80 schools operating in Canada. In all, about 150,000 Aboriginal, Inuit, and Métis children were removed from their communities and forced to attend the schools. Most schools closed in the 1970s with the last school closing in 1997 (Miller, 2012). Though there were instances in which Indian residential schools had a positive outcome for Aboriginal children, mostly in cases of orphaned children or where children did not have access to adequate food, largely due to the loss of access to traditional hunting grounds and diminishing wild game, the forced separation of children from

their parents and communities had extremely negative consequences for all members of the family and community.

The Impact of Indian Residential Schools

Pushor (2011) wrote of a curriculum of parents which, according to her, is a “living curriculum” (Chung & Clandinin, 2010, p. 180), one that reflects the intertwining of many lives and of many experiences in the living with, the raising, and the educating of children” (p. 221). She goes on to challenge teacher candidates to “reimagine what it means to be a teacher and how that might be lived out in the co-construction of curriculum with parents, children, and other family members” (p. 221). What Pushor recognized as important, perhaps indispensable, within education is what both the Canadian Government and the Anglican Church in my father’s Indian Residential School experience consciously and through legislation removed. Aboriginal children were to be separated from their parents and placed in residential schools under the care of government oversight and the management of Catholic, Anglican, United, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Methodist Churches. In spite of early indications that the endeavor was completely inadequate, the government and churches persisted. Even in cases where the government of Canada knew of flagrant abuse and mistreatment of Aboriginal children in the schools, they forged ahead knowing their policy was failing. This was nowhere more apparent than in the physical settings in which Aboriginal children were required to live and study.

Duncan Campbell Scott was the head of the Department of Indian Affairs in Canada from 1913 to 1932 and oversaw the Indian residential school system when it was at its peak. Scott’s legacy, in terms of his administration of education for Aboriginals, could be summed up quite simply: First Nation parents and children were to be separated and this was enforced in painfully strict terms. In spite of this separation, an increasing number of voices from Aboriginal leaders

and parents complained of poor conditions in the schools. Nothing was done until school administrators, teachers, Indian agents, and even some government bureaucrats started to express their concerns. The major problem within the schools was tuberculosis caused by malnourishment, poor ventilation, overcrowded rooms, lack of rest, excessive manual labor, and the emotional stress of being separated from parents and community. One example of the problem observed by Doctor Pitts, who “had special knowledge of the school system because his father was a long-serving principal, and who had friends who were school doctors,” stated “that were I to apply the standards of health to them that is applied to children of the white schools that I should have to discharge 90% of them and there would be no school left” (Milloy, 1999, p. 105). Though there is disagreement in terms of the mortality rates of Aboriginal children who attended the residential schools, the defensible statistics based on the reports of two doctors who were officially employed by the federal government to assess the Indian residential schools, Dr. Bryce and Dr. Corbett, ranged anywhere from 30% to as high as 70%, depending on the school. Many children who entered the Indian residential schools did not live through the experience. Duncan Campbell Scott himself stated that “fifty percent of the children who passed through these schools did not live to benefit from the education which they had received therein” (Scott, 1909, as cited in Milloy, 1999). The separation of Aboriginal parents from their children was not only inadequate but morally wrong; government oversight combined with institutional church management of Indian residential schools proved fatal for many Aboriginal children.

What can be said of the academic quality of the schools? In the majority of cases it was very low and had little benefit for the children who lived through the schools. In a few rare cases, however, where Aboriginal elders and parents were involved in the choice of sending their children to schools, Aboriginal children excelled. One such instance of this was at All Hallows

Girls School in Yale, British Columbia, though this was arguably more of a private residential school as opposed to an Indian residential school. Of particular interest in the case of All Hallows was the attitude of Aboriginal leaders and parents towards their children being educated among White people and away from their families and community. In 1900, the Indians of the Yale band “took a good deal of interest in the education of their children and were anxious in this respect to see them on par with their white neighbours” (Barman, 2003, p. 285). In addition, the local Anglican Order’s magazine stated:

The present difficulty is not to secure children for the school, as in former years, when we had to go to the Indian Reservation to coax the parents into sending their children to school and the children into coming but to find room for those who are desirous of admission. East and West. (as cited in Barman, 1995, p. 339)

There were no reports of abuse or neglect from All Hallows students and it appeared that White teachers, Aboriginal leaders, and students were in relative agreement at All Hallows.

All Hallows was unique in that, for a period of time long enough to fully establish the academic ability of its students, it enrolled both Aboriginal and White girls and provided the same academic curriculum to both. Though the students were segregated, they were exposed to much of the same experience in terms of teachers and academic curriculum in the school. The one exception was that the Aboriginal girls were responsible for all household duties in and around the school. The quality of education was high and “in time All Hallows became fashionable and also attracted numerous daughters of prominent Vancouver families” (Barman, 2003, p. 285). This educational experience produced a surprising result when all students in the school were equally assessed. In one case when the Aboriginal students were tested, “the bishop himself held ‘a very rigid examination’ to discover ‘the answers in all respects being equal, and

sometimes superior, to anything that could be expected from white children of the same age” (Barman et al., 2003. p. 289). As one individual who reported to the Department of Indian Affairs in 1904 declared, “It is beyond doubt that Indian children have the capacity to learn and that the reason of non-success in education is not to be found in want of intelligence” (Barman et al., 2003, p. 291). In spite of the fact that the Aboriginal girls at All Hallows, with the support of their chief and parents, demonstrated their ability to function at a high level academically, the Canadian federal government elected to discontinue academic curriculum from Aboriginal children’s school experiences. In 1910, the federal government’s policy became “to fit the Indian for civilized life in his own environment... To this end the curriculum in residential schools has been simplified, and the practical instruction given is such as may be immediately of use to the pupil when he returns to the Reserve after leaving school” (Scott, 1909, as cited in Barman, 1995). Experience, law under treaty, and most importantly, the voices of First Nation Chief, parents, and community were removed from the educational experience of Aboriginal children. In addition, an academic education was removed from the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. The results of that decision have long since proven faulty.

Unfortunately, education within the majority of Indian residential schools was of a very low level of quality and never intended Aboriginal children to participate within the economic landscape of Canada. In spite of parents’ wishes for their children to learn White ways and prosper within a changing Canada, Minister of the Interior Wilfred Laurier stated, “We are educating these Indians to compete industrially with our own people, which seems to me a very undesirable use of public money” (Barman, 2003, p. 292). Education from that point on was not intended for assimilation into Canada at large but for Aboriginals to take back to allotted Reserves, largely isolated from the rest of Canada. The majority of Aboriginal children were not

only separated from their families and community, and exposed to grave health risks, but given an education which was inferior to that of the education for White students and devoid of a long term purpose in terms of how to prepare them for life on Reserves. For those teachers who rarely, if ever, set foot on Reserve, how were they to prepare students to successfully live there?

Another rare case in which Aboriginal parents influenced the school landscape of their children during the Indian residential school years was at Great Whale River in the 1950s. In a few instances within the Arctic, boarding hostels were established to educate small groups of Inuit children. In one such case, the attitude of Inuit parents in Great Whale River led to an innovation among the hostel schools.

The Department of the Interior was open to the idea that the housekeeper or married couple in charge of the hostel could well be Aboriginal.there was even a suggestion of democratization. The area administrator reported that the woman hired had been “unanimously chosen as the person preferred and best qualified to look after their children by a group of Eskimos who had left for camping. (Milloy, 2003, p. 246)

The woman in this situation was Inuit, formerly known as Eskimo. In contrast to the joint decision of the Department of the Interior and the parents of the children in Whale River, the situation in the hostels of Cape Dorset and Frobisher Bay was handled differently. The Department of the Interior faced opposition from parents as “the Inuits’ affection for their children was so strong that they would not, it was reasoned, cooperate unless their children could be boarded with relatives or placed in a hostel run by a housemother respected in the community” (Milloy, 2003, p. 247). Why the Department of the Interior would consider the inclusion of Aboriginal parents’ wishes in one case but not others is unclear, but the results of including Aboriginal leaders and parents on the school landscape produced far more positive

results than the exclusionary practice of removing children from their parents in the majority of Indian residential school scenarios.

The results of the residential school experience have now come to complete fruition and it is clear that they were a failure, not only for Aboriginal children who were forced to attend them but for their future families and those parents and grandparents who were left behind on Reserves. In addition, the Canadian Federal Government and provincial governments face a growing problem within Canada. The highest rates of illiteracy, unemployment, substance abuse, suicide, and incarceration are found amongst Aboriginals in Canada. “Social maladjustment, abuse, of self and others, and family breakdown are some of the symptoms prevalent among First Nation Babyboomers” (Milloy, 2003, p. 295). The primary cause of these results is, in the words of Canada’s present Prime Minister, related directly to the removal of Aboriginal children from their families:

Two primary objectives of the residential school system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, “to kill the Indian in the child.” Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country. (Harper, 2008, p. 1)

In spite of the government’s policy to remove family and community experience from Aboriginal children who attended residential schools in Canada, many Aboriginals still have within their construct an acknowledgment and respect for ways of knowing outside of their own

family and community experience. In fairly recent history this has been demonstrated in the following ways. In 1971, the Indian tribes of Manitoba stated in *Wahbung, Our Tomorrows* that parents' of the community be consulted by the school authorities regarding the school curriculum. Parents want to be involved in decisions regarding the school program. The valuable recommendations from parents on how to enrich the program culturally, on what materials to be used, what is to be taught, etc. would greatly enhance what school has to offer the Indian children (p. 123).

Among other things, *Wahbung, Our Tomorrows* declared, "Local school boards would be responsible for: a) direct participation on curriculum development" (p. 119). One year later, in 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood, now known as the Assembly of First Nations representing all Aboriginals across Canada, presented a policy paper to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development entitled, *Indian Control of Indian Education*. This document, much like its predecessor, *Wahbung, Our Tomorrows*, declared the desire and intent of Aboriginal peoples: family and community were to be recognized on the school landscape. It stated, "Unless a child learns about the forces which shape him: the history of his people, their values and customs, their language, he will never really know himself or his potential as a human being" (Indian Control of Indian Education [ICIE], 1972, p. 9). Regarding curriculum and parent engagement, it stated that curriculum "can be changed and it can be improved. Using curriculum as a means to achieve their educational goals, Indian parents want to develop a program which will maintain balance and relevancy between academic skill subjects and Indian cultural subjects" (p. 9). The policy also stated that Indian people be directly involved in the creation of school curriculum alongside, and not in isolation of, the Canadian government:

To develop an Indian oriented curriculum for schools which enroll Native children, there must be full scale co-operation between federal, provincial, and Indian education people:

(1) In the federal Indian school system, funds must be made available for Indian people to work with professional curriculum planners. Together they will work out and test ideas for a relevant curriculum, utilizing the best from both cultures. (p. 9)

The response from the Canadian Government to the policy statement of the ICIE was positive. Then Minister of Indian Affairs, Jean Chretien, affirmed the policy and the federal government made an explicit 180-degree reversal of previous policy and accepted the principle of Indian Control of Indian Education. That year marked the beginning of an increasingly hands-off attitude to the contents of education for students on Reserves. In 1974, the federal government started to fund Band-operated schools, and the number of federally directly-operated schools began to decline (Mendelson, 2008, p. 4). However, in 2010, almost 40 years after the policy was proposed, Grand Chief Atleo (2010) of the Assembly of First Nations declared:

The full spirit and intent of the ICIE 1972 policy has never been supported in a meaningful manner. Successive federal governments have consistently failed to provide the necessary support to fully implement the comprehensive First Nations learning environments and systems envisioned by First Nations that would lead to overall improvement in learning outcomes. (p. 3)

The desire of Aboriginals to work in conjunction with the Government of Canada to operate effective schools and create meaningful curriculum has, in the words of Aboriginals, not materialized.

It is clear from recent history that Aboriginal parents and elders desire to work alongside the federal government, not to replace the existing school landscape, but to enter the school

landscape in partnership with both the federal government and their children. What is becoming increasingly clear from multiple sources is that when parents are involved within the educational experience of their children, the children fare better. Richard Riley, former secretary of education in the United States, stated that “when families, educators, and communities all work together, schools get better and students get the high quality education they need to lead productive lives” (Riley, 1996, p. iii).

A Different Understanding of Schools

To continue to ignore and, in most cases, not allow parents and community within a child’s educational experience on the school landscape will continue to limit, and even harm the educational experience of Aboriginal learners. Milloy (1999) stated, “It is clear that the schools have been, arguably, the most damaging of the many elements of Canada’s colonization of this land’s original peoples and, as their consequences still affect the lives of Aboriginal people today, they remain so” (p. xiv). This leads to an important question: What should Aboriginal education in Canada have looked like when schools were first discussed between Aboriginals and the British Crown? This question was answered many years ago by the chiefs of various First Nations and recorded in Treaties 1 through 6 between them and the British Crown. In Treaty 4 between the Plains Cree and Saulteaux Nations and Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, it was written, “Her Majesty agrees to maintain a school in the Reserve allotted to each band as soon as they settle on said Reserve and are prepared for a teacher” (Talbot, 2009, p. 81). The three words, “in the Reserve,” within this portion of Treaty 4 are critical to understanding what Indian Education should have been in Canada. “In the Reserve” directly implied that Indian children were to be surrounded by their parents, elders, culture, religion, and language. Joseph Schwab (1973) referred to these as milieus, elaborating on them in the following way, “References to

community suggest a third body of experience which should be represented in the curriculum-making group: experience of the milieus in which the child's learning will take place and in which its fruits will be brought to bear" (p. 366). In direct denial of Treaties 1 through 6 and Schwab's idea that community "should be represented in the curriculum-making group," David Laird, representing the Canadian Government as Treaty Commissioner for Treaty 7, rescinded this agreement and stated that "the Government is not bound under the Treaty to erect a schoolhouse on each Reserve, and that the Government consider their obligation in this respect discharged by the payment of a school teacher on each Reserve" (Stewart, 2001, p. 131). History went on to prove that the government further violated all seven treaties and established the Indian Residential School system, removing Indian children from their families, community, religious, and ethnic milieus.

Beyond the School Landscape

Personal Experience with the Parents of Students

In my first teaching appointment, I came to witness and be involved in a situation that contained an extremely high level of tension involving a student, his family, and a local public school. The level of tension was so high that the student was not permitted to set foot on the school grounds due to issues of violence displayed by the student towards various staff members. Academically, the student was meeting none of the mandated curriculum goals. Given that no progress was being made within the school place, I suggested that I work with the student off of the school landscape, in effect changing the place in which the mandated school curriculum was delivered, the pedagogical approach to curriculum delivery, and even some of the curriculum resources. This suggestion was accepted and shortly after this was done, the level of tension demonstrated by the student lessened significantly. I then sensed a need to include the parents

within the educational experience of their son. Within this journey, I also came to engage other stakeholders relationally in this situation: the district superintendent, principal, the special needs teacher, fellow students, and community members. From this, I have since come to understand that I was “inquiring into their lives” (Huber, Murphy, Clandinin, 2011). The results of this approach demonstrated to me how significantly change could occur when parents were invited into the educational experience of their child both on and off the school landscape; the experience for all involved became increasingly positive.

Unbeknownst to me, when I initiated a relational space with the parents, I discovered that their view of the public school was that of a system that viewed them with an “arrogant perception” (Lugones, 1987). Their response, in turn, was one of antagonism towards the public school and one that held little benefit for either the family or the school. In speaking with the parents and working to establish a relationship with them, I affirmed them as “holders and makers of knowledge” (Huber et al., 2011, p. 5), indispensable to the educational experience of their son. The response to this was at first disbelief but eventually became one of trust. When the student came to know that his parents were engaged within his educational process in a significant way, the tension evidenced within the life of the student diminished even further. The change was so stark that the father of the student once told me, “Billy, we don’t know what you’re doing but it’s working and our whole family can feel the difference” (B. Robillard, Personal communication, November 2, 1995). Looking back now, I know there was little I did other than make room for the student’s parents to enter their son’s school landscape, a place usually involving only teacher and student. Pushor (2011) spoke of awakening to the exclusion of parents when she stated, “As I lived alongside parents and educators in these inquiries, I came to understand more deeply the taken-for-grantedness of parents’ positioning in schools. I began

to wonder what it might take to interrupt this taken-for-grantedness” (p. 218). In my first teaching experience, I came to experience firsthand this kind of interruption by creating a space whereby parents were vitally included in the experience of their son’s public education. The results were marked and occurred in a short period of time to the benefit of all involved. Within the process of relating to the parents, often at their kitchen table, we came to mutual decisions on how to best proceed in assisting their son to navigate his school experience. It was also during this family time that both parents and student shared how past family and community experiences came to shape who they were and how this in turn influenced their view towards the public school, a relationship usually marked by conflict. This family, like myself, was of Aboriginal descent. Solutions to these challenges were often worked out quickly and with mutual agreement as the typically silent third party, the parents, were present and had equal say in how their son’s education would proceed.

Within this situation, an interruption to the quintessential school experience was composed that possessed a simple theme; this theme was relationship (Pushor & Ruitenberg, 2005). In addition, Pushor (2007) stated:

Attending to children, in the context of their families and communities, has much greater promise for educational achievement in the broadest of senses (and contexts). While it is important to engage parents on the school landscape, it is equally important for educators to move comfortably in the worlds of families and communities, off the school landscape. It is when these boundaries between school, home, and community become permeable and multidirectional that the creation of a shared world which supports and nurtures children is realized. (p. 6)

Though it was not intentional within this situation, subject matter knowledge from within the school landscape was de-centered, or relegated to a lesser level of importance and “a focus on bringing into being a counter story in which children’s and families’ lives are/were central” (Huber et al., 2011, p. 146). What was somewhat ironic is that within a period of about four weeks, the student started to complete his work to mastery to the surprise of his school teachers. One teacher actually asked me if I was doing the student’s work as he did not believe that the student had the ability to grasp, let alone master, the mandated school curriculum. As the parents of the student were relationally elevated in the situation, the school landscape started to gain more respect by the student and family. The student was re-introduced into the school landscape and academic goals were quickly attained.

Methodology: Why Narrative Inquiry?

Relationship is at the heart of thinking narratively and is significant in research and teaching (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). From my experience as a teacher, engaging relationally with parents and grandparents outside of the school landscape has brought about immense benefit to the students on school landscapes. Likely the most significant way in which narrative inquiry benefitted me and the study’s participants was in its ability to give voice to a group of people who are rarely ever listened to, namely Aboriginal parents and Elders. Fazel and Stein (2002) refer to them as a “silent group that is easily overlooked” (p. 369). This understanding of relationship and the need for the participants’ voices to be heard influenced my choice of narrative inquiry as the research methodology I used to conduct this research. I was also influenced by voices who speak from outside of the grand narrative. Elliot Eisner (1998) stated that the pursuit of education is not possible through the current lens of the grand narrative:

Education will not have permanent solutions to its problems, we will have no “breakthroughs,” no enduring discoveries that will work forever. We are “stuck” with temporary resolutions rather than with permanent solutions. What works now may not work then. We are not trying to invent radar or measure the rate of free fall in a vacuum. Our tasks are impacted by context, riddled with unpredictable contingencies, responsive to local conditions, and shaped by those we teach. (p. 5)

Context, local conditions, and relationship are extremely difficult if not impossible to measure. Narrative inquiry both recognizes this and encourages research within this context. Clandinin and Connelly (2000), in referring to the context of the child, stated:

Knowing some of the immediate educational history of a child – for instance, the lessons recently taught, as well as the larger narrative history of each child as that child moves from what was, to what is, to what will be in the future – is central to narrative educational thinking. (p. 30)

Narrative inquiry also relationally embraces the lives of the child’s parents or caregivers. Henderson and Mapp (2002) speak of the influence family has upon the educational experience of their children.

The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and through life. ... [T]he research continues to grow and build an ever-strengthening case. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more. (p. 7)

A research methodology that takes into consideration the past, present, and future of a child and family is, I believe, respectful. This methodology resonated deeply within me as the history of Canada in regards to Aboriginal is replete with examples displaying little to no consideration of where Aboriginal parents and children come from and ill-conceived plans for their future well-being. Where the federal government of Canada and various mainline church denominations have disregarded the whole of the Aboriginal child in pursuit of “objectivism,” which “implies that no matter what any particular person happens to believe, there is a correct and true view of the world” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 36), narrative inquiry places relationship at the center of research with a view to remaining awake to views other than “objectivism” or a grand narrative. Thomas King (2003), in *The Truth about Stories*, declared that the elemental structure of Western society was dichotomous:

We do love our dichotomies. Rich/poor, white/black, strong/weak, right/wrong, culture/nature, male/female, written/oral, civilized/barbaric, success/failure, individual/communal. We trust easy oppositions. We are suspicious of complexities, distrustful of contradictions, fearful of enigmas. (p. 25)

This path of easy oppositions is one that is clearly marked, well-worn, and easy to follow; established in the early 1900s, it has become one of the grand narratives of educational research. At the heart of one of these dichotomies is standardized testing. An obvious weakness with this approach to education is that people are not so easily placed within categories. In contrast, narrative inquiry avoids engaging the well-worn model of dichotomy, suspends judgment, and enters directly into the enigma of relationship. This form of research is based in relational knowing where “narrative inquirers settle in, live and work alongside participants, and come to experience not only what can be seen and talked about directly but also the things not said and

not done that shape the narrative structure of their observations and their talking” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 67). This work is not looking for clean, clearly marked boxes with exact dimensions into which people can be placed but “spaces shaped by wanting to stay at the messy, complex work of knowing in relation” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 30).

I am conscious of how my understanding of being a narrative inquirer is shaped by my father. In fact, I might consider this research to be an aspect of my desire to know him and the rest of our people, both off and on the school landscape. My father also believes that at the heart of being in the world are the ways we are called to be in relationship, in hard ways, and honest ways with people who are unlike ourselves. As an Aboriginal teacher who knows that relationship is at the heart of the way Aboriginals conduct their lives, my wish was to develop a relational research study. From my experience as a teacher, I have seen the benefits of engaging communities and families relationally and I see a great need to walk with parents, Elders, Chief, Council, community, and students off of the school landscape, actively working towards strengthening their voices on school landscapes.

Research Design

The focus on experience in narrative inquiry further support my research into the experiences of an Aboriginal community in which parents and Elders contribute content to a web-based learning environment and Grade 6 children engage with that content in a web-based learning environment. My research question was, how will Salish children respond when they engage with an interactive digital curriculum created from the lives of their own Salish families and community? I initially addressed this question by going to the places where my research participants lived and worked: these were the homes of the parents, Chief, and Band Council members on our Reserve, the Band Council office, and the public school located on our Reserve.

This location of myself as researcher drew upon Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) idea of place or "the specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry and events take place" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). It is to be noted that the place of inquiry did not start with the school, teacher, and student but my father, Elders, chief, council, and parents in home and community places. The research had three stages: introduction, story gathering, and story presentation combined with data collection.

Stage one of the research, the introduction, started with me going to my Reserve and speaking to my Chief, Council, elders, and parents in places where they were most comfortable: their homes and workplaces. My introduction followed our community protocol and included the identity of my grandparents, father, myself and where I was raised. I shared with potential participants my profession as a teacher and current work as a graduate student at the University of Saskatchewan. Time was given to listen to the introductions of my Chief, Council, and parents. Within our culture, gift giving is also practiced and sometimes the giving of tobacco, if the person is a recognized elder. If the initial introduction was favorable and time permitted, I asked my Chief, elders, and parents of my First Nation the following question: "May I sit with you and ask you what you think of my work at university and possibly with our children?" If the individual agreed, I demonstrated one of my father's stories through the web-based program I designed. After the viewing, I then ask if s/he was willing to contribute one of her/his own stories to be shown to her/his child. Some examples or catalysts for stories were provided for parents; they were as follows: a story shared with them by a parent, grandparent, or elder; the most important lesson they learned growing up; a traditional Salish story sometimes connected to a moral or lesson; something they were thankful for; or a Salish practice or tradition. If parents were unsure of what to share, I asked if they would be willing to enter into a conversation that

would be recorded. I found this was another method by which story content often emerged. It was clearly stated that the purpose of my research was to determine how our children, Salish children, responded when engaging with curriculum featuring Salish parents, Chief, and Elders, namely people who are all known to the students as fellow Salish family and community members. The individuals contributing content had a clear idea of what their contribution would entail from the online example shown which featured a fellow member of the community, my father. When Chief and Council, parents, principal, and Grade 6 teacher were in agreement, I proceeded to stage two, or story gathering.

Stage two, story gathering, was done by recording stories from Chief, Council members, parents, and principal, all of whom are Nlaka’Pamux, by MP4 (video), MP3 (audio), and JPEG (digital picture). All online content was password protected with access held by myself and software programmer. All video, audio, and journal entries were labeled with pseudonyms and a master list of identifying pseudonyms with real names were kept in a locked location separate from the recorded digital files. As participants usually felt most comfortable within their own homes, I felt this was the most suitable place to record their stories, although I also approached the Chief and Council at the local band office if this was more convenient. I also intended for the children of the Grade 6 class to witness my engagement with their parents in their own homes. Most of the stories were gathered after supper, as that is when most parents were at home with their children. Time needed to gather stories from each participant was approximately thirty minutes. The actual story content was the choice of the story-teller. Additional examples of story themes were given if the story-teller was unsure of what to share; one of the significant aspects of this work is that the content originated and was controlled by an Nlaka’Pamux parent, Chief, Council member, or elder known by the Nlaka’Pamux children who were the recipients of the

story-lessons. I gave the parent, Chief, elder, and principal time to reflect if they were unsure of what to share. After the recording, stories were then edited and made ready to be shown back to each individual who shared a story prior to the story-lessons being shown to the children. This gave each story contributor the opportunity to edit or change his or her story. Content control was ultimately that of the parent, Chief, Council member, or Elder, placing Nlaka’Pamux people in a central position in the research.

Once the stories were edited and approved by the parents and Elders, I commenced stage three of the research. I uploaded stories into a web-based online learning platform. Web-based implies that the stories have the potential to be viewed anywhere there is Internet access. I then discussed with the Grade 6 teacher of the participating class when I would engage with the students and the stories since the setting for the children to view the content was the school classroom or adjoining classroom. Stories were also presented to the children collectively in their home classroom through an LCD projector. The time needed for the children to listen and respond to each story was approximately twenty minutes; three story lessons were given to each child authored by, respectively, our chief or council member, Elder, and parent.

The gathering of field text followed the presentation of the completed story lessons. Each student and I had a face to face sharing time in which I asked them their thoughts and opinions on the story lessons with which they engaged. These responses were later transcribed by myself. These responses took place after each child engaged the third lesson including their parent within the school. Finally, I had the children record photos that included themselves and settings in which they lived, played, worked, and studied to “teach us more about our students’ out-of-school lives, their cultural “funds of knowledge” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzales, 1992). I did

not utilize these images in my research text but to assist me in understanding the lives of the through the eyes of the student participants.

Analysis and Interpretation

I aimed to be wakeful for six things when analyzing and interpreting my research data: common themes or repetitions, interest or indifference on the part of the student towards the story lessons presented community or to the medium through which they were presented, outlier responses or feedback quite unlike the majority of responses, or differences in how children responded to different story-tellers. For example, were the students more attentive to a story told by their parent or caregiver than they were to a story told by their Chief or community member? Also, did the children think there was anything about the experience that could be improved or changed such as stories being longer or shorter, variety in question types, or stories presented by their siblings, peers, or other school age children? I also asked the children how they experienced engaging with reading that included their own people and how it impacted them, if at all. It was intended that the children engage with one story a day for one week but due to a prolonged absence of the home room teacher I was able to present three lessons to each student within a one week time frame.

Students engaged with multiple aspects of British Columbia and Saskatchewan's public school curriculum through the lessons. Prior to preparing these lessons I familiarized myself with the objectives of British Columbia's provincial curriculum mandates as I was conducting my research within British Columbia. I discovered that both British Columbia and Saskatchewan aimed to include teaching resources that reflect Aboriginal ways of knowing within their classrooms. The primary subject areas that my lessons addressed were English Language Arts, First Peoples, Information and Communications Technology, and Social Studies. In addition,

British Columbia's curriculum regarding English Language Arts and First Peoples states that learning involves generational roles, the recognition of indigenous knowledge, story, and the exploration of one's identity (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 11). In relation to the Aims and Goals of Saskatchewan's current curriculum, "teachers need to ensure that the "throughlines" from each subject area are considered when planning and teaching." (Saskatchewan Curriculum Guide, English Language Arts 6 Aims and Goals, p.1, 2012). These are thinking, identity and interdependence, literacies, and social responsibility. Amongst these four, identity and interdependence were addressed most strongly. This became most apparent in the students' classroom setting which included little to no representation of our First Nation within curriculum resources.

My research design was continuously adjusted and negotiated as the research process unfolded, as engaging with a community on a First Nations Indian Reserve is filled with complexity. Narrative inquiry was ideally suited to embrace the many-faceted quality of a First Nations community, being mindful of the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly 2000). Temporality refers to the past, present, and future events of a people; sociality extends to the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic traditions, and moral dispositions of a people; and place applies to the physical boundaries where the event takes place (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). With these three reference points in mind, I sought to approach all participants in a respectful manner, continually reflecting upon and modifying the research design as I proceeded. Clandinin, Huber, Huber, Murphy, Murray Orr, Pearce, and Steeves (2006) spoke of this practice when they stated "respectful relationships are not pre-scripted, based on a pre-determined plan. Instead, respect as one aspect of relational narrative inquiry, is a thread pulled forward, a thread continuously negotiated throughout the inquiry" (p.

24). In terms of showing respect within the Aboriginal way, my father told me to “listen to the old people; that is the way to gain their trust” (F. Rowluck, Personal communication, September 16, 2012).

Moving from Field Text to Research Text

Analysis and interpretation of field texts and the move to research texts were done with continual reference to the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality, and place. My position as a researcher was somewhat unique in relation to these commonplaces in that I am related to people in the place of inquiry and have been designated by the federal government as connected to the place of inquiry under the legal guidelines of the Indian Act; I am a status Indian. Though currently not a resident of the community where the research took place, I have been there often and am connected through family ties. As I am a member of this community rather than foreign to the region, possessing a substantial base of cultural awareness, I did not have to devote a large amount of time to the participant observation usually required by researchers having little knowledge of the people, history, and place of research (Spradley, 1980).

The inclusion of photos, video, and voice generated by the research participants and their families served two purposes: the first was to demonstrate to Aboriginal participants and their families that they could contribute to research from an autonomous position. Choice and control, I believed, usually bring forth more sincere and ardent participation. Aboriginals are not unfamiliar with research being done on them by non-resident Euro-Canadians but this form of research usually puts the researcher and participants at a distance from each other, severely limiting the objectives of research. Historically, Aboriginals have operated from the perspective of outsider looking in as opposed to an equal participant within the workings of Canadian society

at large. Academia has been no exception to this pattern. Due to the socioeconomic nature of Canada, there is still a significant divide between Aboriginals and those operating and living from a European Canadian position. I was intentional in attempting to assist those from an academic and non-Aboriginal background to more fully understand the daily lives of Aboriginals living on Reserve.

In positioning my work relative to other research, I have drawn on the work of Dewey (1897), Schwab (1973), and Pushor (2007). I was intentional in seeking out work that focused upon the inclusion of parent and community knowledge in the educational experience of their children, both on and off the school landscape. As well, I sought to gain understanding of the social significance of Aboriginal parent knowledge being included in the educational experience of Aboriginal children on and off the school landscape.

My research stands apart from work such as that of Edward Thorndike who based much of his work on assigning percentages to academic behavior. He “popularized the idea of a science of education based on the observation and numerical representation of behavior” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxv). This way of viewing a person through a numerical value based upon a short, circumscribed portion of that person’s life is not congruent with how many Aboriginals view life. This grand narrative has not been well accepted within Aboriginal ways of knowing. Tuscarora holy man, Mad Bear, once stated regarding non-Aboriginal people and some of their ways of engaging Aboriginal people:

We once thought that you came to live with us. You could still have that chance. We’re still here, and we live on this land. We don’t live in your libraries in the pages of your books. This project is not for digging up our pottery, or for digging up our bones, for that matter. It’s not even for digging up data and statistics about us. We have a long surviving

and sacred tradition and an experiential wisdom that's been passed on for more centuries than you can imagine. This is your chance to benefit from that. All you have to do is be quiet and listen and quit worrying about proving and believing. (Boyd, 1994, p. 131)

Mad Bear's statement regarding some non-Aboriginal peoples' ways of fitting Aboriginal people within constructs grounded in data and statistics, a model akin to Thorndike's grand narrative, is inadequate. The majority of academic research among Aboriginal people has been conducted by non-Aboriginal people who lack understanding of the actual life experience of Aboriginal people. This is largely due to the physical separation of Aboriginal people from non-Aboriginal people. In addition, Canada has a major disparity between First Nations people and non-Aboriginal people in terms of economic growth, health, and education. My background as Aboriginal gives me some advantage in terms of understanding the school, home, and community life of Aboriginals. Narrative inquiry requires the researcher to take into account the life experience of the participants and, as an Aboriginal person who was invited to enter our First Nations community in ways many non-First-Nations researchers are not, I feel that I gained insight that other researchers and forms of research have not.

Ethics: Honoring Chiefs, Elders, Parents, Children, and Professors

In approaching ethics, I was mindful of my relational responsibility to two primary groups of people: the members of my First Nation, and my scholarly community headed by my supervisor Dr. Debbie Pushor. We were also guided by the Behavioral Research Ethics Board at the University of Saskatchewan. My ethical journey into research in relation to these two groups called to mind Lugones's (1987) idea of world travelling, which is, in part, "the distinct experience of being different in different "worlds..." (p. 11). Our First Nation and that of traditionally non-Aboriginal society within university and academia situate themselves readily

within Lugones's idea of different worlds. In walking among both groups, or 'worlds,' I sought to respect the identity and wishes of all participants being mindful that ethics "is not a matter of abstractly correct behavior but of responsibility in human relationship" (Clandinin, 2007, p. 538).

Being responsible in human relationship can look very different when on a First Nations Indian Reserve compared to when on a university campus. A recent conversation I had with an elder from an Indian Reserve close to my own partially illustrates this point. I asked, "How do I treat an elder from your Reserve?" He responded, "Like you are treating me now" (M. Michell, Personal communication, July 12, 2011). This elder saw that I had learned the lesson of respect for elders taught to me by my father and because of this I was allowed into, what we call, the circle of our people. The result was that he readily shared his knowledge with me. This man's older brothers also attended the same Indian residential school that my father attended. Our family members had walked the same path. Another example of being responsible in human relationship was when I spoke to my Chief about my academic work; she said that if I simply provided a letter of introduction to the Band Council stating who my father was, describing our family relations on Reserve, that I could speak with anyone I liked to on Reserve, provided they would speak with me. Access to my father's Nation was in some respects easy for me as an Aboriginal person and band member, but I was still obligated to show the proper respect to my elders.

This principal of respect was in many ways no different among my university community, though it was expressed in a different way. My university community called me to follow three guiding principles when engaging in research: ensuring "the free consent of participants to participate, guarding the confidentiality of the material, and protecting participants from any harm that may ensue from their participation" (Seiber, 1992, p. 18).

Throughout all aspects of my inquiry, respect for both the participants of my First Nation and my university supervisor and ethics board guided my research.

Concluding Thoughts

My father and Mother have very different backgrounds. My father grew up in British Columbia and during his earliest years was surrounded by his family on Reserve. He then went on to attend St. George's Indian Residential School. Later, with the help of my mother and significant others, he went to work within White society as a small business owner. My mother grew up in a typical farming community in Saskatchewan, attended public school, enrolled in post-secondary education and went on to a career in nursing. I sometimes wonder how they came to marry and how they managed to stay together, but they did and for that I am thankful. As their son, I have come to learn that only one of them was allowed into my public school experience. I heard the voice of my mother through other White teachers as they lectured at the front of my classrooms. I saw the form of my Mother in other White female teachers as they moved about the classrooms. I read about my Mothers's people in many of the books that lined the library shelves. I felt the correction of White teachers when I failed to grasp concepts or displayed disrespect. However, I never observed an Aboriginal teacher in any of my classrooms. I never heard an Aboriginal teacher speak in English or any Aboriginal language within my public schools. I was never corrected or guided by an Aboriginal teacher within my public schools. There was never a book that told me about my father's people. Aboriginal men and women were, quite simply, non-existent within my public school experience. I am aware that Canadian public schools have made a move to situate Aboriginals within curriculum, pedagogy, and resources. However, my experience as a teacher has demonstrated to me that Aboriginal children continue to see themselves as largely invisible within Canada's public school landscape as they rarely, if

ever see their parents, Elders, and community members or any Aboriginal person in the schools they attend. I wanted to show First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children something different. I desired to create and inquire into the impact of an experience that joins Aboriginal parents and elders to their children in public schools. I felt it was time to learn from rejoining bonds that were broken many years ago in the Indian residential schools: child to parent, parent to teacher, and teacher to child, both on and off the school landscape.

Chapter Two

What Narrative Inquiry Makes Possible

In undertaking narrative inquiry research, I felt tension in writing from the first person point of view. Having been taught most of my life to write from the third person point of view, always aiming for objectivity, it seemed strange that I was allowed to draw upon my own teacher practitioner's perspective. What also continued to challenge me in using narrative inquiry methodology is the allowance of the voices of members of my First Nation, some of whom are close family members. Can we actually be involved? Historically, the voices of my father, grandparents, and elders from my First Nation were disallowed within public education and the skills that would enable them to speak within the parameters of academia were denied. Most of my relatives who attended Indian Residential School went no further than Grade 8. My father was one of them; he has actually never told me how far he went in school. However, he did tell me that he wished he would have gone to university.

The Federal Government of Canada's Indian Residential School system had no intention of providing my Aboriginal father, grandparents, or myself the opportunity or skills necessary to enter into Western circles of academia. After finishing residential school, those who came out alive were to make their lives within the confines of the Reserves that had been marked out for

them by federal and provincial policy makers and those spaces did not, like the residential school education forced upon them, amount to much.

Dominion (Canadian) and Provincial (British Columbia) governments held very different opinions regarding Reserve size. The land surveyed in the province amounted to less than one acre per Indian (settlers were receiving 320 acres per family) although Aboriginal Title had neither been recognized nor extinguished. In the other provinces, the Dominion government recognized Aboriginal Title by signing treaties for land surrender, giving between 160 and 640 acres per Indian family. British Columbia, though, refused a Dominion government proposal to increase Indian Reserves to 80 acres per family. The two governments temporarily agreed to 20 acres per family (“Background on Indian Reserves,” 2014). Though some historians would say that Aboriginal people did receive something in the range of 20 acres, two subsequent acts of legislation, the Dominion Indian Affairs Settlement Act of 1919 and the British Columbia Indian Lands Settlement Act of 1920, took away lands without consent and in direct violation of the Royal Proclamation. (Royal Proclamation, 1763, s. 4) After passing these acts, the governments cut off over 36,000 acres of land from Reserves all over British Columbia without consultation, consent, or compensation (“Background on Indian Reserves,” 2014).

My grandfather, a former hereditary Chief in our Nation, was one of those who after receiving the right to homestead a piece of land upon our traditional territory, was denied the right to own it. The local Indian agent ordered him off of the land previously entitled to him by the governing powers of British Columbia. Land use and ownership were reserved for European settlers not Aboriginals; my grandfather learned this after working hard to cultivate his land, provide irrigation to it, plant fruit trees, and build his house. He was one member of our nation who lost the land he cultivated and the house he had built with other Aboriginal men from our

Nation. He was the head of an Aboriginal crew of carpenters who built houses throughout our Reserve. Though my father thought Grandpa had left his land of his own free will to be closer to town, my Aunt told me that the Indian Agent had ordered him off of his property. Shortly after, White people stole his furniture and everything he had stored in the house. My Aunt told me that one of our relatives had seen Grandpa's furniture in the possession of the White people who had stolen the stored pieces. The Canadian federal and provincial powers of the day determined that Aboriginals were not entitled to the ownership or use of land that they had previously been granted, houses they had built, furniture purchased – and then, finally, access to their own children.

The Indian Act and ensuing residential schools further determined that there was almost no part of the lives of Aboriginal people that could not be taken away by the federal government of Canada. A sad and destructive irony is that the removal of children, like my father from his family, came to be intimately connected to the concept of education of Aboriginal people by the Canadian Federal Government . This “education,” particularly during the residential school years, was first and foremost about removing children from their parents, grandparents, and communities. The results of this initiative have proven in ways too numerous to mention that attempting to educate a child apart from the context of their family and community is like trying to plant seeds without soil, sunshine, and water. The proper context must be present in order for there to be growth.

Though the past is replete with examples of disallowance and then confinement of my father's people, I find particular hope in this form of narrative inquiry research which allows room for voices that have been, and still are, largely marginal within Canada and the Canadian public school landscape. Any Canadian teacher who has taught in a school in Canada knows that

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing are still represented in a marginal way. The inclusion of them as meaningful curriculum is fraught with significant obstacles. These obstacles range from permission from largely non-Aboriginal provincial ministries of education to the passing of Elders who hold knowledge of our traditional ways. In her early research on teacher knowledge, Clandinin (1986) stated, “In research of this kind an attempt is made to understand teachers from their own perspective” (p. 11). She was insistent that “the teachers gave their accounts in their own terms, not in terms imposed by the researchers” (p. 11). In my narrative inquiry, just as in Clandinin’s, my intent was that the research participants – Aboriginal elders, parents, uncles, aunts, children, and myself, an Aboriginal public school teacher raised by an Aboriginal Father and Euro-Canadian Mother – gave accounts in their own terms and that I presented our ways of knowing in a manner that invites the reader to understand them from our perspectives.

Being raised by an Aboriginal Father and Euro-Canadian mother, I strongly feel that one of the greatest impediments to meaningful progress between the Aboriginal people of Canada and their Euro-Canadian neighbors is the simple lack of allowance for people to speak from their own perspective. May this work be a step towards allowing voices that were historically silenced, and still largely marginal on the landscape of Canadian education, an opportunity to speak and a support for understanding on the part of the reader. Without that, I believe there will continue to be limited educative progress within Canada’s public school system for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children and families.

Grandmother to Father to Me – The Gift and Knowledge Passes



My father's people, the Nlaka'Pamux, were completely self-sufficient prior to the coming of Europeans into our territory, located in present day Western Canada. One aspect of our self-sufficiency rested in the cedar-root baskets made by the women of our society. The skill of making these baskets was often passed from grandmother to granddaughter. Petkau (2002) stated that "Nlaka'Pamux women of the Lower Thompson division are considered the best basket makers and therefore, much more of their time is spent at the process" (p.6).

My father inherited a number of these baskets from his mother, grandmother, and aunt, and they sit along shelves in my parents' home. I was recently given care over two of them and they now sit within my own home. As a young boy, they were also used to store my Lego blocks

and toys. Though beautiful, and now considered highly collectible, their purpose was that they always be utilized, not simply showcased. Along with them came the tool used to make them, a small bone taken from the hind leg of a deer and sharpened to a point. As a young boy growing up around these baskets, I can recall times when I would rub my fingers over this bone and wonder how my grandmother used the bone to bind together dried cedar root to form a basket. I never had the opportunity to watch her or hear her stories, as she died when my father was only an infant. What I was told by my father, though, was how he and grandma would draw cedar root from the trees at High Lake Valley for the basket materials. From here, the cedar root was dried for a period of time and then prepared to make baskets. My father also told me about different kinds of basket design: some for market, some for cooking, some to carry babies, some to put on the backs of horses for hauling large loads, and others to carry berries and dried fruit over the mountain to the Squamish Nation to trade for Oolichan grease. There was a specific basket for specific tasks just as there were specific ways to do everything among my father's people.

One story I never heard, or saw lived out, was how my grandmother made our baskets so beautiful, strong, flexible, and even watertight. How did she do it with that one small bone? Fortunately, my Auntie Bea passed on the knowledge of how my grandmother made and used this tool, what White people refer to as an awl.

To make an awl, the men cut or split the bone of a deer's hind leg and bury it in the ground for one month. Then we dig it up, wash it, and sharpen it to a point. It's strong. It won't break because it was buried in the dirt; that's what toughens it. If we didn't bury it, just left it that way, it would break easily when sharpened. That's how the old people did it, so that's how we do it today. (Hanna, 1996, p. 147)

Within my father's culture, there was a time to bury something and a time to unearth it, in many ways akin to a resurrection. I found it interesting that the men and women of our Nation were both aware of where the bone was buried and how long it was to remain; they worked together. The eventual usefulness of the bone was dependent upon not one factor but a plurality: elder knowledge, land, hunter skill, hunting season, basket-maker know-how and, finally, the Creator for all the gifts and the ability to combine them. Everything was connected. Children grew up observing and eventually doing what their grandparents and parents did. The connections were obvious and quietly threaded through all aspects of our lives.

Today, I sometimes wonder if students feel that their school experience is connected or disconnected to their lives outside of school. Can they make simple, succinct connections between what they do in school and their families and life outside of school, do they connect to those who matter most in their lives? Traditional Nlaka'Pamux life contained everyday aspects of life all connected to each other. On a daily basis, children, parents, grandparents, animals, sky, and land all touched each other in ways simple, practical, educative, and easily explained. In a very real way, they were woven together just as a basket is, with a simple tool fashioned from the hind leg of a deer bone.

Thinking about this tool, the awl, I wonder how much of the knowledge of my father's people remains buried. While speaking with elders, relatives, and friends who have grown up on our territory, one of the main themes that repeats itself in conversation is the silencing – and silence – of many of our elders, parents, and grandparents. Where is the sound of their stories, their knowledge, and wisdom? As a schoolteacher, I am acutely aware that the sound of their voices rarely, if ever, enters the public school place where our children, grandchildren, and great-grand children learn. Like the house that my grandfather built where he was not allowed to live

and like the schools his children and grandchildren attended, where he was not allowed to walk their halls or be a part of any aspect of their residential school education. Land, resources, and finally his own children, were deemed inaccessible according to the federal government of Canada; these were off-limits for Aboriginal grandparents and parents. The reality is that the legacy of these federal mandates is still with us.

One of the questions that emerged alongside the main wonder of my research was, “Are there any books representing our people within our schools”? In the school located on our Reserve, from what I could gather, there was one book published in 2012 that was written by a member of our Nation that represented our Nation. In the school located in town where the student population was primarily from our Nation, the principal mentioned that there was a small bin of books based on various Aboriginal peoples throughout Canada. Amongst those, that same single book published in 2012 was the only one that represented our Nation. Within the band school where I conducted my research, one student declared that there was one book that he knew of that contained someone he knew from our Nation; it was the yearbook which contained a picture of his Father. He could think of no other books that represented Nlaka’Pamux people from our Nation. How did it matter that schools contained no representation of our own identity? My teaching experience strongly suggested then when students’ identity was made visible in any way on the school landscape, their level of engagement increased significantly.

My research was focused upon the creation of curriculum entirely by members of our First Nation for children from our First Nation. While creating and introducing these materials during my research, I discovered that other curriculum resources that were determined by members of our Nation were scarce to non-existent. The large majority of core curriculum resources being utilized within the schools on our Nation were written, determined, and sold

almost completely by non-Aboriginal people. I wondered if this was one of the reasons why so few of our Aboriginal children, cousins, nephews, and nieces graduate from school? How would students respond if they encountered the voices of their parents, grandparents, and elders on the school landscape through a medium they are strongly familiar with, a digital medium? In my case, my level of academic engagement increased significantly when I encountered Aboriginals within my Kindergarten school experience. How might such an increase in engagement become the same experience for the children from my First Nation who participated in my research?

As a teacher in Canada's public school system, I have discovered that the voices of Aboriginal and Métis elders, parents, and grandparents, those essential for success, are still largely absent on the school landscapes of Canada, particularly First Nations band schools. Such a fact is interesting to note given that numerous studies, such as the international assessment known as PISA (Program for International Student Assessment), demonstrate a close relationship between parent engagement with their early year's child and their child's engagement in reading-related activities (OECD, 2011). Aboriginal and Métis children still hear the voices of parents, grandparents, and elders in many areas of their lives off of the school landscape. Awake to both the research and the children's context, I was curious to how attentive children may become when they hear the voice of their own people on the school landscape.

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children continue to leave public schools in very high numbers prior to receiving a Grade 12 diploma, and without the knowledge and skills needed to participate in much of Canadian life. Like a bone that is buried and never uncovered, the potential of many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people is never realized. In 2011, only 38% of First Nations individuals living on Reserve, between the ages 18 and 24, had completed high school compared to 87% who had completed high school within the non-Aboriginal population

(Statistics Canada, 2011). The unfortunate result is that for many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) peoples, poverty, welfare, incarceration, and other social ills mark their lives. Like a deer bone that was placed in a hole but never covered over with earth to bury it and make it strong, the lives of many FNMI children are never seasoned within the dark soil of education that would make them strong and able to contribute to Canadian life in a meaningful way. Many FNMI children lack strength as they have not gone through an essential education process, much like a rite of passage. Many Aboriginal individuals retreat into corners of Canada on Reserves which hold little hope or future for them or their children. What difference might the strength of their parents, grandparents, and elders and the gift of their knowledge make to children's education? How might it become a tool through which to initiate a process of creative renewal?

Four years ago my father suffered a stroke. I told him that when he passes, the knowledge given to him by his parents, elders, and family from our territory will pass with him. I told him that I wanted to tell my children about where he came from and who our relatives on Reserve were but that I could not do this if he took his knowledge with him. I wanted to know where he and Grandma used to draw cedar root to make into baskets and where our people hunted deer from which awls to make baskets were made. These were requests that I had been making for over twenty years but had always been denied. For some reason, my father called me two days later and said, "Let's go, it is time to go back." (F. Rowluck, Personal communication, July, 2010) With that decision, my father took me to places that only he knew, places that had been shown to him by our people, and he shared with me stories that could only come from him, our family, and from the land of our people. Like the First Nations and Métis students whom I have taught, my interest level soared when my father and our people were included in my learning. As we travelled and my father told me his stories, I wondered if it would be possible to bring our

people's stories into Canada's public schools, the place where they had once been outlawed and are still largely non-existent. Could educators bring them into the public school place, not marginally, but centrally? Could they become core curriculum, rather than treated as a marginal teaching, as is often the case today? When my father picked cedar root with his grandmother and watched her weave it into a basket with the bone of a deer, he saw that everything was connected; could such a connection be established in public schools today?

Curriculum – Wider than a Graduate Supervisor's Permission

In the summer of 2011, in the midst of my graduate studies course work, I made a trip back to my First Nation to sit with Elders and relatives. I was especially interested in hearing my Elders' thoughts on the direction of my graduate work. While visiting one of my cousins at our band office, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that our Chief had an open door policy and time to sit with me. During our conversation, I was able to show her my work and, as we spoke, I was surprised when she told me that I could do my research with our people on Reserve. Her simple words were, "Billy, you could do your work here with us" (J. Webster, Personal communication, June 12, 2012). In the midst of writing my proposal, my original supervisor and I had not determined who my research participants would be, although I had spoken with members of the Dene Nation in Saskatoon, exploring the possibility of working with them. The thought of working with my own community excited me. When I came back from my father's community to speak with my supervisor, I mentioned that my Chief had told me that the possibility of doing research within our community was open. His response was not particularly one of interest and I recall him being fairly dismissive towards this suggestion; no decision was made either way at that point. As time progressed, and I was instructed by my supervisor to seek out research participants, the possibility of working with my own people on my own Nation was

never brought up again. It was later decided that I was to work with Dene people who had come to Saskatoon from northern Saskatchewan. I started to aim the time of my field work for the summer of 2012 but, in April of 2012, the research participants from the Dene Nation suddenly declined; they were going back to their home in northern Saskatchewan and they were not sure when they would be coming back. With that information, I approached my advisor, telling him about the sudden lack of research participants for my study. I also mentioned again that the door to doing research on my own Nation was open and I asked him if he would consider that. I do not recall an explanation as to why I could not work with my nation, just a simple directive about what I could and could not do. My father's people were not allowed. No alternative was given to me as to whom I could do my research with or what direction to take to start my search. From a dismissive response the first time I broached the possibility of doing research on my Nation to a firmly negative one the second time I raised it, I knew that working with my own people was out of the question for my supervisor. He had made this decision and it was clear.

At first I was confused by my advisor's response but as I reflected on it more thoughts started to emerge. Perhaps the distance to British Columbia was something he felt was prohibitive to the timely completion of my research. Perhaps he felt that his understanding of First Nations from British Columbia was outside of his realm of experience and he would be unable to provide the needed support for myself as a graduate student. The result for me was being drawn into a time of deep reflection. Was I correct to understand that to include my father's people and ways of knowing in my research and core curriculum resources was possibly in violation of what was acceptable within the realm of my university advisor's professional knowledge. Sarason (1995) wrote:

However you define a professional, that person's training makes clear that there are boundaries of responsibility into which "outsiders" should not be permitted to intrude. Those boundaries are intended to define and protect the power, authority, and decision-making derived from formal training and experience. (p. 197)

For reasons known only to him, as discourse around the subject was not open, my graduate advisor determined that the members of my Nation were to remain outsiders to my research. I could not help but recall Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) thoughts when they were invited to participate in an international educational panel. Though their context differed from my own, I felt some solidarity with the words they penned:

In contrast, the grand narrative (at least in this case) led our respondents to the construction of essentially people-free notions. For many on the revision team, an objective specified a certain level of thinking and a certain level of content for a certain age or grade level that was to be universally applied. Narrative histories of people were seen as slightly irrelevant and, if not that, wholly impractical for consideration by our revision team. (p. 30)

The two words, "people free," reflected my advisor's directive in my research. He had determined that the people who were to be free of my research were my father, Elders, and others from my First Nation. I struggled to separate myself from my father and our people and forge ahead into research determined by my advisor. I felt that if my First Nation was not welcome within my research, then neither was I. I could not help but think of the time when my grandparents dropped my father off at Indian Residential School. My father could enter the doors of the school, in his case forced to enter, but his parents could not. There was absolutely no allowance of parents, grandparents, Elders, or any Nlaka'Pamux community members or ways of knowing within the residential school experience of my father; the most significant people in my

father's life were to remain outsiders. My experience in graduate school came to bear a striking similarity to my father's earlier school experience. Parents, grandparents, Elders, or any other Nlaka'Pamux community members were not allowed to be a part of my research or the making of curriculum for our children; they were to remain outsiders while I was to walk through the doors of research alone. Dupre (2009) appears to be correct when he stated, "Racial exclusion and elitist approaches regarding higher education are still haunting these institutions at the pinnacle of education, namely, the university" (p. 34).

It was during this time that I entered into a period of deep reflection and soul-searching. Why was I so drawn to work with my father's people? Why was my advisor against me working with my First Nation? Was graduate school not a place where ideas of personal significance could be explored? I had read a number of graduate school directives about why to undertake graduate studies and one in particular seemed to stand out. According to Acadia University (2011), "Graduate work is a time when the goal is to read, engage in ideas, and undertake a systematic inquiry into something that is personally meaningful." Personally meaningful, could I actually undertake research that was personally meaningful? Perhaps for my advisor a Reserve community was something he did not know about, something too unfamiliar to him. I decided that I needed to speak with my father and ask him what he thought about me working with our people. Meaning making for me always included my father; it always included us as Nlaka'Pamux, or Aboriginal:

Dad, you know that I have been back to speak with our people on Reserve and that our Chief said I could do my research there. I have a problem. My advisor at university said that I cannot work with our people. What do you think about that?

There are a few moments in life that I would say are pivotal, ones that mark a significant change in the way one thinks and acts. I can say that this was one of those points in my life when I was about to make a significant choice, one that would have considerable influence upon how I would continue my walk in this life. My father never answered me immediately but instead looked away. There was a long pause and then, after some time, he looked back at me and simply said, “I don’t know what to say about that.” After this first statement he then added, “How do you feel about that?” (F. Rowluck, Personal communication, June, 2012). It was now my turn to look away and think. Though I cannot recall my exact words, I responded by saying that I wanted to go back and do research with our people. He told me to go for it.

As far as I can recall, my father has rarely spoken in sweeping dogmatic statements about anything. His quiet life has always taught me more than his words ever have. What, however, was his long silence within our conversation telling me? What I know from my father’s people is that silence is a teaching tool, one often not used or even recognized by my mother’s people. His look and silence was one that I had seen and heard before and, when I left his house that day, I pondered what it meant. What was he really saying? After some time of reflection, it came to me in the form of another question. How many times had my father, an Aboriginal man born and raised on Reserve, an Indian residential school survivor, and one who had made a life off of Reserve been told what he could or could not do by a White man? I knew some of the answers to that as a few stories had slipped out here and there over the years while we were growing up. There was the time when my father had worked for a White man for several weeks and, at the end of the time, the man simply chose not to pay him. My father was an Aboriginal and what could an Aboriginal do? There was also the time when I had asked him if he had ever gotten

involved in my school in any way. He told me he had tried once when he spoke to the vice-principal and this is what he recounted.

“Brian, what would you think about bringing in an old car for the boys to work on. They could change the oil and the fluids, change the tires and then move up to bigger things like setting the rings and maybe even pulling motors.” The vice principal’s response was, “Frank, you leave the education of kids up to us, what do you know about it?” (Personal communication, F. Rowluck, 1996)

It became apparent to my father that he was to remain an outsider within my school experience, just like his parents were forced to be outsiders within his educational experience in Indian Residential School. And now, was this circle to repeat itself? Years after hearing my father’s story, when I undertook my teaching internship at a very large high school in Saskatchewan and walked through a large automotive department, I was reminded of my father’s suggestion to my vice-principal. I could see that public schools were now implementing ideas such as those proposed by my father 30 years prior. Although his ideas obviously had merit, being that they came from an Aboriginal meant that schools could not, or more accurately would not, learn from him.

My father’s voice, along with the voices of most of my elders and family on our First Nation, was a declaration of silence in my school experience. Now, years after the Indian agent was forced to leave our Reserve in 1970 and the Indian Residential school was closed in 1979, I was being told by my university advisor that the inclusion of my father, elders, children and our ways of knowing were not allowed within my research. What came to be such a challenge in this situation was that my father had also taught me not to make waves and to do as I was told by those in authority. I learned it would be easier that way, to just keep quiet. However, this

situation with my advisor seemed different. There was something deeper at stake within this conversation and in relation to the larger picture of my profession as a teacher, to how I taught children both on and off the school landscape. If I acquiesced to my university advisor, I knew that ways of knowing from my father and our people would remain outside of not only the academic world but outside of my life. Was I willing to teach my Aboriginal and Métis students that if they went to graduate school they would not be able to include their own people in their research? The problem I had with this situation was that I had already witnessed how my Aboriginal and Métis students responded when they encountered their own people in primary ways within curriculum located in public school spaces. How could I forget that? How could I forget my own father and my elders? I believed it was time to turn my ear towards my father's people and to see if I could join their voices into the school curriculum-making place. That kind of research felt personally meaningful and I was given the support of both my father and First Nations community.

Leaving Graduate School

Speaking to my graduate advisor and discontinuing my research with him was difficult. He had been very supportive in a number of ways in the first year and a half of my graduate studies. The day I declared that I would not be continuing with him, however, felt very liberating. The problem I faced though was whether or not I could locate another advisor who would support the inclusion of my First Nation within my research. That search took me down the halls of the education building and into random professor's offices, some of whom had taught me and others who I had passed in the halls of the college. I asked if I could sit with them for a moment. All of them invited me in and I asked them about their experience in graduate school. Our conversations eventually came to circle around academic freedom and if they were allowed

to pursue areas of interest in their graduate studies. Not wanting to disclose specific details, I discovered that my situation was not new and struggles between graduate students and their advisors occurred fairly regularly in graduate schools. What I came to see as unique in my experience through these conversations was the disallowance of the inclusion of my First Nation within my research. The question that emerged from these conversations was why the inclusion of my First Nation was forbidden. Fortunately, from these conversations I was directed to a professor in the same college who was supportive of the inclusion of First Nations entering into the educative experience of their children. When I came to meet her and share the vision of the inclusion of my father, elders, chief, council, and parents from my First Nation into the curricular experience of children from our First Nation her words left a deep impression on me. “How could you not include them within your research?” (D. Pushor, personal communication, October 15, 2011)

Family, Stories, and Context

The stories from my father and elders which continue to get passed to me resonate with a few essential themes. The first theme revolves around the traditional way in which we are expected to introduce ourselves to someone new, an introduction which includes naming our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and where we were raised. Our elders continue to acknowledge this introduction today. Secondly, there has always been an intimate engagement of Elders, parents, and community in the raising of children; there was no class of professional educators but instead all members of the community were involved in the retention and transmission of knowledge to the younger generation. Thirdly, our Nation had complete autonomy within our own territory. Finally, we were strongly involved in the trading of both our knowledge and natural resources with neighboring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Nations. Both

my father's stories and those from other Elders foreground these teachings and thus provide guidance for me into how to conduct my research. The need to recount and learn from these stories comes also from an acknowledgement within narrative inquiry that context matters. Clandinin (2007) stated, "Human interaction and humans are embedded in context, and people, and cultures, and events have histories that affect the present, findings from one setting cannot be effectively decontextualized. Researchers need to provide accurate descriptions of these characteristics of the research experience for without them it becomes impossible to understand and use findings from the project" (p.11). With that said, it is time to hear and tell some stories.

Show Me the Trail – The Wish of an Nlaka'Pamux Young Man



Trade between my father's Nation and surrounding Nations was extensive. The idea of individual First Nations having little to no contact, or resisting contact, with other Nations is not evidenced by the lifestyle of my father and people from our territory. Written documentation by Europeans who first witnessed life among our people also confirms that our people were aware of and involved with Nations bordering our own and well beyond.

According to our tradition, certain male members of each village inherited or earned positions as traders. Though my father has not stated it and perhaps he was not told, I believe he was one of the male members of our family who was in line to inherit such a position. Being in the family line of a hereditary chief and one who had shown both aptitude and interest in the position, it seems to me that he was a likely candidate. Everyone who knows my father understands that he loves to connect with people in both a social and business context. In addition, my father was given a story and instruction from his grandfather, a hereditary chief of the Nlaka'Pamux people, about how our people conducted trade. The story my father told me was a non-Creation story told to him by his grandfather. He was told about gathering baskets, filling them with berries, and taking them to the coast to trade with the Squamish for Oolichan grease. Mirjam (2003) recounted how these trading trails were well-known to not only our Nation but to many Nations throughout North America.

For thousands of years, First Nations traders followed well-trodden “grease trails,” usually the easiest routes across plateaus, highlands and over challenging mountains far into the western interior, back-packing heavy boxes of valuable Oolichan grease, held in place by cedar “tump-lines,” attached to headbands. The trails, operating on a relay system, covered a geographic area from what is now the Yukon Territories in Canada south to what is now northern California in the United States and as far east as central Montana and Alberta to interior peoples like the Babine, Carrier, and Athabaskans. (p. 2)

At the end of one of these trails was the prized Oolichan grease extracted from the Oolichan fish. This fish was extremely unique to all of North America and had been fished and processed by a number of Aboriginal Nations along the west coast of present day British Columbia. The way in

which it was processed demonstrates the ability of coastal Aboriginals of the day. According to the Nisga'a, a First Nation who fished and rendered the oil along the British Columbia coast, Oolichan was not usually eaten as a fish meat. Most was rendered for its edible oil which could be stored for many months. The oil could be burned like a candle giving it the name of "candlefish."

My father told me that after Grandpa told him about this method of trade for Oolichan conducted by our people, he silently said inside himself, "Show me the Trail." He wanted to know the trail and to take the resources of our people to trade with the Squamish people on the coast; he wanted to know what lay on the other side of the mountain. Part of this desire may have led him as a young man to leave our territory and enter into a life of commerce and trade predominantly among non-Aboriginal people. With the help of my mother and a handful of non-Aboriginal people he eventually started his own business, gaining access to the economic market of twentieth century Canada.

Once again, the story shared with me by my father from our grandfather reveals a number of aspects not stated explicitly. Within our culture, a desire to access and acquire through trade what other Nations managed had been going on for thousands of years prior to Europeans coming into our territory. What is also known is that when Europeans did enter our territory they were usually not met with resistance but cooperation and support. This cooperation is known through the willingness of our chiefs to show early explorers where trading trails were located and to provide assistance in travelling them. The Hope Mountain Centre for Outdoor Learning (2014) recounted the history of one of our trade trails, now known as the Tikwalus Heritage Trail.

The Nlaka'Pamux First Nation has traveled this trail through the

Fraser Canyon for thousands of years. It was used for hunting, trapping, plant gathering, and as a safe travel route that bypassed the sheer canyon walls at Hell's Gate. Dramatic evidence of First Nations' traditional use can still be seen along the trail today. (p. 1)

The Nlaka'Pamux shared their trail with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), who used it to transport furs from Fort Kamloops to Fort. Though this trail never saw much use by the Hudson's Bay Company due to how hazardous it was for travel by horse, it nevertheless demonstrates that our Nation was more than willing to trade and share and had established trade as a vital part of our lifestyle.

In specific consideration of our trade with the Squamish Nation, each Nation possessed items that the other did not, and each was willing to trade their own goods for those from the other Nation. It is easy to surmise that one of the most valued items our Nation possessed were our baskets, whereas Oolichan grease was a valued item of the Squamish. My father added that dried fruit and salmon went into the baskets for trade. Each Nation was able to enjoy the bounty that the other Nation generated from their own land, skill, and through the use of the trails joining one Nation to the other.

Why, then, was our trade with the coastal peoples discontinued? Why were we removed or highly restricted from participating in the trading of our resources and knowledge with the people of other Nations? In a figurative, but also a literal sense, why were we both confined to a small parcel of land and separated from practices we had long enjoyed? The answer comes in a piece of legislation known as the Indian Act of 1876, the purpose of which was not autonomy but confinement. Barron (1988) stated that "Indian Affairs instituted a pass system designed to confine Indians to their Reserves in selected areas of the prairie west." (p.1) I was shocked when

I was told by one of my Elders that the office of the Indian Agent who had ordered my grandfather off of his land and out of his house had only left our Reserve in 1970, and this was only after there were mass protests on our Reserve and across British Columbia. In addition, the final determination of the land our people live on, how and what business is conducted, what resources are used in our education system, and what housing will be granted is still largely determined by non-Aboriginal people. Though Aboriginals are now involved in these processes, the final say in all of these areas is still largely held by non-Aboriginal people.

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 stated that “any lands whatever, which, not having been ceded to or purchased by us,...are reserved to theIndians,” (Royal Proclamation). Governors James Douglas and Joseph Trutch refused to recognize the Royal Proclamation and Aboriginal title by acting without formal policy. Though, in some cases, Reserve lands were allotted to Aboriginal people on Vancouver Island, they were done so without negotiation or extinguishment of Aboriginal title. This pattern followed with all Aboriginal in British Columbia, my father’s people being one of those Nations.

In almost all facets of life for the Indigenous people of Canada – First Nations, Metis, and Inuit – I now realize that we were not to act from an autonomous position and this included how our children were educated within band, public, and separate school systems. Given this thinking, I, along with my father, was never intended to own land, attend public school or university, or write curriculum from an Aboriginal perspective for our own children. This legacy lingers. The response of one of the parents when I asked him if he would contribute a story for me to create curriculum with and for his daughter says it simply, “Nobody has ever asked me for my story before” (P. Michel, Personal communication, September 4, 2012). I responded by

saying, “I don’t know how to do this without you, in fact, I do not think it is right to do it without you.”

As I have researched the history of my people, I have determined that attempting to teach without respecting and including parents, elders, Chief, Council, and community is a concept foreign to the traditional practice of my father’s Nation and, I believe, destined to produce more failure for our people within Canada’s education system. The past one hundred and twenty years have clearly demonstrated that. I felt certain that it was time to dig up the knowledge that was buried as it is still held by our Elders and all those living within our Aboriginal communities. I entered my research with the question, “How could the knowledge and the stories of my people be brought forth to benefit our children?” I felt the time had come when we could learn again with our entire community.

Chapter Three

The Home Milieu – Listening and Creating on the Land of my father’s People

It is not easy to assess a specific start and end date to my research. In truth, my research has been connected to the lives of my Aboriginal father and all my relations on the land where we have lived and walked for thousands of years. In the last century, this place has come to be known as an Indian Reserve. However, three events occurred that initiated a time frame for my research and were the catalysts for the commencement of my graduate studies. The first event was the near death of my father in August of 2009. The second event was the birth of my daughter in May of 2010. The third event was the invitation by my Chief to conduct my graduate research amongst our people in British Columbia in September of 2010.

After my father’s stroke in 2009 and the birth of my daughter, almost a year later, I came to the succinct realization that there were many things I could not teach my daughter about the Aboriginal side of our family. As a professional educator who has taught hundreds of students, I felt almost completely unprepared to teach my own daughter. Teachers typically have answers or at least know where to find them but in my case, I possessed few resources and the primary one through whom answers could be accessed was my father. As usual, he was not talking. Over a span of 25 years, I had asked him a number of times to take me back to our Reserve. He always put off taking me to our people and the land they had lived on for thousands of years. “Maybe next year,” was the typical answer, but next year never came. My primary contact with our relatives on Reserve had occurred as a young boy and this contact stopped around the age of 11. From this early experience, however, I knew the Reserve was where our knowledge was held; it was held with our people and primarily our elders. I wondered what it would take for my father to re-introduce me to this place and this knowledge; would he teach me?

My request to my father to take me to our First Nation in 2010 was similar to my requests of prior years but contained one major difference; this time I was asking for my daughter, his granddaughter. When I approached him in June of 2010, I told him that I wanted to tell Emma about our people. I can still recall my words when I said, “Dad, the only one who can tell me about our family on Reserve and our ways is you and, when you are gone, the knowledge will pass with you. I want to pass this knowledge onto Emma but I cannot do that without you.” About three days later, my father said, “Let’s go, it is time to go back” (Personal communication, September, 2010). The change in my father did not come about because of me but because of his granddaughter and so, with that change, knowledge would pass; the bond once broken between grandparent, parent, and child was being rejoined.

Circle Joined – Three Dimensional Spaces all Intertwined

Narrative inquiry, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience through “collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus” (p. 20). The three commonplaces of narrative inquiry, temporality, sociality, and place, are the fabric of a narrative inquiry and act as the inquiry’s supporting beams. When my father agreed to take me back to our First Nation, the three supporting beams of narrative inquiry, temporality, sociality, and place, were brought together for me in a way that they never were before. In particular, the two commonplaces of sociality, learning with and from my father and our people, and place, learning on our Reserve, that had been absent for much of my life were now present. Temporality came into my research through my opportunity to move backward in time to the place of my forefathers as I sat with Elders who contain knowledge of the past. With this knowledge, I was able to travel forward and to situate this knowledge in the present place of a modern 21st century

band operated classroom. Looking forward, I imagined a future in which First Nations, Métis, Inuit children will witness their identity, their culture, and their people within the classrooms they attend.

The importance of relationship through face-to-face interaction is an important practice among my father's people. Relationship from a distance, through phone or e-mail, has its place but, at some point, people need to be close. In simple terms, this is sociality within narrative inquiry or the "feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480) of the inquirer and participants. Within our Aboriginal ways of knowing, these relationships are closely connected to the land. Two of the questions I heard often when back amongst my father's people during my research were, "How is your father?" and "When he is coming back?" (Field Notes, April 15, 2013). One of our former Chiefs told me how he advised the present Chief when she was taking office, "Whatever you do, make sure you gather all of the people together" (Personal communication, N. Spinx, April 2011). Being present and together is deeply rooted within the consciousness of my elders. Numerous ways of knowing, teaching, and sharing can only take place when one is close to people and the land. With my father's willingness to take me back and introduce me to our people, sociality and place were present in my learning and not silenced, as they had been for a long season of my life. In terms of being relationally connected to my family and the land, it felt like spring when the sun is warming everything up and, in a very real way, I was now ready to learn with my First Nation. I was connected back to my people on the land where we had walked since the Creator placed us there. It was good to be home with my father's people.

The Road of Technology

A significant part of my research included the use of a modern digital technology tool, the computer. It was not without much thought and ongoing dialogue with my father and Elders that I fashioned this tool to conduct my research. My father always modeled to me an interest in and adoption of new technologies. While I was designing this tool the words of Sitting Bull came to me, “If you see something good in the white man’s path, pick it up. And if it’s no good, throw it away” (Agonito, 2011, p. 130). As this tool had not originated with my father’s people, I continued to ask myself if it was something good. One thing that was clear, though, is that digital technology was gaining wide-spread use throughout the lives of most Canadians. The majority of my father’s people, however, have limited access to these tools. One of the little known facts of Aboriginals throughout North America is that when given the opportunity, we readily adopted parts of Western culture. Sitting Bull, Lakota Chief of the Lakota Sioux, is one such example. Agonito (2011) stated:

He and his wives farmed corn, oats, and potatoes, with a root cellar to store their produce. His estate grew to twenty horses, forty-five cows, and eighty chickens, with stock and equipment sheds and two hay-stacks for the animals. He also accepted white schools for his children, placing all five in the Congregational Day School. (p.130)

Though this adoption of western ways occurred after significant armed conflict between Sitting Bull and the American Government during the nineteenth century, Aboriginal people across North America have demonstrated a willingness to adopt foreign forms of technology.

Ningwakwe Priscilla George, (2002) an Aboriginal literacy practitioner, stated that “many isolated communities keep in touch with the rest of the world through technology. Sometimes this is a good thing; sometimes it is not.” (P. 37) She gives examples of some of the positive

ways in which technology has been used to support literacy programming for Aboriginals. “Charles Ramsey, Executive Director, National Adult Literacy Database, told me about an incident in which he posted a poem by a Maliseet man on the NALD Web site. The posting has resulted in several requests for this man’s work, an opportunity he would never had if it were not for technology.” (P.38)

The software program I designed for children enabled the incorporation and presentation of video, audio, JPEG, and text. It provided question-response opportunities in which the students could write, speak, and respond to multiple-choice questions. When I presented completed lessons to the students during my fieldwork, the speaking function was not operational so I provided opportunities for student response simply by asking questions orally and having the students answer them. I named the program *Lesson Basket* after the baskets that my grandmother made and which were passed to me by my father. *Lesson Basket* has a number of functions all rolled up in one tool; it is similar to my grandmother’s baskets as they also had multiple uses.

I hired a computer programmer to write the code for *Lesson Basket* and, as time went on, I came to learn that this was no small request. To make it even more complex, we evolved into a web-based version which gave *Lesson Basket* the potential for lessons to be engaged through any internet enabled device, such as a smart phone, tablet, laptop, or desktop computer. The following example provides a depiction of the code written for the program we designed. In a very real sense, it is a foreign language to the untrained.

```
<xs:sequence>  
  
<xs:element name="name" type="xs:string" />
```

Code written in Visual Basic.Net

Computer code is something that no one except the engineer sees. When thinking about this I was reminded of the baskets made by my grandmother. Like computer code, there is a hidden component that only the designer of the basket sees. Within each coil of a cedar root basket, there are anywhere from four to seven strands of cedar root which are wrapped by an individual piece of cedar root.



Cedar root coil – the strength is on the inside.

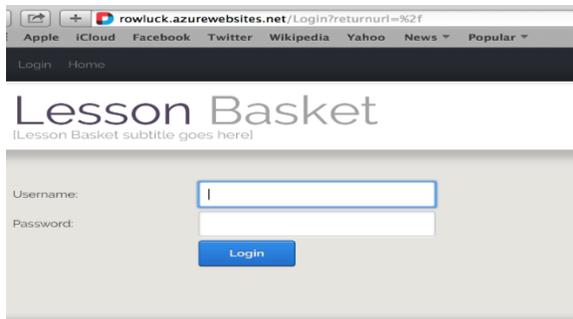


My daughter holding the start of a basket and Grandma's awl made from a deer bone.

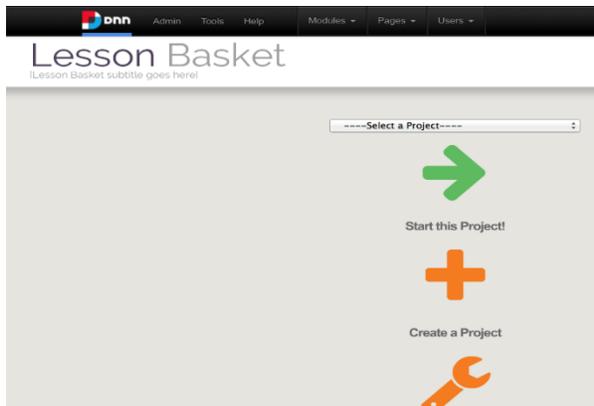


A finished basket.

Our current landing page appears as follows when one first logs onto the site:



After one logs into the program, s/he is taken to a page that enables the user to engage content previously created by another user or to create her/his own content.



The green arrow, “Start this Project,” is what the student selects to start a lesson that a teacher or someone else has created. While designing the software, I asked my programmer to make it as user-friendly as possible. Below, the screen shot represents where the lesson creation takes place. It has drag and drop functionality so files can easily be brought into the program and adjusted. Because a time limit for the lesson can be set, it has the capability to function as a time-limited assessment. This function, in addition to the other potential learning areas, is optional for whoever creates the lesson.



There are six major modes of knowledge transfer or methods of engagement structured within the software: listening, reading, writing, speaking, viewing, and representing. Each of these strands can combine text, audio, video, and picture files to reinforce topics presented. I wanted students to engage in these various formats and to have more than one way to respond to the various mediums. As some students are more adept at engaging a concept through the spoken word as opposed to the written word, I wanted the capacity provided by a variety of mediums.

My father's culture, in particular, is orally based as opposed to text based and this program provides opportunities for students to learn and express themselves through traditional First Nations ways of knowing as well as those more dominant in Western ways of knowing. *Lesson Basket* has relevance in the way that it can incorporate family and cultural themes. This content is not solely written knowledge that can be accessed from Google but can contain and distribute values rooted in local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities or any community.

One aspect of the program about which I was intentional was that it enables users to quickly and inexpensively generate content from Aboriginal people like my father in a place-based way. Like the baskets made by my grandmother, the resources needed to make them grew right on the land where she lived and my father helped her in the process of making them. Curricular resources used in our schools today are largely determined and developed by large, foreign, corporate textbook publishers who have never been to our Nation. They typically take many months to write, design, publish, market, and deliver. Through *Lesson Basket*, curriculum content in the form of a complete useable lesson can be developed and distributed quite easily in one day and the reach can extend to the world through the Internet.

The following photos and text provide examples that can be utilized in *Lesson Basket*. These examples, gathered from the Internet in just over five minutes, could be made into a school lesson in about one hour. A number of the people in the photograph below are members of my First Nation in British Columbia and include elders and relatives. What would make the lesson more interesting would be a personal interview from one of the participants, which is what I did with my lessons. I always started with an interview and then converted it into web-based video, photos, text, and questions for the student participants.



Grand Chief Robert Pasco, Nlaka’pamux Nation Tribal Council -

“This is an important day for our relationship with the Province. The establishment of a joint Board to begin to work together on making land and resource decisions is an initial step in building respectful processes that acknowledge the stewardship and roles of our People and communities throughout our Territory. The NNTC has always operated from a position of principle, and over the last few years we have spent considerable time building understanding with the Province about those principles. This shared decision-making agreement begins the work of putting those principles in action in how we collaboratively make land and resource decisions. We are proud to see this work move forward, and look forward to 18 months of hard work as we build the next steps in our work together on land and resource decision-making. I thank our leadership and communities for their consistency and strength in protecting our Title and Rights, and applaud our team and that of the Province for all their hard work to get us to this day. “

(B.C. and Nlaka’Pamux Nation Tribal Council working in Partnership. [Photograph]. Retrieved November 11, 2014, from: <http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/>)

Though my research question focused on how Aboriginal students might engage with curriculum embodying Aboriginal people from their own community, I had to undertake two foundational pieces of work prior to this. The first was in creating the tool through which I would build and house the content. The second work was in gathering the content from my father, elders, Chief, Council, and students’ relatives from our First Nation. In this chapter, I make visible the process by which I engaged with the people and places that surrounded the students, the main research participants. This step posed the challenge of bringing people into a place they

had never been before. I was bringing them into the school classroom digitally and directly into core curriculum content with which their children would engage.

Creating Lessons in a New Way

Elders and Parents Role in Curriculum Development

The development of curriculum resources is largely “schoolcentric” (Lawson, 2003) in that it centers the school as one of the three primary places in which curriculum resources are determined. A second place of importance is Ministries of Education in which curriculum specialists author curriculum documents for school divisions across provinces and states. These curriculum specialists are typically people who were once employed in public schools but no longer work directly in a classroom. A third place of significance is the large corporate publishing houses, such as Nelson Education, Pearson Education, and Heinemann Publishers. Because the major publishers are key providers of curriculum resources to schools for broad teacher and student use, many educators come to mistake their published resources as the curriculum, rather than as a tool through which to realize curricular outcomes. Head offices of the major publisher from which Canadian schools draw their curriculum resources are predominantly situated in either England or the United States of America. Resources developed from First Nations, Métis, or Inuit home and cultural sources are rare within Canada’s public school system.

In contrast to this model, my curricular materials were situated in two primary places: they were reflective of the curriculum outcomes mandated by Saskatchewan and British Columbia’s Ministries of Education, while the curriculum content was provided by Elders, parents, and members from my First Nation, including my father.

One of Saskatchewan’s learning outcomes for grade 6 English Language Arts is to

View, respond, and demonstrate comprehension of visual and multimedia grade-appropriate texts including traditional and contemporary texts from First Nations, Métis, and other cultures containing special features (e.g., the visual components of magazines, newspapers, websites, comic books, broadcast media, video, and advertising).

(<http://www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca/> English Language Arts 6 Outcomes)

Within British Columbia's provincial school ministry mandate the first major goal of First Nations Studies is "to increase awareness and understanding of the richness and diversity of First Nations and Métis languages and cultures in British Columbia" (Retrieved from www.bced.gov.bc.ca. B.C. First Nations Studies Teachers' Guide, 2004, p.7). Canadian educators, administrators, and provincial ministry employees know that the major curriculum resource publishers provide little representation of First Nations, Métis, or Inuit peoples within their resources and thus fail to meet all of the provincial ministry outcomes. Educators at all levels within Canada's school system, required to fulfill curricular mandates, continue to struggle to locate high quality resources that originate with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. In many cases, they simply do not exist.

When creating my first lesson, which was based around my First Nations reserve and the life of my Aboriginal grandmother and father, I became aware of how much I enjoyed the process. Typically, curriculum content that I have utilized for my classroom and students has been determined for me and contains little to no inclusion of the identity of the students I teach, particularly Aboriginal and Métis students. In this case, that prescription was reversed; our Elders and parents' were coming into the classroom in a primary way. Purnell, Ali, Begum, and Carter (2007) stated:

When teachers incorporate culturally relevant reading materials in the literacy lessons, they can achieve two important goals at once; they engage the learner in the concepts being taught on a more meaningful and personal level; and they create an inclusive learning environment. (p. 421)

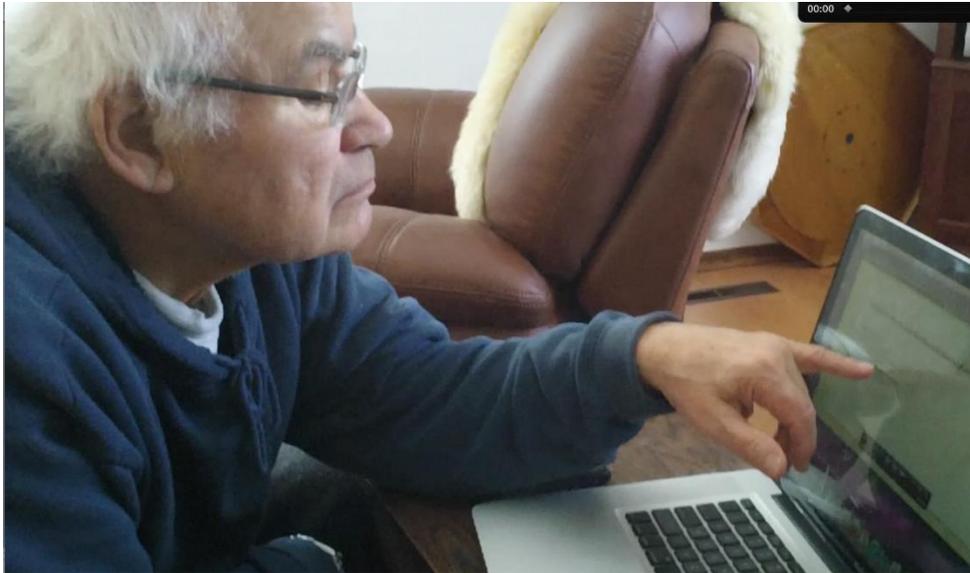
As one orchestrating the curriculum resources for student engagement, and including culturally relevant materials, I found myself highly engaged. The material seemed to matter more when it included my own people. As well, I found the creative process connected to the emerging multimedia arts of videography, photography, and audio highly engaging. Cattaral, Chapleau, and Iwanaga (1999) found that “the arts have also shown links to student motivation and engagement in school” (p. 4). This correlation caused me to be even more curious as to how the student participants would react when encountering lessons derived from their families, community, and utilizing emerging digital forms.

My first student was my father; this arrangement reversed the typical Elder-student role normally practiced in our society and made me nervous. I wondered how my father would respond to me taking the role of teacher, and also seeing our family presented through digital technology. Steve Jobs (2001) stated:

One of the issues as a society going forward is to teach kids to express themselves in the medium of their generation. The medium of our times is video and photography, but most of us are still consumers as opposed to being authors. (p. 14)

The authors in our society are still typically our Elders and I felt like I might be stepping into a place in which I should not be. Shortly after my father began the lesson, I became dismayed when he started to correct me in a way that only a Father can. “That is not true, Grandma was not born at Boston Bar but at Cisco,” and “You have to change that, it is spelled wrong,” and the

corrections continued (Field Notes, October, 2011). I listened, not speaking back or explaining, but listening to my father say whatever he wanted. I think there has always been a certain amount of firmness, and maybe even harshness, that our Aboriginal parents demonstrate towards us, especially those of us who had parents who went through residential school. In many cases, that is all they were shown. My dismay from my father's correction started to lift when I was driving away from my father's house. It was then that I realized that he had been completely engaged in the lesson. I can recall him tracing the words on the screen with his finger. My dismay started to turn to thoughts of possibility. If my father engaged in a lesson with our people, would others do so? It was during this time that I also asked my father about the possibility of working with our people back on reserve. His words of advice were, "Listen to the old people" (Personal communication, F. Rowluck, August, 2012). What turned out to be a lesson for my father was just as much a lesson for me. I was learning how to listen to him and include him in a way that he never was included previously. In turn, his voice was helping determine a curriculum development process and resource. My next lesson was to see if our Elders would help author and determine curriculum resources as well. To take this step, I had to learn how to listen to my Elders like I was learning to listen to my father. It felt so right to be in a position to be guided by those who went before, to learn with them.



My father engaging a lesson about our First Nation, our family.

Before Chief and Council

The day I presented my proposal before my Chief and Council to conduct research on my Reserve was challenging in a number of ways. The first reason is that I was aware that the Council could deny me the opportunity to do my research. Though this may have caused a delay and made the likelihood of finding other research participants more challenging, the deeper issue for me was acceptance among my father's people. A few band members knew who I was and one of my cousins sat on the Council. However, I had not grown up with my father's people and I had been raised away from our Reserve. Would I be accepted and supported? Our Chief reminded me at least three times, "Billy, tell them who your family members are" (Field notes, July 23, 2012). As I shared my family background, I also passed around pictures of various family members. Later, I thought that I should have brought one of my Grandmother's baskets; they would have immediately recognized it, as some of their mothers and grandmothers had made the same kind of baskets. After sharing my work and enabling time for discussion and questions, one of the Council members stated, "We have forgotten how to tell our stories and I

feel that Billy's project would help us to move towards our traditions again" (Field notes, July 23, 2012). After more discussion, there was a vote and the Council unanimously decided to support me in conducting my research on our Nation. It is hard to describe that moment when they all raised their hands supporting my work, moving it into a place of "our" work. A letter was later drafted by our Band, officially stating their support.

August 20, 2012

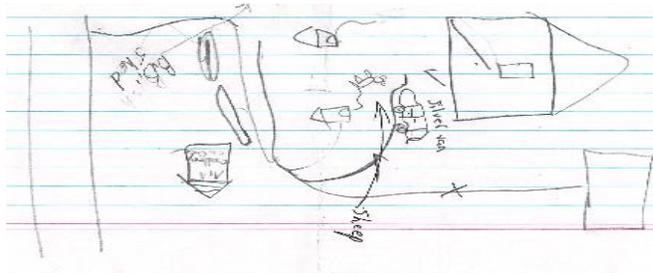
On July 23, 2012, William Rowluck, a member of Sky Lake First Nation, made a powerpoint presentation to the Chief and Council of Sky Lake First Nation on his background and connection to Sky Lake First Nation and his desire to conduct research here at Sky Lake First Nation. His work is titled "Making Space: A Narrative Inquiry into First Nations' Children's Responses to Curriculum Featuring Parents and Community Members through Multimedia." We heard his presentation, asked questions about his work, and discussed our concerns with him. We voted in support of him conducting research with the Chief and Council of Sky Lake First Nation and the families of a grade 6 class in attendance at Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux School. We, the Chief and Council of Sky Lake First Nation support William Rowluck, a band member of Sky Lake First Nation, to gather stories from the Chief and Council and the parents of a grade 6 class from Sky Lake First Nation. We understand that this content will be used to determine how our First Nations children respond when interacting with curriculum generated from their own parents and community members. We also know that the University of Saskatchewan has ethical guidelines to follow for students engaging in research at the graduate level and we do acknowledge and support those guidelines. We understand that the stories gathered will remain the property of Sky Lake First Nation and will not be used outside of Sky Lake First Nation without the consent of Chief and Council and those parents who agree to contribute stories to the research. Research will commence in the fall of 2012. William will gather stories one week in September, one week in October, one week in November, and one week in December. The edited stories will then be presented to the children of Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux School in the January of 2013 for a duration of two weeks. Signed

Chief.

Council Members.

House to House: Gathering Stories on the Rez

The home-room teacher of the students with whom I was to work and the school principal had been contacted by Chief and Council about my research. While I had made contact with some of the school staff, my involvement with the school prior to this had been minimal. Like much of my research, my work was first directed towards members of our community, particularly Elders, Chief, Council, family, and parents. This place is where the foundation of my research rested, not the school or classroom. When I met the students, they were all very eager to provide me with directions to get to their houses. As the students drew out maps, I asked for clarification on details, and when their parents would be home to conduct recorded conversations. I will always remember when one student declared, “You will know it is our house because there is a sheep that is tied up at the front of the house” (Field notes, February, 2013). With maps replete with such landmarks as a sheep, sheep house, and phone numbers, I set out to gather stories.



Student's house with sheep at the front of the house.

There were three primary groups from whom I drew story content: parents, Elders, and Chief and Council. Throughout this process, I sensed that the Elders were somehow quietly directing things from the background. Word got around very quickly throughout my Reserve that Franky's son had returned home, was doing research with the band school, and would be visiting homes. The speed by which people knew what I was doing surprised me. On one account, when I

drove up to the parents' home of one of the students, I was asked how 'so and so' was doing as I had just been to their house. I immediately became aware of how fast people on our Reserve communicated. During another meeting, I was gently rebuked by someone who said that I should first have visited my cousin before coming to visit him. How did he know who my cousin was and that I had not visited him yet? As much as I was directing my research, my community was directing me and to me that reciprocity felt right.



Former Chief



Friend



Me, Aunt, and Cousin



DSLR Camera

The Storytellers, Curriculum Writer, and One of the Tools

Gifts

During this time of gathering stories, I recalled my father's custom of gift-giving. I was about 20 years old when I first became more conscious of my father's ways of treating guests in our home. At any time of the year, while we were sitting around the table or living room, Dad would go down into his workshop where his saddle, guns, knives, and tools were kept. From there, he would emerge with a gift for my friend. The reaction of my friend was always one of surprise and appreciation. It was never a birthday and we were never celebrating a particular occasion such as Christmas, but in my father's way, guests and gifts simply went together. He never explained why he gave gifts to my friends and though I did not know it then, I have since come to learn that this practice has always been deeply rooted within our First Nation. Some

might call it a form of potlatch which was a gathering where gifts were given away by the Chief of our Nation.

When first meeting parents, elders, and Council members on my home Reserve, I started with the giving of a gift, which was then followed by the introduction of our family backgrounds. On a couple occasions, we discovered that we were relatives and then a conversation would often ensue about how we were related and how this uncle or that aunt was doing. I thoroughly enjoyed this time of learning about the context surrounding the lives of the parents and students. The likes and dislikes of the children, challenges they were having in school, and future aspirations often emerged during this time. A surprising thing occurred during this time, which caused me to wonder about how parents and grandparents were being influenced when brought into the educational life of their children and grandchildren. A parent, one of the research participants who was about my age, mentioned that there had been significant change in her father when she told him that she needed help with the raising of her youngest son. “He slowed down his drinking when I told him that he was needed” (Field notes, February 23, 2013). Another Elder mentioned the bond of affection that she felt for her granddaughter and how it was somehow different from that of her own children. This Elder had been reticent in sharing her knowledge but when I told her that her story was for her granddaughter and other children from our Nation, she started to soften her stance towards sharing her story. From these accounts, I learned to state to parents, elders, and community members that whatever they shared was for their children, grandchildren, nephews, and nieces. Ethics release forms required by my university were then usually signed without hesitation and conversation about curricular content was, in the majority of cases, readily shared.

Do I Have Anything Worthwhile to Share?

One challenging aspect of conducting conversations with parents, Elders, and Council members and inviting them to create curriculum resources with me for our children was that a number of them felt that they had nothing significant to offer. This was told to me in different ways. A statement from one of the parents was, “I don’t think I have anything important to say” (Field notes, April 14, 2013). I responded by giving them examples of my father’s lesson from our family. I also said that the most important thing was that a story came from him or her because no other person could share what they could for their child. This process, within the context of long conversations about almost anything, yielded positive results. I also came to discover that there were some people who were natural storytellers, eager to contribute with a minimum of background, while others needed more time and patience. In each case, and with each story shared, I created an individual lesson for each child. In case a parent would not or could not share, I also prepared stories from elders, Chief, and Council so every student could participate in the process. This backup plan, so to speak, was akin to my father being raised by relatives when his parents, my grandparents, died. No child was left without care and when one was unable to give, another stepped into the place of caregiver.

Resistance from parents to the process was minimal, with the exception of two parents. In one case, a father of one of the children stated that his daughter was getting straight A’s so he did not see what else was needed. He did not believe I really needed to do anything to add to or to change the presentation of curriculum to the students. In another case, a parent was quite concerned over the validity of what she had to share. She was also struggling with personal issues. Knowing that all of the other parents, Elders, Chief and Council had said yes to the work that I was doing, she did not want to be left out of the process of sharing a story with me for her daughter.

The Recording Process

I set out to capture video, audio, and JPEG files from each parent, Elder, and Council member. I had no professional training in this area and learned on my own, usually through Youtube and talking with sales clerks from camera and video stores. I started with the simple notion that if I had a decent digital single-reflex camera (DSLR) camera that I could get what I needed to produce decent lessons. In addition to the capability of capturing digital photographs, such cameras can also capture video footage, moving pictures with audio. A DSLR is a camera and video camera in one package.

I soon learned that it took more than placing a camera in front of a talking subject and pressing play to capture useable footage. The most important thing I learned in the interview process was that the voice needed to be captured clearly. This issue was addressed by utilizing an audio pre-amp which significantly increased the audio signal quality of the recording. After I captured the video and audio clips, the next stage of the lesson development started, which was editing the footage.

Edit and Edit Some More

The editing process was carried out on an Apple computer, utilizing the software programs imovie and Garageband.



I could usually record, edit, and create a lesson the same day I recorded the footage. In the editing process, I first created a separate audio clip and saved this as a separate file. I then

compressed the video file to prepare it for web-delivery or viewing over the internet. Video files usually have to be made smaller for web-delivery as they are often too large to stream in their original file size. This process is much like translating one language to another. The original language needs to be modified and changed into another language for understanding to occur for the non-Native speaker.

The video introduction of the speaker was then extracted and that was used for the start of each lesson. I was very intentional in having each participant introduce who they were and where they came from as I wanted the student participants to realize they were engaging in content with their own people from our Nation. I then drew a still photo of each participant and would combine it with select portions of audio from the participant. Though I could have presented video clips, I wanted students to engage in the lesson by taking notes on the audio clips as opposed to simply viewing a video. Most people in our day are conditioned to passively watch video but I designed my lessons for students to engage with the content and locate specific points within the stories such as the topic, main idea, and supporting details. The notes that students took were then used for response opportunities through multiple-choice questions, essay writing, and speaking responses.

When a lesson was complete, I went back to the parent, Elder, or Council member who contributed the story to review the lesson and make sure s/he was comfortable with it. In 13 out of 15 cases, the storytellers were satisfied with the lesson I created. In one case, a parent corrected me on spelling errors and in another case I was unable to connect with a parent to show her the lesson she had helped create. In all, I spent a little over one week recording storytelling conversations, editing the footage, re-editing after I showed the completed lessons to the storytellers, and editing the final lesson for corrections requested by the storytellers. There were

a few late nights as I worked to complete the lessons and drive to parents' and Elders' homes for review.

Stories Shared

Perhaps it would be important to add here how many stories were shared. To categorize the stories that were shared is difficult but there were three general types of story-givers: the first was Elders, the second was parents, and the third were Council members.

Elder Stories.

Two themes emerged from Elders: the importance of connecting as a community and the importance of the land. Regarding land, one Elder spoke to me about how he had instructed our current chief. He said, "Whatever you do, bring all of the people together, no matter what you do, you must do this" (Field Notes, August, 2011). Another Elder spoke about the lack of communication between the elderly and young people as she recounted how a grandmother in our community treated her children and grandchildren to a meal at a local restaurant. She said that this grandmother sat at the table looking at her children text on their smartphones while she sat there in silence. After the meal was finished, she got up out of her chair and told them that they could pay for their own meals; she was very upset that they would not share conversation together with her while she sat within arms-length of them.

The land, including water in our territory, was also a strong theme. The proper way to care for it, the abuse of it by White people who only saw what they could gain from it commercially, and how some of our people were losing contact with it were common stories shared in my Elders' voices. As our Reserve is situated close to some of British Columbia's major tributaries that have been a source of provision in salmon, a number of stories emerged around the river and salmon. One Elder told me about the eddies which line the Fraser and

Thompson rivers. He told me that when the salmon were running up river to spawn that they would regularly swim into these eddies to rest. These places, he said, is where the salmon would regain their strength to make their next push up river. A problem occurred when the White men came and started building the railway as they thought nothing of pushing rock, dirt, trees, and garbage into these eddies, negatively impacting the fish habitat and their ability to spawn. When salmon stocks are depleted, it is common for White people to blame First Nations for overfishing. While this usually results in a moratorium, few question the practice of destroying fish habitat.

Parent Stories

The parents within the study were close to my age and so we often got into conversations about everyday life issues such as family, school, and work. Themes around our parents and grandparents often emerged and this frequently brought up the issue of the residential school that our parents and grandparents attended in our territory. Some of the last students who attended the residential school are around five to ten years older than me. Though I did not create any lessons based on the residential school, due to the wish of my Council, we were all aware of how our lives were connected to the educational experience of all of our relations who went before us.

Common themes from this group of story-givers is not easy to determine as stories ranged from personal aspects of family life to modern pop culture to life on the land. Something I did notice was that this group of participants was speaking more about life outside of our Nation. This was especially true of two participants who were members of First Nations other than our own. These two participants spoke very strongly about their roots and emphasized that they were not members of our Nation. In one case, the story shared by one of these participants was so strong that I used it for the lesson I created for her daughter. In about half of the cases,

participants spoke about life outside of our Reserve and Nation. Within this, employment and school were subthemes. One participant spoke in ways quite similar to the Elders, recounting methods of fishing, berry picking, and sharing food with Elders.

Council Members Stories

Like parents, the themes of this group varied greatly. This group was similar in age to my father who have entered retirement age or were about five to ten years before it. They were not considered full Elders but possessed significant experience and knowledge and were still strongly active in our community. Much like with the parent participants, our conversations were often very long and filled with humour and family recollections. A number of these participants had been in residential school with my father and were able to explain certain things to me about growing up in our Nation during those years. What I noticed about these stories is how a number of them spoke from a place of strength. In spite of the many challenges of this generation, I sensed that quite a few of them were able to not only survive but thrive. The term residential school survivors came to mean more to me and, in some cases, I might call them residential school thrivers. More than one participant spoke of how they were getting ready to retire with a full pension and shared with me their plans on how they were going to spend their new found time and freedom. A few shared with pride how they had found employment at a young age and continued in it for many years. These participants reminded me strongly of my father and his work ethic, which is one of the strongest I have known. The stories I created from this group followed a theme of employment and pride in one's work.

In the Community, Gathering stories for Learners and Being a Learner

I came away from this time often overwhelmed with emotion. It was not a simple process of asking a few questions and having people from my Nation speak, but a time of re-connecting

to who I was as First Nations. I wept as I heard the pain of separation of families and forced attendance in residential school. I was filled with pride when I learned how much wisdom my father's people carried. When one parent hid behind closed doors and I witnessed her daughter's response at not being able to hear her mother's story, I felt sadness and empathy. I wondered if I was in some ways like her, wanting to hear my parent's story but not being allowed to because my parent was unwilling or unable to share. In all, a bridge between older and younger was being built and I was soon to learn how the children would respond to seeing their people in core curriculum resources.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Deeper Noticing of Exhaustive Knowledge, Nurture and Care

Chooqusch: It is Finished

During this phase of the research I became more awake to two differences between my Aboriginal father's way of living and that of my Euro-Canadian mother's way of living. The first difference was in being comfortable with a level of knowledge less than exhaustive. Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) stated that Indigenous epistemologies "are not uncomfortable with a lack of certainty about the social world and the world of nature, for many indigenous peoples have no need to solve all mysteries about the world they operate with and in (p.151)." Being raised by an Aboriginal father, I have long known that some things are left unsaid or left for another time when, perhaps, the learner is ready. In my father's language there is a word,

which when translated into English, means finished. This word in one of our orthographies is “chooqushch.” On more than one occasion, after conversation with a research participant, I knew it was simply chooqushch. This was especially so in conversations with Elders but also came to be so in conversations with students. In these times, I almost always felt the tension from the academic world of my mother’s people who I knew would want more, a delving deeper, or a further unpacking of an idea. There were times when I attempted to obtain further information but felt regret in doing so as it was almost like I was being disrespectful of my father’s ways. I knew this when my Elders, who were patient, would sometimes just reach their hand over to mine and give it a gentle pat, “Chooqushch, my boy, it is finished” (Field notes, April 8, 2013), at least for now.

Nurture and Care

The second consideration, in relation to my father’s way of living and my Euro-Canadian mother’s way of living, was in an area of what Schwab (1978) deemed the milieu and its relation to nurture and care. He stated that relevant milieus will include “the character of what can and cannot be attempted in a curriculum” (p. 367). I desired that the character of my research reflect nurture which is almost the complete opposite of what our people endured and still feel as a legacy from the Indian residential school. As one who is intimately connected to a community that has endured significant trauma, stemming from the Indian residential education system, I was always treading carefully in terms of how much information I should request from Elders, Band Council members, parents, and children. In the case of my Band Council, there was only one request made to me in regard to my research and that was to not focus upon the residential school our people were forced to attend. I agreed with their request and assured them that their wishes would be honored. What we all knew, however, is that every aspect of our lives bear the

marks of colonization through the residential school. All of our families had been separated in one way or another by the residential school system and we all continue to feel the consequences of that separation. A fellow member of my Nation said, “The school still haunts my community, the memories live deep inside those who spent their childhoods there, and for some the trauma has been passed on for generations” (Loring, 2010, p. 7).

In the same way that I felt certain areas of my father’s life were off-limits or perhaps too difficult to talk about, I felt the same thing when conducting research with members of our community on Reserve. I was keenly aware when participants were willing to share and when they were not and this is something I did not push. It was a lot like talking with my father. With a lifetime of experience trying to talk to someone who attended the Indian residential school, I knew there were limits in terms of how far to extend conversation and questions.

Tom’s Story

An example of the need to reflect nurture and care within this context was one student who was very keen to witness the story of his father. At the same time that he was engaging his father’s lesson, his father was undergoing major heart surgery with the real possibility of not surviving. Everyone related to this parent, from the participant to the participant’s mother, siblings, home-room teacher, and community, knew this. When it came time to present Tom’s lesson to his son, I sensed a soft desperation from this particular student to see his father’s lesson. At one point, I could see tears welling up in his eyes as we spoke about it. There was no question in my mind as to this student’s desire to see his father’s lesson. I wondered if the lesson became something he could hold onto when he was processing his father’s mortality. As I was bringing his father’s voice, picture, and story into his life, I came to realize how unquestioningly personal it was. After he completed the lesson and I entered into conversation with him about the

lesson, I was careful to provide the participant the opportunity to share on his terms. It was at this point that I felt that it was imperative that I respect where this student was situated. For me, the long-term goal for all participants was nurture and care and this, I felt, could occur with a less than exhaustive treatment of the participant's reflections. For many participants involved in the research, trauma and loss were common and required a high degree of sensitivity and respect on my part.

Prior to even considering research among my father's people, I was sitting with my Chief talking about various aspects of life on our Reserve. The conversation turned to how our people were dealing with the challenges with which so many First Nations deal. She said, "Some of our people have gone through the healing process, others are in that process, and others have not yet entered into it" (Field notes, September, 2012). This continuum of healing was the context of my work. When Schwab spoke of what should and should not be attempted in curriculum, I feel that he was speaking of being awake to individuals and, in my research, that meant being very sensitive to the pain that our people have gone through and were currently going through. My First Nations community in which I conducted my research was no stranger to suffering and loss and required the highest level of respect on my part.

Researcher, Cousin, Teacher, Son, Band Member

On the day I drove to my Auntie's house on Reserve to start the final phase of my research, I met some friends driving away from her house. I knew something was wrong. As soon as I came over the river, I was told that Tim had passed away. My cousin had been drinking heavily since he got his residential school settlement and, three days before my arrival, he failed to wake up. He had told me on my previous visit that he would provide a story for the children but that story, as it turned out, would never be told.

I sat around the fire outside of my Auntie's house while relatives, friends, and community members slowly made their way home. Lisa, one of Tim's close friends, and I were the last ones sitting around the fire. As we spoke about our families, she told me about a man she knew who went to an Indian residential school before Tim, but around the same time as my father. The man Lisa told me about watched three five year old boys get raped until they died. He was the one who dug their graves (Field notes, April 6, 2013). As I was listening to Lisa's story, I knew I needed wisdom to walk with members of my Nation who lived with great pain and sadness.

Tim, my cousin, was one of the boys who survived rape at the same Indian residential school my father attended. Though he tried to make a new life in his adult years, he struggled throughout most of it addicted to alcohol. It was to this context that I came to do my research and I was more than mindful that "narrative inquirers cannot subtract themselves from the inquiry relationship" (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 3). This was my Reserve, my family, my research, and I was connected in more ways than one.

I do wish that the effects of those years were over but they are not. All of us continue to feel the pain from what was done to our fathers, mothers, cousins, grandfathers, grandmothers, aunts, uncles, and elders. We see it in their eyes and, unfortunately, we know that the same forms of abuse that occurred in the schools are happening in our communities today. While speaking with my cousin Mariah, I asked her if some of our people had learned to neglect and abuse our children in the same way our parents and grandparents had been abused at the residential school. Have some of our people become like those who abused us? She responded yes (Field notes, April 19, 2013). It was into this context that I had come to listen and learn.

As I entered this final phase of my research with the children in my research, I felt the same way I did with Dad whenever I wanted to ask a question about his life. I did not want to

bring up the pain of his past. It could be a question about our Aboriginal language, culture, Grandma's baskets, a certain relative, or Grandpa's fishing spot on the River. What I knew is that almost any question directed toward any member of our Nation was connected to pain and loss. Try as I might to soften the questions, the last one hundred and twenty years of our history has been hard. It was because of this context that I knew I had to be gentle and respectful.

Introducing My Research to the Students

Day 1: Demonstrating the First Lesson

It was a school day like any other. Students were in class and the home-room teacher was directing, assigning, reminding, cajoling, and planning in typical teacher fashion. I was enjoying the classroom experience as a teacher who did not have to plan, assess, discipline, or do any number of things that teachers normally do. I guess I should not have been surprised when the home room teacher turned to me and asked me if I would like to show the students what they would be doing as participants in my research, but I was caught off-guard.

On Indian Improvisation

I think I am pretty good at improvising or perhaps I have just had to do it more frequently. I recall a day when I was working with an all-Aboriginal construction crew and we had lost the hammer. As I looked at the job to be done without the tool needed to do it, one of my fellow workers, a full-blooded Indian from La Ronge barked out, "Billy, use that half-Indian in you." We all laughed and I proceeded to find a rock as a substitute for the hammer. After experimenting with the angle, my hand, rock, and quite a few more swings than I would have needed with a hammer, I drove the nail home. The rock worked.

In response to the teacher's request of me, all the students looked at me, wondering what I actually had. The only thing I had brought into the classroom was my backpack filled with

laptop and camera equipment. In one way I was prepared, but I was not prepared in that typical teacher fashion. I had no teacher lesson guide, either written or mentally prepared, listing materials, motivational set, outcomes, individual, pair, group activities, or assessment. With eleven sets of eyes on me, I had to decide quickly how to proceed. I grabbed my backpack and opened it up. I placed my laptop on one of the large tables in the classroom. The students needed no prompting as they started to gather around the table to see what I was about to present.

I did some explaining, but tried my best to not talk. I chose to share my family's lesson with them. I logged on, pressed play, and then it happened.

Introduction (Audio/Video and Photo) – Hi, my name is Billy Rowluck and I am from Sky Lake First Nation

in Southern British Columbia. Come with me on a learning adventure to my Reserve.



(Audio, Photo, and Note-taking by students)

Sky Lake First Nation is located on 14,161 acres of land divided into 56 Reserves. The Reserves are located at the site of the Indian Village of Staxmet, meaning where the



rivers cross.

(Audio and Text) Now, get ready to answer a question on what you just listened to.

(Audio and Text) Question one, what does Staxmet mean?

Where the streams cross

–

students. As I started the lesson, I watched those students who were within reach of the laptop reach out their hands to touch the track pad and start navigating the lesson. It is actually what the program calls the student to do. They were engaging. This was a bit of a problem for as soon as the students behind those in the front row realized that the front row students could navigate the program, they wanted to navigate as well. This increased the level of engagement even more. I had to guide the students at this point so there would not be ten hands trying to navigate a single computer. The students were all focused on what was being shown and leaned in close to see and hear. Various comments started to emerge.

“Teacher, is that your father?”

“Yes, that is my Dad.”

“Did you say he was from the Westside?” (a part of our Reserve)

“Yes, that is where my Dad used to live.”

“Be quiet, I am trying to listen,” another student chimed in.

“I was just asking.”

“Just listen, okay?” the student responded.

“Okay, okay” the first student agreed, satisfied that he had an answer.

Being mindful of the teacher’s regular schedule I fast-forwarded through parts of the lesson highlighting how to conduct note-taking, essay-writing, and a speaking response. The next lesson would have to wait for another day.

From start to finish, all of the students were fixated on this first lesson. The word fixate is strong and I am intentional in using it. They were completely focused and needed no prodding to engage the various aspects of the lesson. This engagement was with a minimum of scaffolding as

well; the students needed little verbal guidance from me after I started the lesson. It was, however, the first lesson, and from what I could tell based on my classroom observations, a completely new experience for the students. I had observed little use of technology in their everyday classroom practice as a number of laptops were situated in a pile at the back of the classroom. There were also no core curriculum resources reflecting our people, culture, or language from our First Nation in any of the existing classroom activities.

My lesson essentially moved students from a timed, leveled paper-based reading program developed from an American University with no inclusion of our First Nation into hearing, reading, and viewing content featuring members of our First Nation through a digital medium, and allowing First Nations students to respond through writing and speaking on my laptop. My lessons called students to engage with the lesson through note-taking, answering multiple-choice questions, writing an essay, and articulating a verbal response. In spite of their initial level of interest, I knew enough from teaching that new experiences in a classroom can command students' attention strongly one day and have them bored the next. With that in mind, I reflected on the words of Clandinin and Connelly (2000)

Each narrative inquiry is composed around a particular wonder and, rather than thinking about framing a research question with a precise definition or expectation of an answer, narrative inquirers frame a research puzzle that carries with it “a sense of a search, a ‘research,’ a searching again,” a sense of continual reformulation. (p.124)

While writing down my observations, I started to wonder if the students would focus as strongly with their parents' lessons as they did with my father's lesson. I also wondered if they would respond differently when engaging one on one with the laptop compared to engaging in a group

classroom setting with a lesson presented through the LCD projector. While these questions would wait for another day, that wait was not long.

Reflecting on the First Lesson as a Teacher

I personally noticed how liberating it was for me as a teacher to facilitate rather than direct a lesson from a typical white board format. The lesson format I designed, combining our people with the interactivity of a computer, enabled me to step aside or de-center myself and bring the students, their culture, and technology into a more central place of learning. As I conducted my research, I noticed how relaxed I felt. It was only later that I came to realize that I had been de-centered as a teacher. Such positioning gave me a greater opportunity to observe students with less distraction. With that de-centering, however, the question arose for me as to who or what was being centered in regard to both learning styles and the content and medium that I was introducing.

The first aspect being centered in my research was our territory, the land on which we had lived since time immemorial. The second thing being centered was our community, all members of our Nation who were known personally to the students in the classroom. The third thing being centered was the laptop computer through which the content was stored and arranged into a school lesson format. The fourth thing which was central was the culmination of what students brought into the program as they took notes, answered multiple-choice questions, wrote an essay, and spoke. The entire process reminded me of how my father learned when he was a young boy.

Yaya and I would get into that old truck and head up to Botani. To be honest, I wanted to play with my friends but, you know, I just had to go. She packed a lunch and we headed up

there. We would camp up by the lake by the cedar trees and dig back the soil to the roots. She would take strips off the roots, just enough, not too close to the trunk and not too close to the end of the roots. We would then cover up those roots and they would heal and, in time, would grow more so others could take from those same roots. When we went back, the trees were still standing and the roots gave more for baskets. I would help her and watch her as she did this. (Personal communication, F. Rowluck, 1982)

When my father was a child learning alongside his grandmother, the weaving together of Elder knowledge, child, tools, animals, and land were commonplace. In the same fashion, I aimed to combine these various elements through a twenty first century interactive digital tool within the setting of a twenty first century classroom.

Day 2: Students Engage with their Parent's Lessons One-on-One with a Laptop

For some time I had been thinking about where to conduct the one-on-one lessons with students. The computer lab had to be booked and it somehow did not feel like the right place. Students from other classrooms came in and out of this lab at various times and I thought that this might distract our students. As well, the desk space for students to take notes was very limited in this lab. The homeroom class of the students was too noisy and I felt that some students might feel uncomfortable with having their parent's lesson heard by fellow classmates. Where was the goldilocks zone, the place that would be just right? Just outside of the classroom in the stairwell was a quiet place with large windows overlooking a field. It was close to the classroom and was quiet, providing there were no students wandering through. I set up a desk and two chairs and experimented with the wireless streaming capacity of the school and my smartphone. The reception was not very good so I moved my lessons into video screen shots that

required more manual control on my part to keep them moving but ensured that they would work. The space and equipment was all ready for the students.

The students came in one by one. My briefing was short as I told them that I would only assist in starting the lesson on the computer and making sure it ran from start to finish. Once I checked to see if they had a pencil and paper to take notes, we started. With the exception of one student, all evidenced an eagerness to start the lesson. The one exception, who I will call Sally, came in with a look of, “Go ahead and do whatever you want, I am not going to really try and I think this is stupid.” I had seen this look numerous times before in my teaching career and, as I reflected on this, I recalled the last conversation I had with Sally’s father. As I walked up to his house he said, “Why does she even need this? She is getting straight As already.” I sensed antagonism. I thinking about this later I recalled the challenges my father went through growing up on reserve. There were few bright spots in my father’s life on reserve and I wondered if Sally’s Father was living with similar challenges. His response pointed to reasons deeper than his daughter’s public school grades and whatever those reasons were I would not come to know. In spite of this, Sally’s mother wanted her to participate and had prepared a story for her daughter.

In relation to this I do know that our community currently has matriarchal leaning in terms to decision-making and, in this case, the mother’s decision held sway; she gave me release of her story for her daughter. Sally’s disposition toward the lesson was clear and it seemed as if her father’s attitude toward the lesson was brought into the room with her. She slumped back in her chair and started to play with her pencil. A mild, condescending smirk came through her facial expression. Her body position was well away from the desk inasmuch that she could not even touch the laptop or write on the paper on the desk. When I started the lesson, she coyly looked up to hear the introduction of the lesson spoken by her mother. Nothing changed in

Sally's demeanor until the voice of her little sister gave a distinct ascending coo during her mother's introduction in the lesson. A smile immediately broke out on Sally's face and she moved slightly forward from a reclining position to an upright one. The ice seemed to have cracked. She was now close enough to the computer and the desk to engage with the lesson. The smugness remained but in place of a pure aloofness, there emerged a mild focus and Sally joined her pencil to paper and started to take notes on her mother's story. As the lesson continued, she slowly moved closer to the laptop and in contrast to leaning away from the lesson, she began leaning into it. Her level of engagement continued to increase and the underlying derision initially portrayed was replaced by the demeanor of a student who was focused, engaged, and creative.

I video-recorded all of the students as they engaged in their parents' lessons and Sally's experience stands out strongly. Why did she change? When I look at the first moments of Sally's lesson compared to the last, she seemed like a completely different student. Was it the voice of her little sister, the voice of her mother, the interaction on the computer, or a combination of all of them put together that made the difference for her? Whatever the case, Sally was leaning in and not away from the lesson. If her father could have seen her engagement, I feel that he would have seen that we were both aiming for the same thing; we both wanted his daughter to engage and succeed academically. My work simply combined our people in a culturally responsive way with his desire for high academic standards.

I came to learn from the home room teacher at a later time that Sally was not actually getting A's in her academics. With the exception of one student in class, all students were performing below their grade level. The leveled reading program that the students were

undertaking was remedial in nature and I could not help but notice the way in which students were less than involved in it.

After Sally left our lesson space and I set up the following lesson, I called the next student into the hallway. Once again, I introduced the student to the format, made sure she had a pencil, and started the lesson.

One lesson given by Joe, a member of our Nation and a parent of Jennifer, provided a story based upon his profession as a professional firefighter. Joe and I had similar work experience within the context of the forests of British Columbia and it was fairly easy to get him talking about something we both were very knowledgeable about. Joe's profession called upon him to battle forest fires throughout Canada but primarily in the forests of British Columbia. He chose to share an account including a fairly high degree of danger.

Joe's lesson for his daughter Jennifer.

Listening and Note-taking: "My job is going out to forestry fires and laying guards out to prevent the fire from spreading, and doing hose lay, bucking up trees, slashing. One time we were working and we heard a strong wind, whooooooooo, and we had to run out of there and, a short time later, the fire came through and burnt everything up.

Question One, Joe mentioned three things he does in his job, what are they?

- a. Hose lay, bucking up trees, and chopping wood
- b. Slashing, hose lay, and watering trees
- c. Chain saw work, digging ditches, and hose lay
- d. Hose lay, bucking up trees, and slashing
- e. Watering trees, bucking up trees, and slashing

Reading and Note-taking:

A member of the BC Interior firefighters' union crew was struck by a falling tree when a tree he was falling fell back on him and struck him. He sustained serious injuries to his left leg, including a fractured femur. According to fellow workers, he was following all safety procedures related to falling a lone snag and the accident was one that could have happened to anyone. The falling of lone trees is a required practice of firefighters. The firefighter was safely air-lifted to Kamloops Regional Hospital for treatment and is currently recovering surrounded by family and friends.

Question Two, what caused the firefighters injury?

- a. Falling a lone tree that fell on him
- b. Falling a lone tree that was struck by lightning
- c. Falling a tree and getting struck by lightning
- e. Practicing falling a tree that was considered dangerous
- f. Falling out of a helicopter while going to the hospital

Question Three, Essay Question

The firefighter worked on a crew of seven males and no females. Should females become fire fighters as well as males? In at least 100 words, give at least two reasons for your answer.

Question Four, Speaking Question

If you had a chance to become a firefighter, would you? Give at least two reasons for your answer. You have 20 seconds to prepare and 20 seconds to speak your answer. Start preparing now and speak your answer when you hear the bell.

In determining Joe's lesson, the choice of what I would use for his daughter's lesson was not made solely by myself but by Joe and myself. When I sat down with each of the parent participants and told them that they could share whatever they chose for their child, I was intentionally reverting back to how education or knowledge transfer was conducted within our nation prior to the Indian Act and resulting Indian Residential school system. All adult members were involved in the education of children. In contrast, The Indian Act, which is still current within Canada's constitution today, legislated the removal of Aboriginal children from their parents, grandparents, and elders, essentially all adult members of their communities. I intentionally directed my research back into the model of traditional Aboriginal education.

I noticed a sense of relief in this process when I, as a professional educator, was not required to make every decision in what was going to be shared with children in my classroom. This decision and ensuing direction was akin to how knowledge was transferred from one generation to the next within Aboriginal culture. In allowing parents, elders, and others from my First Nation to speak from an autonomous place, the variety of subject matter was rich and varied. It was unlike anything I had ever experienced or utilized in a classroom setting. It was one of the most satisfying teaching experiences I have ever encountered in my career as an educator.

Day 3: Students Engage Elders Lesson through LCD Projector

The homeroom teacher was away for four days of professional development and I was asked to fill in as the substitute teacher. During this time, the style of interaction between the students and myself started to change. It was during this time that I felt my relationships with the students started to move towards a deeper, more forthright stance. They were becoming more open and honest towards me. When I introduced a lesson from one of our elders through the

format of the LCD projector for the whole class, Twila spoke the question, “Do we have to do this again?” When I asked her if she had a preference between engaging with her typical schoolwork or the lesson she encountered with her father through the computer, she had no hesitation in stating that she preferred her father’s lesson. When I asked her, “If you could choose to do your reading on a computer or on paper (like you regularly do each morning), what would you choose?” She responded, “I would rather do that” (pointing at the laptop she used for her father’s lesson.) When I probed and asked her why she preferred the computer over the paper-based lesson, she said, “Cause it’s easier than writing and doesn’t make your hand sore and its easier for me to use electronics.” With the students’ emerging candor came their expressed preference for engaging with curriculum resources featuring people from their home community through an interactive digital medium.

Elder’s lesson through LCD projector.

Introduction – Hello class, today we are going to hear from one of our elders and remember, take notes.

Listening Section – The farm fish that they’re doing, it’s not the real sockeye. Some of the fish that they’re bringing in to put in these farms is from the Atlantic, and we don’t eat that Atlantic fish, we have never touched that. But they’re bringing them in and they’re putting them over here, you know, down the coast and they have all these fish farms and they get lice, and they.....and they. I think they let out their farm fish every once in awhile so we can get some fish. But it tastes horrible. It’s not the real thing.

When you take the fish out of the gill net, our fingers will go right through the salmon and they’re still alive. And I cooked a sockeye salmon; I didn’t take the skin off, but you know it smelled like I was cooking something with tar. I asked them, “Do you smell

anything in the house?” They said, “Yeah, are you burning rubber?” I said, “No, but you know what, I am cooking a salmon.” So we didn’t have salmon for supper, we just put it in a bag and took it down to the garbage bin. We wouldn’t even, the dog wouldn’t even eat it.

Question 1. What is the elder’s topic?

1. Atlantic salmon
2. Cooking salmon with rubber in it
3. Sea lice
4. Farm Fish
5. A dog’s eating preference

Now get ready to read a passage and, remember, take notes.

Reading Passage

The salmon farming industry has been responsible for creating new jobs in hatcheries, on farms, and in fish processing plants. Salmon farming is the single largest employer in the northern Vancouver Island community of Port Hardy and in the Central Coast First Nations community of Klemtu. The industry currently employs approximately 6,000 people. Additional jobs could be created if the industry were permitted to grow to meet demand. (www.farmfreshsalmon.org)

Salmon farms are breeding grounds for sea lice due to the high densities of fish in relatively small net-cages. In an attempt to control chronic lice infestation, salmon farmers use pesticide treatments. Emamectin benzoate (marketed as SLICE) is the preferred chemical for sea lice control in Canada. However, the use of this pesticide has

long been opposed by scientists and environmental groups due to lack of thorough scientific research on its effects. (www.farmedanddangerous.org)

Question 2. What is the main benefit of fish farms?

1. It employs First Nations people in Klemtu.
2. It has created jobs in hatcheries.
3. It is the largest employer in Port Hardy.
4. Fish processing plants have been built to process salmon.
5. It has created new jobs.

Question 3 Why do salmon become infected with sea lice?

1. They are treated with emamactin benzoate and lice are attracted to this.
2. The salmon are given SLICE which also feeds sea lice.
3. Sea lice are put in net cages with salmon to consume pesticides.
4. The high density of salmon in small net-cages.
5. Salmon always get infected with sea lice.

Writing

Salmon farming is highly controversial. Some people support it and others oppose it. If you had a choice between eating a farmed salmon or a wild salmon, what would you choose? In your essay, give at least two reasons to support for your thesis. Write at least 100 words.

You have 12 minutes to write your essay, start writing now.

Speaking

Some people want to expand raising salmon in net-cages while others feel that raising salmon in captivity is unsustainable. Perhaps there is a third option. What do you think?

Whether you support farm fish, oppose it, or have another option, give at least two reasons to support your opinion on what should be done.

You have 20 seconds to prepare and 20 seconds to answer. Get ready to speak your answer.

The elder's lesson, like all other lessons I co-created with members of our Nation, fulfilled three broad strategies under Saskatchewan Education's Curriculum Renewal Initiative: A focus on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit content, perspectives, and ways of knowing; development of learning resources; and consultation and collaboration with partners and stakeholders. In contrast, the curriculum resources being utilized on a regular basis within the classroom where I conducted my research contained no determination by or representation of members of our Nation. Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (2001) spoke of the term "funds of knowledge" to refer to the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133). What Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez referred to as culturally developed bodies and skills was completely absent within the regular curriculum content and concepts of our Band school. The lessons I created within our community and with our community members purposefully incorporated a number of conceptual curriculum foundations. A sense of self, community and place was foremost among these considerations. Each lesson came directly from members of our First Nation living in our community, and on the land where we have lived for centuries.

Throughout the process of introducing locally designed curriculum resources through a digital medium to the Grade 6 students of our Nation, one prevailing marker emerged. Children from our First Nation preferred engaging curricular content and concepts inclusive of their own people and culture over resources devoid of inclusion of their people and culture. They also

preferred to engage curricular content through a digital medium over a paper-based medium. I heard this reflected when I entered into conversation with the students after they had engaged with the various lesson types. Luisa stated:

I actually liked what was going on because I knew some parts of what (my father) was talking about during the lesson. It intertwined education with my parents, like it made it more interesting to learn more about them. I really like what you're doing. It's nice to listen to the elder speak and have her opinion on things and it is also cool to have my opinion to be shared. It's pretty cool. (Personal communication, April 2013)

No students declared that s/he would prefer to continue using the paper-based curricular content the class was currently using, content devoid of any reference to their own people or culture.

All students stated that their preference was to engage with curriculum digitally, over the paper-based resources they were currently using. John stated that he preferred computer over paper "because it's easier to type and read it. Ahhh, it has buttons" (Personal communication, April 2013). The one interesting thing that came forth was that about half of the participants preferred a mix of both the computer and paper over the exclusive use of paper or computer. Katy declared that she would prefer a mix of both (computer and paper), "'cause my hands really get tired when I'm writing and my hands do not get tired when I type" (Personal communication, April 2014). Her answer was similar to another student who declared that "it's easier than writing and doesn't make your hand sore and it's easier for me to use electronics" (Personal communication, April 2013).

Can We Walk in Two Worlds?

The baskets made by my grandmother and father tell the story of not only where and how they were made but what their purposes were. They had a multiplicity of designs and purposes but

one thing was certain – they were not to sit on a shelf to be showcased. One of the main purposes of our baskets was to enable trade with surrounding Nations. My great-grandfather’s story, which was passed to my father, told of our practice prior to the passing of the *Indian Act* in 1876.

“Take baskets filled with berries and fruit and travel over the west mountain pass to the Squamish to trade for Oolichan grease.”

“Dad, what is Oolichan grease?”

“That is Indian Crisco.” (Personal communication, F. Rowluck, August 7, 2012)

My father told me of how our people also used to trade with the Plains people. “The berries, picked in our territory, went into their pemmican. That is what Grandpa told me and that was even before his time in the 18th century.” My grandmother’s knowledge and skill with the deer bone awl, my father’s effort digging back the soil from the cedar tree roots, and the strips of cedar root given to us by the Creator, were all combined to create a basket. This creation was designed to carry resources within our nation and for trade outside of our nation with the Squamish Nation for Oolichan grease. As we desired Oolichan grease from the Squamish Nation, they desired our baskets filled with food from our territory. Trade was an integral part of our way of life. How can we engage in trade again, bearing our knowledge, within public schools?

Infusing Aboriginal Content into Saskatchewan Curriculum

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education is in the process of revising curricula. Within their revisions is a mandate to include resources that reflect First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing. This 21st century initiative is in part a response to the forced removal of language and culture in the Indian residential school system and the low educational attainment levels of Aboriginal peoples across Canada.

When I commenced my graduate work, I was not intentional in producing a resource that could be traded beyond our territory or utilized beyond the confines of my classroom. My intention was to serve my Nation and the students I would eventually come to teach in my future classroom. As I continued my work, however, educators started to request access to the lessons I was creating. Because of these requests, I started to wonder if I could walk in the same way my forefathers did in developing a resource from our territory and sharing or trading it with others outside of our territory. To trade, however, one always has to know three things: do they want what I have, can I provide them what they want, and do they have anything I want?

Saskatchewan Education

While creating curriculum resources for Grade 6 children from my First Nation, I was intentional in aligning them with a number of subject matter areas within Saskatchewan Education's curriculum documents. Social studies, English Language Arts, Health, and Science were the obvious subjects that my lessons incorporated but they also came to hold possibility in addressing outcomes in Media Studies and Communications Studies, Level 20 elective courses taught in high school. I also saw potential to incorporate Mathematics outcomes within my lessons.

Saskatchewan's Social Studies 6 Outcomes and Indicators include four major themes: interactions and interdependence of nations, dynamic relationships, power and authority, and resources and wealth (P. 1). English Language Arts include the three organizing strands of comprehend and respond, compose and create, assess and reflect (P. 1). Health curriculum includes understanding, skills, and confidences, decision making, and action planning (P. 1). Science includes life science: diversity of living things; physical science: understanding electricity; physical science: principles of flight; and earth and space science: our solar system

(P. 1). In one lesson designed with a Council member from our First Nation, we were able to incorporate outcomes from these four subject areas. The following lesson we created and presented to the Grade 6 children of our First Nation demonstrates this.

Listening - Alfred – So, there are four runs of salmon that come through our territory and the Stuart run is one that we have always allowed to pass. We have always let that one go because that is the only fish that the Indians up north get. It just wouldn't be right for us to take that, as what would they eat? We can take from these other runs but not that one. But then the DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada) comes and says that we are overfishing and are responsible for the fish stocks being too low. When I was down the coast at a sports fisherman's conference, I noticed that they were doing a lot of fishing but the DFO does not talk about them taking out too many fish. And that is not talking about the big trawlers out there that take so many fish. So, when the fish are low then it is always the Indians who are overfishing but not the Whites.

When preparing my lesson I observed how it aligned itself, in general terms, with interactions and interdependence between Nations in social studies, composing and creating in English language arts, the diversity of living things in science, and understanding in health. I was also cognizant of how I could incorporate mathematics within this lesson with a question such as this.

In 1999, three types of farmed salmon were harvested. 37,673 tonnes of farmed Atlantic salmon, 7,510 tonnes of Chinook, and 1,555 tonnes of Coho. What is the total of these three and the percentage for each?

Total - _____ tonnes

Percentage – Atlantic - _____%

Chinook - _____%

Coho - _____% (BC Ministry of Fisheries, Farmed and

Dangerous.org, David Suzuki Foundation, Super un-Natural, John Volpe)

The program's flexibility invites the inclusion of a variety of question types and formats and easily enables the incorporation of various subject matter types.

In relation to Social Studies, the above lesson addresses interactions and interdependence between our Nation, other Aboriginal Nations, and Euro-Canadian Nations. The way in which our Aboriginal Nation regarded the northern Carrier and Stal'apm Nations in the north was through the observation of a moratorium on harvesting a species of salmon that was the only one that would reach their territory. In contrast, the Federal Government of Canada declared that the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan summary can be modified at any time and does not fetter the discretionary powers set out in the Fisheries Act. In practical terms, Fisheries and Oceans Canada have determined who can fish, what they can fish, and when they can fish. Currently, some Northern communities can harvest little, if any, salmon that comes into their territory. This is clearly stated in the Northern Pacific Salmon Integrated Fisheries Management Plan Summary. (Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 2013., P.12) A specific connection with a grade 6 social studies outcome would be planning an inquiry to illustrate how culture and place influence the beliefs and values of the local community. Students would be able to explore how our place along a major river influences others who live on or near the same river either upstream or downstream.

English Language Arts (ELA) 6 Outcomes and Indicators for compose and create in Saskatchewan Education's curriculum call educators to "create various visual, multimedia, oral, and written texts that explore identity" (CC6.1). The document elaborates by directing the educator to "represent speeches, opinions, and facts about identity." The theme of identity is significant within the curriculum and yet, as I continued to search the existing curriculum

resources within the classroom, I became increasingly aware that content inclusive of First Nations identity was absent. In ten lessons being used in the classroom around the time that I entered it to conduct my research, two featured content about and peoples within the United States, three focused on Japan, one on China, and the others on Israel, Rome, Britain, and Ethiopia. In contrast to these resources, the lessons I created with my community featured the identity of the students through their families, the land they lived on, the food they ate, and both their Aboriginal and English language. ELA Compose and Create outcomes also call on educators to consider appropriate technology to communicate or enhance representations and incorporate aids including photos and sound which activate prior knowledge and assist in enabling the student to readily comprehend the lesson. Being that my lessons featured people, setting, and themes through video, audio, text, and photos, they were closely aligned with intended outcomes in the current provincial curriculum.

The lessons I created with our community called on students to first engage with the identity, thoughts, and stories of fellow community members and eventually invited the students to compose and create their own thoughts, through both essay and oral response. I was intentional in introducing students to ideas and topics within their own personal experiences. A common theme shared by various community members related to the fishing of the wild sockeye salmon. Wild sockeye salmon has long been one of the primary sources of food that our Nation has harvested and it is commonly eaten by students in our class. After listening to a community member speak about salmon and then read two divergent readings on wild and farmed salmon, students were invited to compose and create both an essay and oral response on the subject. In

one essay question, asking students to choose between eating a wild salmon and a farmed salmon, students responded in the following ways:

“I like wild fish because I have been eating it my whole life.”

“I would eat wild fish because [community member] said that we have been eating wild fish before so that’s the kind of fish I would eat”

“I love wild fish because it tastes so good.”

Student responses were rooted in their personal experience, and to their ties to those individuals they knew personally, and the land upon which they lived. These activities about salmon aligned themselves with activating students’ prior knowledge.

Day 4: Students Engage Community Members Lesson Through LCD Projector

It was one of the hardest moments of my research. Taylor’s mom did provide me with a story from which I created a lesson but was unable to give me clearance to share it with Taylor. The teacher in my always wants 100% participation and as a member of our community there is a strong innate desire to see everyone present. Like any gathering, however, there are times when consensus is not possible. This was one of those times. The issue was what to do now that Taylor’s could not engage her mother’s lesson. What was obvious was the disappointment on Taylor’s face when she learned she would not be able to engage her mother’s lesson. She was clearly dejected. I could take denial but I really struggled to see Taylor’s response when I told her her mother’s decision. It was obvious to me that she wanted to view her mother’s lesson and have the same opportunity that her classmates had. She knew that I already had the lesson prepared and had attempted to obtain her mother’s permission a number of times. As we were in a classroom setting and other students knew that Taylor had not been called out like they had, questions emerged as to why she would not have a lesson. Some things just cannot be hidden

within a school, classroom, or Indian reserve. Fortunately, I had an answer ready for this situation which was that each parent had control over what he or she shared with both myself and their child and we all needed to respect that. I also shared a practice of our First Nation when a parent is unable to perform the responsibility of care for their child. I told the class of when my grandparents died and relatives from our Nation raised my father and aunty. There was always someone to take the place of a parent when that parent was unable to perform their responsibilities. In place of the lesson from her mother, I introduced a lesson from a community member known to Taylor and all other students. Our community always had another parent or grandparent to fill in to provide care when natural parents, grandparents, or caregivers were unable.

What surprised me about this was Taylor's reaction to this surrogate lesson. When she became aware of her inclusion in the process through a different means, her obvious dejection changed to a clear eagerness to participate. This was the way of our people; no one is to be left out. Taylor finished her lesson before all of the other students and did so with an attention to my instruction that was obvious. When she saw that she was not to be left out but included, her attention to my instruction and her work was strong.

Conclusion

My experience in inviting parents, elders, and community members inside core curriculum resources and delivering these resources through an interactive, digital medium demonstrated two primary things in regards to student engagement. Students engage strongly with resources that include culturally relevant content and with resources presented through a digital medium. I discovered through the content creation portion of this work that once parents, elders, and community members understood the direction of the work that almost all agreed to

participate for their child's education. In spite of differences which are evident in any community, the willingness to contribute collectively was strongly apparent.

CHAPTER FIVE

An Old Practice with New Materials

Stage One – Making a Basket, Something has to Die

The making of baskets goes through four stages. The first stage is marked by darkness and death. A deer gives up its life and from its hind leg, a bone is used to fashion an awl. This bone is buried in the ground for a period of time until its lifeblood and calcium are drawn from its pores and it becomes hard and strong. After the right amount of time, it is unearthed and sharpened to a point. It is now ready to manipulate cedar root. Cedar trees also gave up their life as strips of bark are cut and drawn from their roots. This living matter is cut again, and hung to dry in cold, dark cellars. The roots slowly release their life moisture which was drawn from mountain streams and rains.

I described in Chapter One how, like in this stage of basket making, many of our people went through a very dark time in Canada's history. Men were taken away from their lands and houses. Children were taken from their mothers and placed into the darkness of residential schools. Though the Canadian Government's intention was that they cease to exist as Aboriginals, they emerged and continued to carry their stories and language into the lives of their children and grandchildren. Even in their dark silence, like the roots drying in my grandma's cellar, they continued to speak and eventually emerged to be fashioned into something beautiful, strong, and purposeful. My father's voice and those of my elders have been buried for many

years, rarely being heard in the ears of their children, or in a place known as the public school classroom. It is only now that the unearthing process is underway.

Stage Two – Dig up the Bone and Pick the Roots

The second stage of making a basket is known as the time of gathering. The type of materials gathered, the order in which they are gathered, and the seasons in which they are drawn are not random, but instead purposeful and sequential. It was known by our grandmothers that the bark of Western Red-Cedar root was superior to materials which grew exposed to the light of the sun, stars, and moon. It was also known that up to four kinds of wood were used to make a basket. One was ideally suited for the bottom, one for the sides, and one for the top. In addition, certain trees of the same species were ideally suited to give up their bounty whereas others were not; the place where they grew told a lot about their quality and potential use for baskets. There were also the materials used to adorn the sides of the baskets. The bark of cherry trees was used for this in its natural color red or dyed black. Reed Canary Grass was also used, displaying a cream-colored appearance. Finally, the way in which these materials were prepared could take a period of months until they were ready to be formed into a basket.

The stories I collected to shape into school lessons came from a shared history of a community and were not randomly developed. The inspiration for the first lesson came from my grandmother. I showed my father this lesson and asked him if he would be willing to share a story to create another lesson. He agreed to do so and then his lesson was shared with the Chief of our Nation who invited me to work amongst our people. My Council voted to support my work amongst our Nation, after they witnessed my father's lesson through a computer and LCD screen in our band office. The principal of our Band school then opened her school and a Grade

6 classroom in which I could conduct my research. A teacher from that classroom gave strong support in opening her classroom to me. The students of that classroom all drew maps to their parents' houses. From parents, I gathered more stories to fashion into lessons for their children. All the materials were gathered with our community and from the land on which our community lived.

Stage Three – Putting Baskets Together

I never witnessed my grandmother assemble the baskets that were passed to my father and recently to me. I have, however, been able to sit with another of our grandmothers who demonstrated how to assemble a basket in the tradition of our people. The dried cedar root was close at hand and only took a minute for her to gather from one of the rooms in her house. The awl too was readily available and in a few short minutes she was showing me how to start a coil, the foundation of a basket. About five to seven strands were gathered together and another single strand was folded in and somehow secured. She then slowly encompassed the group of strands together into one coil and as she continued to wrap the group together, the wall of a basket emerged. After she worked for some time, she handed me the coil.

After I gathered stories from Elders, Chief, Council members, and parents through the weaving together of their stories and information from various other sources, I fashioned them into lessons aligned with the outcomes of the Saskatchewan and British Columbia's Grade 6 curricula. The array of additional materials I utilized were a video camera, web-based software, laptop computer, and the internet. These materials came to include the space of a classroom, desk, computer, paper, and pencils. All of this was couched in the support of a Social Sciences Humanities and Research Council Scholarship, bursary support from Indspire, and scholarship support from the University of Saskatchewan. I cannot forget my wife who blessed my time

away from her and our children. My father also supported me and gave me something priceless – his blessing and guidance in how to learn from our elders.

Stage Four – The Baskets Are Used

Completed baskets had a wide variety of design and uses. Some baskets were used to carry babies, like the leather papoose of the Plains First Nations. Other baskets were used for market. Some baskets were used to store household goods and other were employed for carrying large loads on an individual's back. My father also told me about baskets for cooking and for horses to carry. One of my recent discoveries was that there were even very large baskets used for bathing. While the list of uses for the baskets was broad, in all cases the baskets were used for the benefit of the people of our Nation. For the baskets to sit within the house of an individual solely for show was a foreign concept to our Nation. Baskets had purpose – to contain and transport.

The lessons I created were introduced into the lives of Grade 6 children from our Nation. I placed a basket in front of the children and invited each one of them to open the one designed specifically for her/him. I then took baskets designed with our elders and other community members and we opened them together as a class. Within each basket were voices, faces, words, and questions all made by the people of our Nation, people the children knew and loved. With each lesson opened, the children were learning the ways of our Nation, learning that those who are older always teach those who are younger. The students were learning how school could be a place where their lives and the lives their parents, elders, Chief, and Council, and where the land and animals that lived in our territory could all co-exist. School became a place where their identity and the identity of our people became central, not marginal. I learned that our

community of parents, Chief, Council, and elders could create core curriculum resources in the classroom place of our children, grandchildren, nephews, and nieces.

Will We Reflect Aboriginal Children in Schools?

Baskets were used for the benefit of our Nation. One of their final uses was for trade with neighboring Nations. The baskets crafted in our Nation were considered very high quality and possessed intrinsic value based on both the quality of their materials and craftsmanship. The addition of edible goods from our Nation increased their value further and made them a unique and valued trade item. Dried fruit, salmon, and berries were placed within them and transported over the Western mountains to the coast and into the plains of North America. This practice enabled us to benefit from the bounty of neighboring and foreign Nations and establish trade partnerships far beyond our borders. Unfortunately, this practice was severely restricted and eventually stopped by the colonization policy of the Canadian Federal Government. Trade was to be done only by Euro-Canadian Nations, not First Nations.

I have often wondered how we can support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children within Canada's public school system. Unlike former Canadian educational mandates and models, which forbade Aboriginal culture, language, identity, and the presence of Aboriginal adults, Canadian teachers are now mandated to plan programs in culturally responsive ways, reflecting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit ways of knowing. In what ways can we create spaces for Aboriginal people to enter into the public school classroom, spaces that historically have been denied them? How might this curriculum approach offer a possibility to address culturally responsive ways of knowing? As I started down the road of emulating the practice of my Aboriginal forefathers, I was guided by a few simple words of my father, "Show them a model." After some thought, I responded by asking, "Dad, would you be in the model?" After thinking

about it, he said “Yes.” With that decision, his voice sounded within the ears of our children and went on to be heard by our relatives. Elders, parents, aunts, uncles, Chief and Council then started to teach our children within the classroom space. Our voices came together for our children and now a new question has emerged. Should our knowledge and resources go out again to the Coastal peoples and the people of the Plains? Baskets have been made and filled by our Nation for our people. They could be made again, filled again, and this time traded beyond our borders. Other Nations could make their own baskets too and fill them with their knowledge and trade with us.

Implications for Practice

Research for PhD

I originally intended to move back to my First Nation for a period of several months to co-create resources with members of my First Nation and to deliver them to students in our local Band school. I envisioned myself delivering new lessons to our students on a weekly and possibly daily basis and observing their behavior as they engaged with them. I was gently reminded by one of my university advisors that I was undertaking a Master’s degree, not a PhD. With the parameters of a Master’s graduate degree more clearly established, I conducted my research on a more limited scale. I did, however, wonder what a more lengthy research program would look like and, with that, have discovered that PhD work could commence within a subsequent time frame addressing the following goal. How would Aboriginal student achievement be impacted when students engage digital, interactive curriculum resources featuring people, culture, and language from their own Nation? This research would require moving to a First Nation, possibly my own, and settling in for one to two years. My work would consist of five primary parts: gathering, creating, distributing, observing, and discussion.

Gathering consists of interviewing and recording a participant with a video camera, creating requires the use of a laptop with video editing software, distributing required the use of our web-based software, observing could be done by myself and another teacher, and discussion based would take place with the home room teacher and myself. This would all be done in respect to core curriculum outcomes of the province or territory in which I was researching.

Business

In creating software and designing core curriculum resources during my graduate work, I consulted with various stakeholders within my profession. I deliberated with teachers, professors, teachers in training, retired teachers, principals, superintendents, Ministry consultants, librarians, and public school students. My intention was to align myself with current curriculum outcomes and the actual teaching and learning experiences of education stakeholders. One thing that emerged from these discussions were requests to use what I was helping to create. I was unable to do this as all of my material was under Tri-Council ethics policy and could not be shared outside of the parameters of my research but, on more than one occasion, I wanted to simply share what I had. It was during this time that I found out about a business start-up competition and entered my idea. To my surprise, I was selected as a candidate and began the long process of creating a business plan and pitching the product that I had created. One year after this endeavor, we are closer to establishing a web-based publishing company to serve First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all Canadian students within Canada's public school system, using the *Lesson Basket* design process.

Conclusion

Some items can only be built in certain contexts. Materials required for an item can only be found in a few places and the wisdom and expertise to form these into something beautiful

and practical is only held by a few. The season must also be right, as resources only yield their bounty during specific times of the year. Beyond that, those who know must be willing to share their knowledge and be in relation to students who are ready and desirous to learn. For reasons that only the Creator knows, I was joined relationally to people and given access to resources and, as I have received, I was given the opportunity to give. Because the Creator has given to me, I have been able to walk his path.

My research question, “How will Nlaka’Pamux children respond to online digital curriculum featuring Nlaka’Pamux parents and elders?” revealed answers and also birthed new questions. When an Indian residential school survivor was asked to share a story, he spoke of the trade that once existed between our Nation and those far beyond our traditional borders. When I asked my initial graduate school advisor if I could include my First Nation within my research, as you came to know, he would not allow them within my research. Fortunately, a later supervisor held an opposite view. You have been shown how modern technology can be combined with First Nations knowledge and aligned with provincial curriculum outcomes. You have also seen how my First Nations father, elders, Chief, Council, principal, teachers, and students were able to create core curriculum resources, or *Lesson Baskets*, in the same fashion that our grandmothers and grandfathers created cedar root baskets.

I wonder what your thoughts are of how the children of my First Nation engaged core curriculum resources created entirely from our First Nation? I wonder what possibility you now see and what you might like to try yourself? If you are a teacher, what difference might it make to your practice if you could connect with the stories of my community? How might it help you if you had a digital resource that could be brought into your classroom that captures First Nations ways of knowing and was created entirely for you? If you are First Nations, Métis, or Inuit, I

wonder if you and your community would be interested in sharing your stories for your children so they could learn with and from you in the public school classroom place? Your community could enter the space and the lives of your children in public school classrooms. Would you like to take that walk?

The Season is Right

The last ten years have demonstrated a growing awareness of the need for change in education by and for First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and non-Aboriginal Canadians in Canada. Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Apology to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada in 2008 for the Indian Residential School system was a major landmark in awareness for all Canadians as to how serious and injurious this school system was for Canada's Aboriginals. In addition, the Idle No More movement, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and Bill C-33 all point to one simple truth. Education needs to change for Aboriginals in Canada and this vitally includes non-Aboriginal Canadians. A number of factors distinguish the research described in this thesis from other research. The *Lesson Baskets* created though the research originate with Aboriginal peoples, utilize current digital tools, are aligned with provincial and territorial curriculum outcomes, have the potential to be shared on a broad scale, have high level assessment functionality, and are tied to the market economy. The core principals underpinning *Lesson Baskets* reflect the ways of my forefathers. The season is right, it is time for *Lesson baskets* to be made, shared, and traded again.

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