

PLACES OF ACTIVISM: ENGAGING YOUTH TO EXPLORE THE PLACES THAT  
MAINTAIN COMMUNITIES OF ACTIVISM

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By

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## Abstract

The present study used action research with youth to investigate and create radio shows about the role place has played in maintaining the identities of activists committed to social and ecological justice. The research focused on whether youth involvement in a participatory, critical learning experience of creating radio shows interviewing activists from their community helped those students to develop and maintain their own activist identity and community. The study also examined other aspects of the critical learning process and conditions of the radio studio that affected their identity. Finally, the study asked if the youth participants planned to take any steps to maintain their activism beyond the study.

In addressing these questions of activist identity in relation to place, the study is presented as three mini-studies. Mini-study 1 addresses how the experienced activists who were interviewed by youth described the role of material places in enabling and supporting their activism, the final product of which is two radio shows. Four inductively generated, theoretical categories are presented to capture the experienced activists' descriptions of place including *relationality, the act of making place, normalizing transgression in everyday life, and using power*. Mini-study 2 addresses how the youth participants perceived the process of interviewing activists on a radio show, as well as other aspects of making radio shows including the radio studio as having contributed to their own activist identities. It also looks at the steps, if any, the youth had planned to stay active beyond the study. Profiles of each youth participant are presented to represent their perceptions of creating radio shows. Mini-study 3 invites the reader on my self-reflexive journey as an educator committed to social and ecological justice including reflections on existing practice in schools, place and youth identity, collective spaces for agency, intergenerational mentoring, slow pedagogy and mindfulness, radio as a pedagogical tool, and my own style of teaching.

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*“It’s a beautiful world, life is short, and I want to live. I want to feel the wind rushing around me. I want to walk on the land I love, every day. I want to garden with my children and watch them taste the fruits. I want friends. I want to drink starlight in the mountains and howl at the moon. I want the experience of being alive, to feel my sensuous and spiritual relation to flesh, water, rock, fire, wind, species, shooting stars” (Greenwood, 2010, p. 11).*



## Chapter One: Introduction

*“Awareness of self and others in relation to place can either be nurtured or blocked through the process of education” (David Greenwood, 2013, p.97).*

This action research study involved youth to investigate and create radio shows about the role place has played in maintaining the identities of activists committed to social and ecological justice. The research focused on whether youth involvement in a participatory, critical learning experience of creating radio shows by interviewing activists from their community helped those students develop and maintain their own activist identity and community. The study also examined other aspects of the critical learning process and conditions of the radio studio that affected their identity. Finally, the study asked if the youth participants planned to take any steps to maintain their activism beyond the study. This study was undertaken to develop understandings in three main areas including how the experienced activists interviewed by the youth described the role of place in their activism, how the experience created by the research impacted the youth, and how I changed and moved in new directions towards educating for social and ecological justice as a result of the current research.

In the following pages of chapter one, I will introduce the study by providing a rationale, stating the problem, and articulating my research questions. In chapter two, I provide a review of literature relevant to the study. This includes an overview of current literature on *cultural geography and the concept of place* and how it can be useful to frame an educational study, an overview of *spatial identity*, a brief discussion of *education and school places* including in relation to environmental and socioecological education, an overview of the literature *on youth in the 21st century*, and finally a summary of existing research on *youth subcultures and activism*, and *agency*. In chapter three, I discuss the research framework of the study including its ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods. Chapter four highlights the research

findings. The thesis concludes with chapter five summarizing the significance of the research including how the findings link to the literature and together with the implications, limitations, and further avenues of study.

In the next pages of the first chapter, I will describe the context of why there is need for a more engaged citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and how education can be one way to help us address the intersection of the social and ecological issues facing the planet. As part of chapter one, I will also begin to explain why we need to investigate the “where” of maintaining activist identities and communities. I conclude chapter one by defining terms used throughout the study.

### **Rationale For Undertaking a Study in the Area of Critical Environmental Education**

Today, the planet is living through a critical moment in time. When citizens in North America turn on one of their 21st century gadgets to keep up with current events, they see a vast amount of suffering all around the globe. Each year the planet is losing thousands of species (WWF, 2014) as well as access to local traditional knowledge, such as languages (National Geographic, 2012). Our world is dominated by a Western worldview marinated in an “extractive culture that has been deforesting, defishing, dewatering, desoiling, despoiling, destroying since its beginnings” (Jensen, 2009, para. 10). We, in the West, are polluting our waterways, criminalizing our youth, destroying the ozone, and “trashing the planet” (A. Leonard, personal communication, June 11, 2011) all because of the dominating powers we have influencing our places such as colonization, globalization, capitalism, and patriarchy (unpacked in the *defining terms* section below). As Naomi Klein (2011) described in a speech addressing Occupy Wall Street protesters:

The point is, today everyone can see that the system is deeply unjust and careening out of control. Unfettered greed has trashed the global economy. And it is trashing the natural world as well. We are overfishing our oceans, polluting our water with fracking and

deepwater drilling, turning to the dirtiest forms of energy on the planet, like the Alberta tar sands. And the atmosphere cannot absorb the amount of carbon we are putting into it, creating dangerous warming. The *new normal* is serial disasters: economic and ecological. (para. 16, italics added)

The range of intersecting global issues is vast, as can be understood from Klein's excerpt above. Current political ideology in the West prioritizes profits over people and places, and as a result many people, ecosystems, and more-than-human species are being affected. In the current local context in the prairies of Western Canada we are experiencing a so-called "boom time" because of the economic gain we are receiving from resource extraction, including oil, gas, potash, and uranium. The temperate grassland ecosystem of this prairie is now considered one of the most altered on the planet, especially the grassland located in North America (Henwood, 2010). In Saskatchewan, we have less than 20% of our native prairie left due to agriculture, ever-expanding urbanization, and oil and gas development (SK PCAP, 2012). Because of the dwindling grassland habitat, Saskatchewan has over fifteen Species-At-Risk (SMoE, 2012). It frightens me that we cannot recognize the unjust system that is "careening out of control" (Klein, 2011, para. 16) in a province of only one million people with a history of social democracy and cooperation.

Current Western education systems, including public schools and universities in Canada and more specifically Saskatchewan, contribute to the patterns of inequality and injustice by reflecting the current practices played out in the greater society (Apple, 2004a; Bowers, 2001). Students within the education system are taught that these patterns are *normal* and their role as a citizen should contribute to them. On the other hand, education has the potential to address these serial social and ecological disasters, through educating for a *new normal* citizen. Rather than inscribing youth with a notion of an apolitical, individualistic conception of citizenship as

currently practiced in many Western conventional school settings (Kennelly, 2008), schools and society should be educating for a justice-oriented citizenry to address the oppression of people and places including within the greater ecology of life. Education has the potential to promote a justice-oriented, engaged, and active citizenry able to “critically assess social, political, and economic structures and consider collective strategies for change that challenge injustice and, when possible, address root causes of problems” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 3).

The world is full of beauty and the possibility of wonder, connection, and pleasure (Greenwood, 2010). It is full of millions of people working in different areas of education and activism, trying to make the world a better place. We need more of them. We need a critical mass of justice-oriented people, forming a new culture and a new way of living sustainably with others in the biosphere in order to shift dominant Western worldviews. To help educators and society with this journey of fostering a justice-oriented citizenry, David Greenwood (formerly Gruenewald, 2003) has put forth a framework that uses critical pedagogy and place-based education to theorize a critical pedagogy of place (also known in broader contexts as critical ecological education or place-conscious education). Place-conscious education has been identified as a way to address social and ecological issues as intertwined (Greenwood, 2013; McKenzie, 2008).

As a practicing classroom teacher in this colonial space of Regina, Saskatchewan, a small, prairie city in North America, I see youth spend 13 years of their lives in school systems designed by, and arguably for, adult dominant culture. Moreover, this space does not often include the concept of “place” in the design of the school or the curriculum and therefore often leaves students disconnected from their communities, natural ecosystems, and their sense of agency. The purpose of schooling seems to be to train youth to conform to societal norms and accepted behaviours, allowing them to participate in adult dominant culture. Sir Ken Robinson (2010) has

likened schools to factories pumping out products (i.e., homogenized students) to participate in the corporate market. Schools tend to operate within a factory framework with rigid timetables, particular age groupings, and independent subjects – often not an experience dedicated to teaching creativity and justice-oriented citizenship skills.

Most recently, I taught for three years in an outdoor experiential education program called Trek School, designed for a small group of 20 grade eleven students to inquire into topics of their interest, covering curricular outcomes of five different subject disciplines. Trek School was a student-centred, integrated program that had been in existence for 13 years<sup>1</sup>. During the three years I was involved, the program was designed to encourage students to take action for social and ecological justice. At the end of each year of the Trek School program, several students expressed their reluctance to go back to conventional school for their last year of high school after experiencing a more empowering approach to learning. Throughout each of the three years of teaching the program, I witnessed students becoming passionate and empowered when asked to organize, volunteer, and plan for social and ecological change. I wondered how these active and engaged students were going to stay engaged with social and ecological justice after they left the experiential school program. Were the students only “activists” within the conditions of the program, based on the program’s physical setting, location, and cohort of peers? Or would they continue to identify as active citizens upon leaving the program? Jon Anderson (2004) had the same question after he researched and lived with environmental direct activists: “what happens to the activist self when it returns to ‘normal’ society?” (p. 52). He concludes that whether or not the activist self is taken into spaces of normal society depends on the relationship between the individual and the “normal society” concerned (p. 52). With a focus on place, this study will start

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<sup>1</sup> Trek School ran from 2001-2013 and educated approximately 20 students a year.

with asking “where” as opposed to “why” or “how.”

### **Personal Contexts: Self Location**

My own location in society as a White, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied woman and teacher engaged in social and ecological justice activism informed this research (St. Denis & Schick, 2003). Guba and Lincoln (2011) describe the concept of reflexivity to be the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, “It is a conscious experiencing of the self as both inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the processes of research itself” (p. 124). Shulamit Reinharz (1997) suggests that researchers not only “bring the self to the field...[we also] create the self in the field” (as cited in Guba & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). She suggests that although we all have many selves we bring with us, those selves fall into three categories: “research-based selves, brought selves (the selves that historically, socially and personally create our standpoints), and situationally created selves (p. 5)” (as cited in Guba & Lincoln, 2011, p. 124). Below I will touch on parts of myself relevant to the current research study.

**The place that I am from.** I grew up on a farm on Treaty 6 land near the town of Watrous, Saskatchewan located in the moist-mixed grassland ecoregion. I was able to grow up on this wild land with spear grass and migratory birds because of the treaty promises that have been upheld by the First Nations in my area. I hope that one day settler people will be accountable with our side of the agreement. Both I, and this land of which I am a part, are direct products of 500 years of colonization. Thus the place that I live, and the very structures that I live within, are racist.

**The place of my family.** I have three older sisters and one younger brother, and together we had plenty of unstructured play time to explore and adventure through the prairie. I am thankful for having the opportunity to learn in a social, collective setting with my siblings in

natural places.

**The place of community.** While in university, I developed a network of socially and ecologically conscious friends whose company I keep still. By being involved with this group of people, I began participating in potlucks where we joined together, shared food, played music, read poetry, collectively painted canvas, shared ideas, and organized! We created a “community of sentiment” that bettered ourselves as people, created a new normal for each other, and inspired each other to take social, ecological, and political action (Appadurai, 1996, p. 8).

**The place of grasslands.** After I received my degree in education, I left my community (only geographically though) and moved to Val Marie, Saskatchewan – the gateway to Grasslands National Park. I worked for the Prairie Learning Centre and taught outdoor biology engaging students in the grasslands. It was here when I reconnected to the natural and began to take action on behalf of it.

**The place of relationships.** My partner, Marc, reminds me daily about the importance of my community and being active in that community. My dog Scout has taught me about the knowledge that the more-than-human world holds. My child has awakened in me both a sense of wonder in all things big and small, and a sense of urgency to make the world better.

**The place right now.** Because of all of this, I believe that it is my responsibility to help create change in my community, as part of a collective. I do this in part by teaching, volunteering, parenting, and organizing. I am doing this research because I see a world dominated by discourses and practices that oppress other humans as well as the planet, and I want to try to join others in disrupting these discourses to allow spaces for other ways of knowing to enter the conversations.

## **Policy Contexts**

The local school division in which I work enforces policies that negate the role of place in

education. For example, our high schools allow students from all areas of the city to attend without basing the student population of each school on where students live. This means students are driving from all locations and enrol in schools based on their reputations for athletics and academics. In addition to this, there is a staffing policy that moves teachers around from school to school every seven years, regardless of the impact on the local community. There has also been a pattern of closing community schools in heritage buildings to build brand new, large open concept schools.

My school division and other divisions around the province are underfunding outdoor, environmental education programs and are instead building industry partnerships to fund courses on energy resource management, police studies, auto mechanics, cosmetology, video games and computer applications, and others. The educational setting that I teach in is modeling public education as job training, and therefore reflecting neoliberal trends within the greater society. In addition, there are provincial threats of incorporating increased forms of standardized assessments, regardless of the research literature citing that they are not beneficial for students' learning (Spooner & Orlowsky, 2013).

I feel as if my work setting as a teacher does not reflect my values toward social and ecological justice, and I would like to inform my practice with principles that do follow my values. I also have the desire to try to influence decision makers in my school division to support educational initiatives and visions for a sustainable future.

### **Potential of Radio**

I regularly read the magazine *Rethinking Schools*. In 2010, I came across a resource reviewed in the magazine called *Drop That Knowledge: Youth Radio Stories* by Elisabeth Soep and Vivian Chavez. The book described engaging urban youth from underfunded public schools in Oakland, California in developing radio shows about local issues affecting youth culture. The



authors ended up developing a program that gave youth an opportunity to earn a high school diploma from participating in the youth radio program. I wrote about and experimented with creating radio in a graduate class focusing on culture and environment. At the time, I was teaching an integrated program, referred to above, focused on social justice. I used the opportunity to work with our local community radio station and our local chapter of Amnesty International to develop a youth radio component to the program. Students were given credit for making the radio shows in various curricula, depending on their choice of topic. I observed youth feeling empowered and proud of making the shows. The radio shows also built a sense of community within the classroom as the class listened to their classmates on air. My students described the deep learning that they experienced from the guests that they interviewed and from their peers during the process. Soep and Chavez (2010) explain that *Youth Radio* “create[s] places where young people can come together with adults and peers whose paths they might never otherwise cross” (p. 15). The authors also attest that “Youth Radio’s program *is* education, community-based education” (Soep & Chavez, 2010, p. 173). I recognized that radio would be a useful tool in a participatory research project because learning could come from both the process of creating the shows and the content of the show.

*Youth Radio*’s program was participatory, educational, and a rich form of cooperative research that engaged youth in being critical. It modeled a transformational form of education that is an alternative to the dominant Western education system. I was curious about radio’s potential as a transformative pedagogy with my own students.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This study will consider the radio studio to be a place however will not consider radio to be a place because the focus of the study is about material, physical traits of places, and radio can be considered more of an abstract concept that may undermine the focus of the material places in the study.

## **Relevance of Research**

In addition to my own personal and professional reasons for investigating the where of activism, I have also noticed a lack of studies in this area. Reviewing literature on youth and agency led me to two calls by educational researchers that have influenced this study. The first is a call by McKenzie (2008) to foster more instances of collective experiences as pedagogical places that challenge dominant forms of knowing by, “seeking to create spaces that enable youth to engage in collaborative, intersubjective experiences, which are not pre-determined, but that support de- and re-familiarization and cultural formation” (p. 367). McKenzie acknowledges that educational researchers need to work towards forming a new culture that addresses social and ecological issues by striving to create the conditions for participatory and grassroots initiatives that are political while avoiding being normative. Her call mentions the importance of spaces for youth to learn about cultural formation and participatory practices, and encouraged me to ask, what are the characteristics of the physical, material places where youth can engage in the collaborative and intersubjective experiences McKenzie refers to above?

The second call to investigate youth activism and surrounding contexts was from a 2007 study looking at developing citizens and communities through youth environmental action. The researchers state that “investigating characteristics of the educational practices (Schusler, 2007) and settings (Chawla & Heft, 2002) that support or impede the development of action competence is another area ripe for reflective practice and research” (Schusler, Krasny, Peters, & Decker, 2007, p. 123). Here, “action competence” is understood as youth having the ability and willingness to take informed action on issues that interest them. After mulling this statement over, I thought more about how the “settings that support the development of action competence” could be investigated by looking into the characteristics of places where experienced activists feel they can maintain themselves as activists. Such places could then be applied as a starting point to

developing educational experiences for youth.

After reviewing several bodies of literature (see Chapter 2 for an in depth review) and finding few studies looking specifically at the material *places* of activism, I realized there is a need to address the gaps in the literature by looking at the characteristics and conditions of the places in which activists maintain themselves as capable of addressing justice issues. There is also a need to involve youth in such studies in order to experience critical learning about where activists have been able to maintain their activist identities/communities in order to further their own learning and practice as activists.

### **Research Questions**

The research focused on whether youths' involvement in a participatory, critical learning experience of creating radio shows and building a potential activist-place in the radio studio furthered their own activist identity and community.

Specifically, the study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) How did the experienced activists that were interviewed by youth describe the role of material places (and associated social interactions) in enabling and supporting their own activism?
- 2) Did the youth participants perceive the process of interviewing activists on the role of place in their activism as having contributed to their own activist identities or sense of community? If so, how?
- 3) What other aspects of the process of making a radio show and the place of the radio studio did the youth find as having an effect on their identity or sense of community?
- 4) What steps, if any, do the youth participants plan to take to maintain their activist identities and communities beyond the current study?

### **Defining Terms**

*Places* involved in place-conscious education can be considered “unique and bounded biophysical and cultural environment[s]” (Greenwood, 2013). In this study, place will be considered as the meeting grounds for culture and environment, as all culture is situated in environment and environments are culturally produced (Greenwood, 2013). To take a cultural geographical perspective of place, Kaltenborn (as cited in Anderson, 2010) writes that “geographical space becomes place when human beings imbue it with meaning” (p. 38). This definition is important in order to recognize that places can be viewed at a range of scales, from a room in a radio station to a natural area to an entire nation. This study also recognizes the importance of more-than-human influences on the making of places, from animals and insects, to natural processes and weather. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is important to recognize that places can be local but are connected to other places around the globe through mass media, migration of people and goods and services, as well as climate change (Appadurai, 1996).

*Activism* has several definitions, but the one that will be referred to during the study will be Natalie Gerum’s (2007) description from her book chapter titled *Finding the “I” in Action* in the edited collection “Notes From Canada’s Young Activists: A Generation Stands up for Change.” She explains, “I have come to think of activism as twofold: it means *being* the change, actively leading a life that reflects the kind of world you want to live in, and it’s about creating action beyond yourself and acting as an agent of change” (p. 193).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> There is a tension between the idea of the “good citizen” and the “bad activist” (Kennelly, 2011) due to the field of citizenship education as well as media portrayal of activism. Some forms of activism can be considered as actions of a “good citizen” including engaging in worthwhile community projects and donating to charities. However other forms of activism involve critiquing government and decision makers in dominant culture that have contributed to the injustices in the first place. The former version of activism is “highly reconcilable with the neoliberal model of the self-perfecting citizen” (Kennelly, 2011, p. 51). Often this latter form of

Eve Tuck (2011) writes about *colonization* in curriculum studies as not an historical period that is now over but that it continues to define the relationship between Aboriginal people and settler people and therefore is something that needs to be viewed in the present. Tuck goes on to describe that settler colonialism is directly tied to the land, as settler colonies are premised on the elimination of native societies and the displacement of Aboriginal peoples from their homelands (p. 35). In this study, colonization refers to the displacement of Aboriginal peoples from their land by settler people and the attempted assimilation of Aboriginal peoples into dominant settler culture through residential schools and other oppressive actions. Colonization also refers to the denial of our Canadian history in school textbooks and curriculum with the story of Canadian history starting when settlers “sailed the ocean blue” and discovered Canada (Smith & Thornton, 2008). Tuck and Yang (2012) remind settler educators that colonization is not a synonym for other forms of oppression and therefore decolonization not a synonym for social justice and human rights endeavours. Settler colonialism remakes land into property and transforms the human relationship to land into one that is owner over property.

By *globalization*, I mean the electronic media and mass migration that is currently dominant in the modern world today. Appadurai (1996) describes these conditions in the following way: “more people than ever before seem to imagine routinely the possibility that they or their children will live and work in places other than where they were born: this is the wellspring of the increased rates of migration at every level of social, national and global life” (p. 6). Greenwood (in press) describes contemporary discourses of globalization in relation to place as “narratives of displacement, movement, and rapid change, [which] tend toward diminishing

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activism gets considered by media and dominant-culture as the “bad activist.” The current study considered activism as questioning norms that contribute to injustice, although the definition of the term activism is slippery as it is used by the participants throughout the study.

place as a central construct for cultural experience and analysis” (para. 2). Globalization in this study means the global exchange of goods, services, and people, and the push within societies and therefore schools to participate in this global economy, often times through commodification and migration from homeland.

*Patriarchy*, as Lather (1994) defines it, is “the socially sanctioned power of men over women, operat[ing] in both the private and public spheres to perpetuate a social order that benefits men at the expense of women” (p. 243). Lather describes patriarchy as reproduced through the social construction of gender, including the reinforcement of the split between nurturance and autonomy, female and male, well-mannered and rambunctious, and so on. Because of the various privileges for men that come along with patriarchy, Lather (1994) explains, “which biological sex we are born into makes an immense difference in the material and psychic patterns of our lives” (p. 243). Our society today currently privileges people that fit nicely into the socially constructed categories of male and female: however, if one is to come from a non-dominant gender or represents oneself as not fitting into the traditional gender compartments, one is more likely to experience oppression in the form of bullying, harassment, or not being included or taken seriously. Gender stereotypes appear daily in most Western schools and educational experiences, often reproducing conditions of patriarchy in youth. Moreover, our schools today are places where heteronormativity and homophobia run rampant leading to an increasing number of teen suicides due to bullying about sexual orientation (Egale, 2007).

*Neoliberalism* is described by Mark Olssen (1996) as supporting the state in providing the conditions, laws, and institutions necessary to operate a desirable market place - one that is created through economic deregulation and cuts to social programs (Kennelly, 2008).

Neoliberalism does not come in just one form: rather, it is a set of conditions which take on

different forms in different contexts and locations (McKenzie, 2012). Forms of neoliberalism aim to create an individual who is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur (Olssen, 1996). The various context-specific forms of neoliberalism came out of liberalism, which promoted the idea that the interests of the individual were the interests of the society as a whole – a society that behaves out of self-interest and is relatively detached from the state. Forms of neoliberalism then, came from a view that in an age of “universal welfare,” the possibility of people becoming indolent and lazy was too high a risk and therefore sparked the use of surveillance and control methods. The state took the role of ensuring that each one of us makes a continual enterprise of ourselves (Olssen, 1996). Michael Apple (2004b) takes this further to recognize that schools follow this same type of neoliberal logic; for example, in North America, often only schools with rising performance indicators are considered worthy, and students are taught to “make a continual enterprise of themselves” (p. 21). This also has implications for how and where social and environmental issues are addressed in education (McKenzie, 2012).

The study is premised on my belief, as well as of others (e.g., Bowers (2001b), Greenwood (2003), Hart (2010), McKenzie (2008), Orr (1994)), that we have a need for youth education to be about more than getting a job to “compete effectively in the global economy” (Orr, 1994, p. 2). Educational experiences should address the injustices that contribute to the destruction of our planet and to people’s lives and should contribute to developing well-rounded citizenship and activism skills in youth. Education can be a site of transformation that empowers youth to take action and to self- identify as a citizen capable of addressing issues in her or his community. The next chapter describes the contexts of the study including a review of relevant literature.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This literature review helps frame the current study, *“Places of Activism: Engaging Youth to Explore the Places that Maintain Communities of Activism.”* The review of the literature explores several main areas relevant to the study, including: (a) cultural geography and the concept of place, (b) spatial identity, (c) education and school place, (d) youth in the 21st century, (e) youth subcultures and activism and, (f) agency. Specifically, the purpose of this literature review is to both inform and to identify the gap in environmental and socioecological education research which this study addresses.

### **Cultural Geography and the Concept of Place**

Jon Anderson’s cultural geography perspective is helpful to frame both the concept of place as well as of systems of power in education. Anderson (2010) describes cultural geography as seeking to explore the intersections of context and culture, asking “why cultural activities happen in particular ways in particular contexts” (p. 5). Cultural geography identifies that the product of the intersection between context and culture is *place*. Cultural geography studies the taking and making of place, looking at the way that identities and communities form by interacting in a place, and the contributions, physical or otherwise, that influence the daily actions in a community. Inversely, Anderson (2010) claims that all living organisms are “trace-makers,” as our everyday actions leave traces behind, contributing to the making and taking of places. From this perspective, we are all engaged in producing the world, and creating cultural meaning. In fact, Anderson (2010) explains that, “in the lived world we cannot escape places; they are all around us, making up the fabric of our cultural life” (p. 37).

In order to understand the significance of the above quote I will elaborate on the definition of “place”, as well as “trace” and “culture,” concepts that are inextricably linked with place. Anderson (2010) describes traces as the things that we leave behind in spaces by our



cultural life. He explains that traces are left by humans or non-humans, and can be material, like buildings, signs, graffiti, or non-material such as performances, activities, and emotions: Traces can “take physical shape as things, events and processes, and they can involve emotional, intellectual, and psychological connections” (Anderson, 2010, p. 89). Traces are not only considered to be localized because global traces can be found in local places such as food, electronics, films, and people. Culture is the everyday practices of a people; it is “ordinary” and encompasses all forms of social activity that comprise a way of life (Williams, 1958). Therefore, places are local-global spaces filled with traces, or “drenched in cultural meaning” (Preston, 2003, p. 74). Deborah Martin (2003), a geography researcher with a focus on place and activism, explains that:

Place, as geographers have argued, is socially constructed through several complex and intertwined elements, including interactions among people and groups, institutionalized land uses, political and economic decisions that favor some places and neglect others, and the language of representation (Pred 1984, 1986; Massey 1991; Barnes and Duncan 1992a; Duncan and Ley 1993; McDowell 1999). (p. 731)

Martin (2003) concludes that all of the elements above that make up place provide a grounding for everyday life and experience. Martin’s definition of place also hints at the power imbalances present in a place when she refers to decisions that favour some places, and therefore people, and neglect others.

When it comes to social and ecological justice in relation to place and activism, it is useful to review the literature within the field of cultural geography on power and how it works in places. Many sources in critical research suggest that certain privileged groups of people have more opportunity to exercise their power to leave their traces behind at the expense of other groups (Apple, 2004a; Kumashiro, 2000; St. Denis & Schick, 2003). The privileged groups have

dominating power, and thus form dominant culture. Anderson (2010) describes dominating power as “power which is successful in controlling or coercing the action of others” and can often make individuals act against their own interests (p. 55). He goes on to explain,

Dominating power is thus the ability to define what a culture considers to be normal and appropriate behavior, the definition of basic notions such as right and wrong, what is acceptable or improper, what should be tolerated, and what should not. (p. 56)

In the context of Western schools, Apple (2004a) and others have noted that school is a culture produced for certain groups of people - namely White, able-bodied, heterosexual, upper to middle class, anthropocentric - to easily succeed, while often people (and other species) that do not fit into this description are oppressed.

Anderson's (2010) interpretations of cultural geography also aid with the understanding that although these are the dominant traces left behind in places, we are all leaving traces that shape our own worlds. Marcia McKenzie (2011) used a useful explanation of culture in relation to education and identity by asserting that we are not all empty vessels waiting to be filled with culture, but in fact we are all active producers of cultural meanings in everyday life. From this understanding, there is an alternative to dominating power. Prompted by dominating powers in schools, resisting powers become possible to “intentionally oppose, challenge and dispute acts of domination” (Anderson, 2010, p. 60). Education often becomes a perpetuation of dominant culture, while at the same time, having the potential to be a site of transformation, liberation, and possibility (Freire, 1970). As Anderson (2010) points out, resisting powers can come in many different forms, including subtle forms such as wearing a hat in school when there is a rule against it, or organized forms such as demonstrations, rallies, and revolutions. All forms of resisting power, regardless of the concrete effects, should not be overlooked as they represent a direct confrontation to dominating powers (Anderson, 2010). Anderson points out the need for

more research looking at how activists have been successful in fostering the resisting powers that not only stop the imposition of dominant culture upon them but that also aid them in sharing their own values and norms (Anderson, 2010).

### **Spatial Identity**

A key body of literature linking cultural geography to identity is that on spatial identity; research that looks at the relation between who we are as individuals or communities and the places where we live and interact. Scholars from a wide range of disciplines have described identity as emerging within social, cultural, and historical contexts (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Hart, 2010). I will use the terms identity and subjectivity interchangeably, as I recognize that each person or subject has multiple and fluid identities and positionalities (Butler, 1993; Kreber, 2010). Our identities are written into existence by the stories we tell about ourselves or that others tell about us. Our identities also change depending on where we are. In other words, our identities are defined by place. We both shape places (intentionally and unintentionally) and places shape us. The traces that we all leave help to arrange, manage, shape, and transform places in line with our beliefs and political values.

Anderson (2004) raises the idea found in geographical literature of a spatial division of identity arguing that *who* you are is dependent on *where* you are. More specifically, when studying the identities of environmental direct activists, Anderson (2004) examined the degree to which “activist selves are expressed in activist spaces, and other aspects of self-articulated through different practice in other spaces” (p. 46). He explores the degree to which identities of self that have come to be called “activist” are taken into other civil society spaces. His conclusion is that the degree of activist identity a person performs is due to the discouraging ties, customs, and cultural norms (in other words, “dominant traces”) that influence these spaces.

From Anderson’s (2004) study with environmental direct activists, he found that often the

places where people identified as activists were places that had different norms and behaviours than “normal” civil society. Therefore, the daily practices in the activist places challenged or contested dominant practices and norms. Maxey (1999) points out that the shifting nature of self is reproduced continuously through daily practice. In other words, our identities are continually re-created by our performative acts in particular places (Anderson, 2004). Thus, applying Anderson’s work on activist identities and place, I assume that it is the daily practices, alternative to dominant cultures, norms and customs, performed in a place that develops a cultural reputation that allow the place to become known as a “place of action.” Anderson describes the relationship between identity and place in the following ways:

Individuals enter spaces, become liable to the ties in those spaces and, dependent on the power of the ties and their power over the individual, become bound by them. Since we live in multiple spaces we are liable to many ties; we have many selves held together by a variety of practices in discrete places. (p. 52)

Although Anderson describes individual self-identity, it is the relation to place that allows me to infer that the conditions of the place may create a shared meaning for individuals to identify as “activist.”

The shared meaning formed by the interactions between different people as well as between the people individually to the place is called intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity, as Hey (2002) iterates, helps us to understand “individualization *through* as opposed to *against* the social” (p.239) and the ecological (as cited in McKenzie, 2008). McKenzie (2008) explains that there are few examples that “suggest the ways in which youth can, and do, come together to negotiate their identities (intersubjectively) in the contexts of various subcultures, public spheres, and places, and in their coalescence, create social and cultural change” (p. 368), suggesting more research on this topic is needed. The next section will focus on the dominant traces that may have

influenced youth identities within their years of formal schooling.

### **Education and School Place**

There is a relationship between the “school place,” the values of the society in which the school is situated, and the identities of the children and youth that attend the school. Joseph Agbenyega (2008), an educational researcher looking at the connectivity between school place, pedagogy, identity, and learning writes that “studying students’ experiences without reference to the places that shape their experiences and identities detaches [them] from [their] context and obscures positive meaning making” (p. 54). Most youth in Canadian contexts have spent as many as 13 years of their lives in a public school place, and therefore their identity today will have connections to the Western education system’s values and the values of Western society in general.

Education across North America, and more specifically in a Canadian prairie context in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, has continued to demonstrate its goal of socializing and preparing youth to contribute to the global economy while overlooking the social and ecological injustices that are simultaneously present; for example, the hundreds of missing Aboriginal women (NWAC, 2014), the growing number of Species-at-Risk (WWF, 2014), and the thousands of litres of fresh drinking water used for fossil fuel extraction (Council of Canadians, 2014). Hart (2010), an educational researcher from the prairies, focuses on formal education by saying that “people need to be able to make decisions about complex (political) issues, about resources such as water and energy, population, and pollution; schools are not preparing students for their democratic responsibility as citizens” (p. 158). With this in mind, it becomes necessary for further analysis of current Western education systems and school places to set the context for the research at hand.

Many educational researchers including C.A. Bowers (2001b), David Greenwood (2003), David Orr (1994), Howard Woodhouse (2009), John McMurtry (2000), Marcia McKenzie

(2008), Robert Stevenson (2007), and others have described current educational systems in Western contexts such as Canada as “aligned with the forces of economic globalization and a politics of unsustainability” (McKenzie, 2008, p. 361). Sir Ken Robinson (2010) traces current educational paradigms back to the intellectual culture of the Enlightenment and the economic circumstances of the industrial revolution; he states “education is modeled on the interests of industrialization and in the image of it” (i.e., schools organized on factory lines). Because of the focus of education for the economy, schools are seeing a de-emphasis on subjects outside of the core areas of literacy, science, and mathematics, such as the creative arts and political, environmental citizenship that can teach students to work collectively to contribute to a better society (Stevenson, 2007). As citizenship education researchers have found, most schools in Western contexts such as Canada are places designed to train students for a future of work, but not a future of participating in a democracy (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). This leads schools to convey norms of individualism, competition, achievement, and independence - norms that prevail in the dominant culture and maintain the existing structures of society (Bowers, 1997; Stevenson, 2007; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Kennelly (2008) attributes the norms of individualism and competition found in Western school contexts to an overarching narrative of neoliberalism. Kennelly (2008) argues that an awareness of neoliberal practices is important to take into account when working with youth because, “[it] is relevant not only as a political and economic ideology, but also needs to be seen as fundamentally cultural and symbolic because of its impact on the everyday, and what this might mean for the young people growing up in its shadow” (p. 10). Students need to be taught about ideology critique (Orlowski, 2011).

Apple (1982), a critical education researcher, writes about how schools end up contributing to the reproduction of social and economic inequalities in society based on class, race, gender, ability, and sexuality. He attributes this to some groups having less experience of

and more limited access to (dominant) culturally valued forms of knowledge. Such an example can be found in Kennelly's (2008) research where she interviewed a Canadian young person aged 20, who had spent time in both an "uptown academic school" and a "downtown tech school." He described the schools as being very different in terms of not only the amount of work and difficulty of the work, but the level of engagement with critical thinking and principles of organizing for activism. The research participant's comments suggest a division between "technical" schools that historically serve working class communities versus "academic" schools that serve the middle class in terms of focus on community involvement and "good citizenship." The development of citizenship skills that are transferable to activism are often experienced by students from schools in middle and upper class neighbourhoods but leave out students in working class or impoverished neighbourhoods. Robottom (1987) summarizes education as "always ideological and thus subject to the self-interests of the people who share power in society and may share certain values" (as cited in Hart, 2010, p.157). In contrast to dominant forms of Western education, considering the role of place in education enables us to consider alternatives, such as in the fields of environmental and socioecological education, which I will examine in more detail below.

Environmental education offers a critical alternative for resisting dominant conventional education systems in Western contexts. As defined by the British Columbia government (1995), environmental education is "a way of understanding environments, and how humans are part of, and influence, environments" (p. 5). Taking environmental education further, socioecological education as defined by the North American Association of Environmental Education (2012) involves "exploring the vital connections between societal, cultural, and environmental concerns" (NAAEE, para. 22). The field of environmental education offers an opportunity to question the nature of education systems that continue to reproduce the kind of social conditions (i.e., passive

consumerism) which pose threats to the environment (Hart, 2010, p. 158). Hart (2010) explains, “Environmental education, by its very nature, challenges traditional education provision to engage educational issues that, like environmental issues, are political, contested, and involve deep philosophical struggles with positioning arguments” (p. 157). Stevenson (2007) aligns with this statement by explaining that environmental education has the revolutionary purpose of transforming the values that underlie our decision making from the present ones. In other words, both Stevenson and Hart see environmental education as a resisting power in conventional education. Stevenson and Hart agree that environmental education has two main purposes: a) to be critical of current conventional educational systems and, b) to develop a commitment to *act* to improve the environment from its present state. With this definition, the current study fits within the field of environmental education.

Environmental education has been critiqued in the past for not acknowledging different cultural ways of knowing and not addressing issues of social justice, diversity, and anti-oppression (Bowers, 2001b; Greenwood, 2003). Alongside its development has been a concurrent critical discourse developing that addresses the interdependence of ecological and cultural issues, often called socioecological education (e.g., Bowers, 2001b; Greenwood (formerly Gruenewald), 2003; McKenzie, Hart, Bai & Jickling, 2009). Socioecological education or critical ecological education addresses what educators and researchers can do with culture, acknowledging that education is embedded in a cultural system. Bowers (2001b) has been working in this area for many decades and has come to understand that cultural practices stem from “root metaphors” that are part of a culture’s everyday language and thought. He asserts that Western, industrialized countries are based on root metaphors of anthropocentrism, individualism, and progress. Unless the root metaphors in dominant culture are addressed, or in other words, the dominating powers that influence our daily actions, educators cannot do environmental education in their practices



the way that Hart and Stevenson define it.

Authors working on the intersections of social and ecological issues (e.g., Bowers, 2001b; Gruenewald, 2003; McKenzie, 2008) agree that the main goals of socioecological education should be to simultaneously conserve cultural practices/reinhabit places and to critique cultural practices/decolonize places; the former is articulated by Bowers (2001b) in his “ecojustice” education, while the latter refers to Greenwood's (formerly Gruenewald, 2003) “critical pedagogy of place” theory. Reinhabitation/conservation allows education to focus on developing deep connections to places and (re)learning how to live well where we are. This includes affirming, conserving, and creating forms of knowledge that nurture and protect people and ecosystems (Bowers, 2001b). Reinhabitation also implies “taking a new stance toward one’s own becoming. We reinhabit the self whenever we seek our own renewal, when we stop to listen to the teachers, or when we acknowledge the heartbeat of empire in our own bodies” (Greenwood, 2010, p. 19). In other words, reinhabitation is about self-care along with connecting to our place and conserving practices that care for people and places. Decolonization acts as a resisting power to question dominant discourses and culture, to disrupt and question the stories we live by (King, 2003). It problematizes the colonization of people and land (Greenwood, 2010). Decolonization and reinhabitation depend upon each other and must happen alongside one other (Greenwood, 2010). Tuck (2012) warns researchers about the use of the word “decolonization,” and acknowledges that it must not be used as a metaphor for other improvements we want to bring about in our societies and schools. Tuck (2012) states that decolonization brings about the “repatriation of Indigenous land and life” (p. 1). Therefore, when Greenwood refers to decolonization above, according to Tuck, he should perhaps refer to “deconstruction” of dominant forms of knowledge instead unless directly referring to the undoing of settler colonialism.

Both environmental and socioecological education research acknowledge school as being an influence in perpetuating dominant cultural values, norms, and behaviours. These fields of study and research focus on learning not only about places and therefore social and ecological justice but about learning for and through (or in) places and justice. Environmental and socioecological education acknowledge that critical learning can become a way to engage youth in developing action oriented identities and communities while simultaneously contributing to making their communities better places. This study contributes to the literature in both of these fields.

### **Youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

*“How this generation finally decides to deal with its alienation will be the crucible in which our future society takes shape” (Conway, 2011, para. 23).*

Our youth<sup>4</sup> today in Canada are oppressed in a number of different ways (Conway, 2011), primarily due to the dominating power of neoliberal practices (Kennelly, 2008). First, youth are no longer children, but they are not yet adult; they are in a liminal positioning (Anderson, 2010). This liminal positioning has consequences for the places that they can take and make within the cultural world (Anderson, 2010). Second, adult culture is dominant culture and often youth do not have a voice that is heard by adults in a serious way; adults have the power (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). Third, as Conway (2011) puts it, adults have left the world a very unhappy and insecure place to be in for a youth. Conway describes youth suffering unemployment rates in Saskatchewan higher than the national average. He goes on to describe the high debt loads they will leave post-secondary institution with, if they have the privilege to go. Last, the cost of housing in Saskatchewan has skyrocketed in the past few years making it difficult to make ends

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<sup>4</sup>The Government of Canada defines youth as age 12-19.

meet for students or young workers working minimum wage jobs (Gingrich, Enoch, & Banks, 2014). These conditions for youth are on top of the growing ecological crisis that they have inherited. The oppression experienced by youth would seem to lead to a sense of hopelessness and apathy. Brigitte Depape, the so-called “Rogue Page” that is known in Canada for holding up a “Stop Harper” sign in front of the Senate, addresses youth apathy by saying:

While it's true that some youth are disengaged, they are far from being apathetic. Many youth are deeply concerned with the state of our country and world, but they are not engaged because our society tells us that we cannot change things. When we look back at advancements in Canada, history books tell us that politicians won these victories for us. This is disempowering and leaves us waiting for the next great political leader to come around...As a result, youth can't see themselves as agents for change either. In reality, it is the hard work of people of all walks of life, forming grassroots movements, that leads to fundamental change. (Depape, 2011, para. 9)

In a study that resonates with Depape’s statement, McKenzie (2006) found that students who participated in socioecological education programs emerged from the experience with knowledge of issues happening globally yet sensing a lack of agency as they worried about goals for their own future. Some students, especially students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, felt concerned about the issues that they learned about, but did not feel as if they could make social change on a large scale. McKenzie found that empowerment and agency corresponded to class and privilege as the students from higher classes could more easily imagine themselves making a difference. A student who was interviewed as part of her study acknowledged that she changed her way of thinking quite significantly during the program by taking on an “anti perspective” but later, after leaving the program and reintegrating back into her regular life, found that her perspective shifted towards one that was less extreme than when she was in the program (p. 211).

Bowers (2001b) cautions that students may walk away with a sense of utter powerlessness rather than agency and instead suggests that the educational process should focus on local issues at the community level as this may “regenerate the sense of local responsibility and mutual support that has been undermined by national and international market forces” (p. 11). Therefore, if education is going to inspire active citizenship and activist identities within youth, it must be relevant to the community.

Although there are examples described above of youth caring about justice but not seeing themselves as agents for change, there are also many examples of youth who do take social and ecological justice actions and see themselves as part of the process of change. An example includes the authors and editors of the 2007 compilation *Notes from Canada’s young activists: A generation stands up for change*. In the introduction, the young editors explain their coming together for action as:

[S]uddenly realiz[ing] there was a vast network of young people who were building a nation they believe in and who, in changing their lives, are changing our worlds. These people apparently ignored the myths we are commonly taught: that we must choose between making a living and making a difference, between being respected and being effective, between pursuing a personal career and building a strong community. Instead, they were doing all of the above. It was surprising, and it was totally uplifting. (Cullis-Suzuki, Frederickson, Kayssi, and Mackenzie, 2007, p. 3)

Such a quotation may be directly related to the overarching aims of conventional schooling in Western contexts and the dominant powers located in schools and society that perpetuate an education for the economy and not an education for eco-justice<sup>5</sup>. The “myths” that the authors

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<sup>5</sup>Eco-justice is a pedagogy put forward by Bowers (2001b) that argues that social justice issues need to be framed in terms of a more comprehensive theory that includes the cultural roots of the

refer to are what Bowers (2001b) considers to be the “root metaphors” that we live our lives by in the Western world and what Anderson (2010) calls the “dominant traces” in places. Additionally, the passage offers insight into the power of the collective, and the influences that peers and places have on one another for taking action. Finally, the above quotation recognizes that part of the process of change for a better world is changing one’s own life and daily practices.

Thus, current research suggests that it is necessary to regenerate a sense of responsibility through youth activism and agency (Kennelly, 2008; McKenzie, 2008; Schusler, Krasny, Peters, & Decker, 2007).

### **Youth Subcultures and Activism**

Subcultures can be defined as existing in relation to the wider culture but at the same time carving out alternatives to larger social realities (Cohen, 1997). Subcultures cannot emerge from dominant culture as they exist in subordinate relation, such as youth in relation to adults.

Kennelly (2008) completed a literature review looking at youth subcultures and activism which found that none of the research reviewed represented a sustained “attempt to understand the formation of young people’s ‘political subjectivities’ as emerging from within both subcultures and the wider cultural realm” (p. 12). The current study is interested in understanding youth’s identity formation as activists, or in other words, their “political subjectivities” in certain places, and thus fills a gap in the literature of youth activism. Youth subcultural literature also covers youth resistance, but does so by looking at ways youth practice resistance on a daily level, such as listening to punk-rock music (Kennelly, 2008). Kennelly notes that a look at more intentional and politicized forms of resistance practiced by youth activists could expand this field of knowledge.

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ecological crisis.

## **Agency**

Agency is often understood by followers of Judith Butler as “arising through performative aspects of selfhood that subvert hegemonic norms” (Kennelly, 2008, p. 40). Other researchers, including Selya Benhabib, view agency as “the narrative construction of identity that can lead to action” (Kennelly, 2008, p. 40). Kennelly posits that theorists of agency tend to agree that it is within the “nonunitary self” or through multiple subject positions (i.e., subjectivity) that the potential for action arises. In other words, it is the meeting, clashing, and grappling with alternative positionings of politics, place, and identity that allows agency and action to surface (Anderson, 2004). McKenzie (2006) explains subject positions are pre-conditioned but not fixed. She writes, “the discourses dominant in a given time and place tend to constitute the subjectivity of the majority of the people much of the time” (p. 201). In Anderson’s (2010) interpretation, the dominant traces left behind have power and influence over the identities of the people in those places.

Rather than focusing on the individual agent (or “activist”) in trying to understand how social transformation can take place, Lovell (2003) suggests the recognition of agency residing within collectives or groups and incorporates the role of relationships and interactions with a focus of action in the public sphere. Lovell (2003) brings to light that effective political agency is interactional and collective; it can exist in the interaction between subject positions. I would add that these relationships and interactions can be with people, places, or other species. The current study will necessarily focus on the collective because the physical “places of activism” that I am interested in learning more about will be brought to light from the intergenerational discussion and the interactions of discourses brought by a number of people, including the youth and the experienced activists. High levels of interdiscursivity have been linked to social change while a low level signals the reproduction of the established order (McKenzie, 2006). As well, Kennelly

(2008) points out that “one consequence of an individualizing rhetoric about one’s own personal responsibility to ‘save the world’ is the psychic cost that comes with carrying a burden too heavy for any one individual to reasonably take on” (p. 156). This individualizing rhetoric, feeling as if we are personally responsible to change the world, it can be argued is in itself a result of the many forms of neoliberalism present in society.

### **Summary**

Given the problematic social and cultural structures dominant in the Western world, such as colonization, patriarchy, globalization, and forms of neoliberalism, there is need for a socially and ecologically conscious citizenry to act against and resist injustices. One way to do this is through engaging people, specifically youth, in critical place learning that acts as an alternative to mainstream Western education models.

Cultural geography, by suggesting all living things make and shape places based on their daily actions, is a field of research that is promising in informing this work. Places also shape living things and influence peoples’ identities. Places where injustices are present are places where there are not enough people, and other species, resisting dominant culture. Anderson (2010) writes that there is a need for more research looking at where activists have been successful in fostering resistance to dominant culture, while at the same time imposing their own values onto places.

Related to cultural geography is the concept of spatial identity, which acknowledges the shifting identities of people based on where they are. McKenzie (2008) points out that there are few examples showing the ways in which youth come together to discuss and think about their identities and while doing this, creating social change. Both McKenzie (2008) and Anderson (2010) suggest that there is a need for current dominant culture in Western contexts to change through groups of people coming together and acknowledging their own identities and values.

As reviewed in *Education and School Place*, Western educational models tend to educate for jobs rather than to educate youth to learn more about justice-oriented citizenship (Westheimer, 2004). However, there are alternatives to current dominant education practice, such as the field of socioecological education. This field puts emphasis on education for transformation and action to make better communities and ultimately a better world. However, even within this field, more research is needed looking at the role of place in maintaining activist identities, especially involving youth.

Researchers working on youth engagement and agency suggest that it is necessary to regenerate a sense of responsibility through youth activism, for youth to feel empowered on a global scale (Kennelly, 2008; McKenzie, 2006; Schusler, Krasny, Peters, & Decker, 2007). Youth subculture research showed a need for more studies focused on the formation of youth's political subjectivities, and specifically, intentional and politicized forms of resistance practiced by youth activists. Lastly, the literature reviewed on agency discussed the need to focus on collective agency rather than individual forms of agency.

The current study is informed by the literature reviewed, and focuses on place as a way to address resistance and cultural change within research participants. Ultimately, the study is meant to engage youth in the participatory, critical learning experience of creating radio shows by interviewing activists from their community. The radio shows are an opportunity for youth to create a physical place of activism in the radio studio while talking with activists about places that allowed them to maintain their activism. The radio show is a way to take local action on an issue that is globally relevant and a way to engage the community in a forum hosted by youth.



### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

Along with Levin and Greenwood (2011), I agree that researchers have a responsibility to do work that is socially (and ecologically) meaningful and socially (and ecologically) responsible. One manner in which to achieve this is politically informed action research and inquiry committed to praxis and social change (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 21). In this view, research should be praxis – “practical, reflective, pragmatic action” (p. 21) - directed to solving problems in the world that originate in the lives of the research participants. Similar to Bradbury and Reason (2006), my research is rooted in a participatory worldview and adheres most closely to Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) as a framework (Fine, 2008). Like Bradbury and Reason (2006), I believe research should have, a) an action dimension to “the overly quietist tradition of knowledge generation which has developed in the modern era” (p. xxiii), b) secondly, research should expand the hold over knowledge held traditionally by universities – knowledge should be part of the community, and c) last, research should contribute to the revisioning of the Western mindset – to move away from a modernist worldview with a value system dominated by economic progress and toward a participatory worldview, collaborative relationships, and a variety of ways of knowing.

#### **Ontology and Epistemology**

Many writers suggest that the “modernist worldview or paradigm of Western civilization is reaching the end of its useful life” (Bradbury & Reason, 2006, p. 4). The modernist worldview helped in moving forward our material welfare and control of our lives, but it also devastated our societies ecologically and socially. New patterns of thought are emerging that may ultimately transform our thinking and our action; in fact, this is the challenge – changing our worldview.

Peter Reason (1998) explains that different from a mechanical/modernist worldview or a relativist worldview, “a participative worldview accepts that there is a given cosmos, a primordial

reality, and that human presence actively participates with it” (p. 4). A participative worldview is emerging at this very moment; we can begin to sense it but cannot fully articulate it. As John Heron puts it, “Worlds and people are what we meet, but the meeting is shaped by our own terms of reference” (as cited in Reason, 1998). This shaping brings about a subjectively articulated world, whose objectivity is relative to the perspective of the knower. Reality is *subjective-objective*, always called into being and shaped by the participation of the knower in what is known (Reason, 1998). We are embodied and emplaced beings who are necessarily acting and participating in the creation of our worlds, and therefore action research helps to judge the quality of our acting.

While a positivist worldview looks at knowledge as based on a dualism between mind and reality, and relativism describes knowledge as the constructions of the human mind, a participative worldview rests on at least four different kinds of ways of knowing as we act in the world, as described by Reason (1998):

*Experiential knowing* is through direct face-to-face encounter with person, place or thing; it is knowing through empathy and resonance, and is almost impossible to put into words.

*Presentational knowing* emerges from experiential knowing, and provides its first expression through forms of imagery such as poetry and story, drawing, sculpture, movement, dance and so on. *Propositional knowing* “about” something, is knowing through ideas and theories, and is expressed in abstract language or mathematics.

*Practical knowing* is knowing “how to” do something and is expressed in a skill, knack or competence. (p. 4)

Therefore, a participative worldview draws on a multiplicity of ways of knowing that does not just act “as an academic pursuit but as the everyday practices of acting in relationship and creating meaning in our lives” (Bradbury & Reason, 2006, p. 10). For Reason, and myself,

relationships should be viewed not only with other humans, but also with the other-than-human world.

The purpose of knowledge is practical (Reason, 2008). It is meant for communities to flourish and to connect communities to ecological networks of which we are a part. Reason (1998) writes that “we learn more profoundly about our worlds when we are more interested in making them a better place with our actions than in simply learning about them” (p. 7). When knowledge is linked to experience and action it helps restore the individual to the circle of community and the human community to the context of the wider natural world (Reason, 1998).

When thinking towards a better future for people and places, I take guidance from writers and researchers using research methodologies grounded in participative worldviews and multiple ways of knowing. As Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) write in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*,

We may also be entering an age of greater spirituality within research efforts. The emphasis on inquiry that reflects ecological values, on inquiry that respects communal forms of living that are not Western, on inquiry involving intense reflexivity regarding how our inquiries are shaped by our own historical and gendered locations, and on inquiry into “human flourishing” as Heron and Reason (1997) call it, may yet reintegrate the sacred with the secular in ways that promote freedom and self-determination. (p. 125)

The modernist worldview appears to be shifting to make room for the emergence of a participative worldview.

**Quality.** Participation in natural processes is an ecological imperative as worldview and ecological devastation are clearly linked together (Bradbury & Reason, 2006, p. 10). Reason (2006), in his paper *Choice and Quality in Action Research Practice*, sums up the purpose of inquiry that is grounded in a participative worldview: “Because all human persons are

participating actors in their world, the purpose of inquiry is not primarily to describe or interpret our world, to contribute to the fund of knowledge in a field, to deconstruct taken-for-granted realities, or even to develop emancipatory theory, but rather to forge a more direct link between intellectual knowledge and moment-to-moment personal and social action so that inquiry contributes directly to the flourishing of human persons, their communities, and the ecosystems of which they are part (Reason & Bradbury, 2001a; Reason & Torbert, 2001a)” (p. 188). This above quote leads nicely into a discussion on validity.

In terms of validity, a participative worldview understands knowledge to be more valid and more useful and true to life if these four ways of knowing are congruent with each other. As Reason (1998) describes, knowledge is more valid “if our knowing is grounded in our experience, expressed through our stories and images, understood through theories which make sense to us, and expressed in worthwhile action in our lives” (p. 4). Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) describe Schwandt’s (1996) proposal for entirely new criteria for judging social inquiry. Schwant believes that social inquiry should become “the practice of a form of practical philosophy” (p. 121). Schwant (1996) proposes three criteria that can be useful for judging social inquiry, in terms of validity. The first is that we should seek to find a social inquiry that generates knowledge for which we do not yet have the content or from which we might understand the aims of practice from a variety of perspectives. Second, social inquiry should aim to enhance or cultivate the capacity to engage in moral critique. Last, the social inquirer should be judged by being evaluated on the success to which her reports of the inquiry enable the training of human judgment or the capacity for practical wisdom (as cited in Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba, 2011, p. 121). This study draws from this approach to validity.

## **Methodology**

My methodological framework most closely adheres to Youth Participatory Action

Research (YPAR), which “provides young people with opportunities to study social problems affecting their lives and then determine actions to rectify these problems” (Camarota & Fine, 2008, p. 2). PAR, with its “emphasis on inquiry, learning and action to improve the community or the environment” (Mordock & Krasny, 2001, p. 16), is a good fit with the current study, which hopes to engage youth in investigating the role of place in maintaining experienced activists’ identities and communities, and to help youth participants negotiate their own identities as activists. Community-based PAR researchers Cahill, Rios-Moore, and Threatts (2008) describe PAR as “a process for personal and social transformation; in other words, as a process of ‘opening’ our own eyes and seeing the world through ‘different eyes,’ coupled with a desire to open others’ eyes” (p. 90). PAR is about being participatory by involving participants in the research process; as well it is action-oriented, meaning that the research participants and the community are changed as a result of the research.

Because the current research is being undertaken under the auspices of a Master's degree thesis initiative with time and other logistical constraints, it does not fully embody Participatory Action Research principles by involving all participants in the designing and executing of the project. Nevertheless, this research incorporates many participatory aspects of PAR including engaging youth participants in developing critical research skills to analyze and transform their own lives while at the same time giving back to community collaborators (Cahill, Rios-Moore, Threatts, 2008). Although the participants were not involved directly in the choice of research question and the methods of analysis, they were the lead contributors to the process of developing the scripts to create the radio shows that they hosted. Thus, it would be more appropriate to call the current study an action research project.

According to the Action Research Handbook, there are two primary purposes of action research: “a) to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of

their lives and; b) contribute through this practical knowledge to the increased well-being of people and communities and to a more equitable and sustainable relationship with the wider ecology of the planet of which we are an intrinsic part” (Bradbury & Reason, 2009, p. 2).

Therefore, epistemologically, action research challenges where knowledge resides and for what purpose research is undertaken. Action research with youth is about youth learning and knowledge creation as well as sharing that new knowledge with a public audience.

Since the research participants are youth and tend to be overlooked in dominant adult culture, the action research approach is a useful one in an attempt for youth voices not to be overshadowed by adults – rather, the adults can become allies to the youth. Julio Cammarota and Michelle Fine (2008) describe action research with youth participants as “designed to contest and transform systems and institutions to produce greater justice [as well as] a formal resistance that leads to transformation – systematic and institutional change to promote social justice” (p. 2).

Action researchers working with youth acknowledge that youth have the capacity and agency to analyze their social context and to engage in critical research collectively (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). The intended consequence of action research with youth is praxis and thus “changes of consciousness that allow the young person to perceive him/herself as capable of struggling for and promoting social justice within his or her community” (Cammarota & Fine, 2008, p. 10).

Because this methodology is interested in changes of consciousness in the youth, or rather shifts in identity, it becomes a useful tool to undertake research on the role of physical place in shaping the identities of youth participants. As well, in the current research, the radio studio becomes a place that can potentially allow youth to perceive themselves as capable of promoting justice within their community.

Gayá, Wicks, and Reason (2009) remind us that “often, the success or failure of an inquiry venture depends on the conditions that made it possible, which lie much further back in

the originating discussions: in the way the topic was broached, and on the early engagement with participants and co-researchers” (p. 244). Therefore, the prior relationships I had with the research participants influenced the success of the project. In action research, “the findings become launching pads for ideas, actions, plans and strategies to initiate social change” (Cammarota & Fine, 2008, p. 6). Therefore, the research has implications for education and youth development that go beyond the current study. The epistemological basis of the research redefines knowledge as action in pursuit of social and ecological justice (Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

Although the primary focus of the current action research project is youth development with implications for social and ecological change, I also realize that this study may have impacts for my practice as an educator. Jack Whitehead and Jean McNiff (2010) have been helpful for me to better understand how action research can be an emergent process for the researcher, and a process that creates a “living theory” in order to contribute to practice and research. They explain that “your theory of practice is not static; it is living, part of your life” (p. 47). The living theory approach is about questioning taken-for-granted assumptions about the way education operates, and questioning whether I am a part of that or if I am living my values in my practice. Below is the action research cycle that Whitehead and McNiff have developed as a way for the researcher to “live in the direction of their educational values” (p. 21). I will use this cycle as a framework for the part of the research project that relates back to my own practices as an educator and researcher.

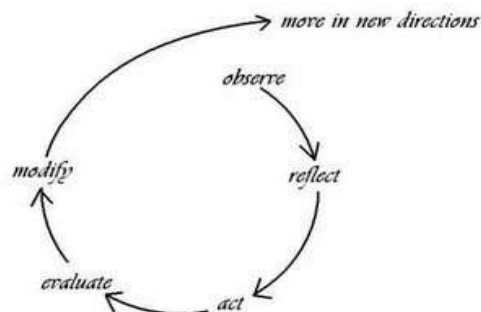


Figure 1. Whitehead & McNiff (2010) “Cycle of Action” used for Action Research

## Design of the Study

**Sampling.** Purposive sampling techniques were used to choose research participants based on their commitment to activism for social and ecological justice. All participants were contacted through personal email addresses using the recruiting information and consent form seen in Appendix A. A total of 8 participants were selected in order to match the structure of the radio show which was well suited to multiples of four.

Youth participants were sought first. Due to the timing of the research project (data collection occurred throughout the summer of 2013), after some effort a group of four female youth was coordinated who were available to spend a couple months on the project and were available at similar times during the weeks of the project. The four youth participants were between 18 and 19 years old and had participated in both conventional education and an integrated experiential education program focused on taking action for social and ecological justice within the past three years. The programs that the youth participants were involved in were programs in which I was one of the two teachers. Youth were chosen in this way in order to foster a relationship of trust and understanding throughout the research process. The participants, because of these criteria, and the students that tend to enrol in such programs<sup>6</sup>, were all white and either working or middle-class. I attempted to include more gender balance by contacting several male potential participants but none could be secured due to their intense work schedules or vacations away from the city.

Subsequent to finding the four youth participants, four experienced activists who have maintained their activist identities and communities for at least five years were sought. Each self-declared as having a focus on activism for social and ecological justice. Two of the experienced

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<sup>6</sup> From the three years I taught in the program, a total of 65 students were taught and 15 were male. 7 identified as non-white, and the majority of students came from middle-class families.



activists were male and two were female and all were white despite attempts to contact others from more diverse positionalities. Each youth participant was matched with an experienced activist participant at the first group meeting based on similar interests determined from the questionnaires and my prior knowledge.

**Research Methods.** Data collection methods included a questionnaire, two introductory workshops, radio shows and radio show scripts, interviews, and taking notes in research journals. I used these methods to get at the root metaphors and traces in the places the youth participants had experienced in schools, society, and selves. The research actions are listed in Table 1 below, along with the date that each action occurred, and how data was collected for each step. I will elaborate on each of the data collection methods below.

Table 1		
<i>Actions of Study and Data Collection Method Used</i>		
<u>Action</u>	<u>Date (2013)</u>	<u>Data Collection Method</u>
Introductory Questionnaire	Sent out to youth after receiving signed consent forms	Questionnaire
First Introductory Meeting with Youth	August 6	Research journals
Second Introductory Meeting with Youth & Activists	August 14	Research journals
Media training with all participants	August 20	Research journals
Writing Scripts with youth	August 22, August 27	Scripts
Radio Show 1/Radio Show 2	August 23, August 30	Transcribed radio interviews
1-on-1 interviews with youth	Within 1 month of radio show	Transcribed interviews

**Questionnaire.** To gain a sense of how youth participants see themselves in relation to

activism, community engagement, and identity, I asked them to complete an initial short questionnaire. The questionnaire asked questions about past leadership roles, experiences with social and ecological justice issues, and school experiences with activism. The questionnaire was developed by using some of the questions from Ernest Morrell's (2008) survey for an YPAR project about "learning, action, and change in urban education" (p. 165) as well as by adding questions directly related to experiences with social and ecological justice (see Appendix B).

***Introductory workshops.*** Two introductory workshops were set-up, with the first workshop including only the youth participants (August 6, 2013) and the second workshop intended to involve youth and all four experienced activists: however, only three youth and one activist were able to attend (August 12, 2013). Both workshops occurred in a community space, a locally owned downtown coffee shop, in a private room. Each workshop was approximately two hours (from 8pm to 10pm) and was based on the developed workshop protocol (see Appendix C).

During the first workshop, the aim was for the youth participants to learn and build their critical research skills in order to later interview experienced activists. The workshop included: a) an introduction to the framing of the study including the concepts of places and traces, and why this is important, b) interview questioning techniques and, c) an introduction to the radio show concept and how the process was going to be set up. The first workshop was also a chance for consciousness-raising about issues related to social and ecological justice, including white privilege, becoming an ally, and corporatization of schools. The youth participants were introduced to a variety of videos, readings, and concepts (see Appendix C) that they could keep in mind when asking questions on the radio show. The goal was to help the youth understand some of the terminology and issues that the experienced activists may discuss with them. Youth participants were asked a few questions during the workshop for discussion and journaling (see Appendix C) and were asked to hand in their completed questionnaires if they had not already

done so.

The second workshop brought one of the experienced activists together with three youth researchers for a meet and greet (see Appendix C). In this session, the research study was again summarized and the youth listened to stories from the experienced activist about what got him into activism and what his current interests were. The activist engaged the youth in a discussion about why they cared about social and ecological justice issues. The aim of the second workshop was to increase comfort with each other, and to decide upon future dates for meeting. I took notes and research memos after each workshop to help inform data for analysis.

***Media training and radio show.*** A critical media training workshop involving one local journalist/radio producer was held after the two introductory workshops (August 20, 2013), to increase comfort and develop relationships amongst participants, as well as to further learning about radio show techniques. The training workshop took place at one of the experienced activists' office space and went from 8pm to 10pm. The office space was very comfortable and private, including couches, a coffee maker, juices, snacks, and separate rooms for breakout sessions. The journalist who introduced media techniques to the group was a CBC radio producer who works with the Morning Edition and has been involved with the Regina group of Journalists for Human Rights.

The journalist met with the youth participants and taught about creating a radio show from a critical lens. She took the list of suggested questions that I had prepared (see Appendix D) and helped the youth tweak the wording of the questions according to best practices, including putting them in their own words. She explained to the youth the importance of doing a pre-interview to help better prepare their script for the live radio show, as they would then have some ideas as to how the experienced activist would respond to questions they asked. The journalist brought hand-outs about radio interviews (see Appendix E) as well as sample scripts from previous CBC radio

shows that focused on social and ecological justice, and the youth participants reviewed these.

While the youth met with the journalist, the experienced activists took the time to build relationships with each other and discuss current issues they were working on.

After about 45 minutes of separate break-out sessions, the youth and experienced activists had an opportunity for a pre-interview in order to plan their radio shows together. They had about 40 minutes for this session. We then met as a whole group again and discussed the radio shows, including how they would be part of the Regina chapter of Amnesty International's regular radio show on Regina Community Radio (CJTR - 91.3FM), called Human Rights Radio. I worked closely with the Human Rights Radio volunteer from Amnesty International, with whom I had a previous relationship from a prior teaching experience.

We arranged for me to meet with the youth radio show teams a few days before their radio show to touch base and go over their scripts with them. In all they produced and aired two radio shows, each involving two youth and two experienced activists.

***Preparing the scripts meetings.*** I met each grouping of youth that were working together a few days before their radio shows. We met at a locally owned downtown coffee shop. Together, based on their pre-interviews, we developed their detailed scripts for the radio show. Along with dialogue and gentle leading from me, the youth participants developed interview questions, planned musical breaks, chose the songs, and decided as a pair what the radio show process would look like. The radio show scripts became part of the data that was incorporated into the analysis. The script became their guide for hosting their own 1 hour talk radio show live on the local radio station, and was also helpful for the sound technician who was a volunteer from Amnesty International. I emailed him the script one day in advance of each show.

***Radio shows 1 and 2.*** Two radio shows were conducted of 1 hour each. The radio shows were saved as podcasts for later listening, and these podcasts were transcribed by me and used as

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Radio Shows can be found online as podcasts at the Amnesty International Regina's page:

<http://humanrightsradio.podbean.com>

Look for:

"Activists Making a Difference" – August 24, 2013

"Activists in our Community: Why They Choose to Act" – August 30, 2013



Jim, the sound technician. Photo credit: Amnesty International Regina

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research data (Podcast 1, 2013; Podcast 2, 2013).

**Interviews.** In order to get subjective data about the youth research participants' experiences and perceptions of the process of examining place in maintaining the identities of experienced activists, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with youth. I met each of the youth, individually, at the same coffee shop that we met to write the radio scripts. All four youth were interviewed individually within one month following the radio show for approximately 60 minutes in duration. I had a series of semi-structured interview questions that could be asked during the interviews (see Appendix F), but for the most part I let the conversations take a natural direction, and that

lead to rich data about place and activism in relation to the participants' school experiences. The interviews aimed to elicit stories from the youth participants about their experiences with the process of creating a radio show and the significance of learning about place in relation to activism. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by me and were used as data.

**Research journals for reflection.** A reflective journal was used for participants to individually examine their own identities in different places. All four youth kept a journal through the research process. Youth participants had regular opportunities to reflect on the process of creating radio shows, participating in critical media training, and working with experienced activists through scheduled journal writing periods. Timed free writing was the journaling technique that was used with youth participants at each time of meeting. A timed free write is a technique used to get ideas flowing in journaling. Usually a question is posed and

participants write for a set amount of time straight (e.g., 5 minutes) without going back to reread or fix any errors (see Appendix H).

The journal process examined the places that influence identity and community as youth participants engaged in interviewing activists fighting for social and ecological justice. Throughout the journaling process, participants were also challenged to ask themselves what the conditions for a supportive place for activism looked like in relation to the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental. The journals became useful for reflections to grapple with the difficult questions and subject matter that arose throughout the research process. The journal was formatted according to participants' choice and was kept private from other group members. This was a way to provide a perspective to the research that may not be present in workshops or interviews and to provide a private space for participants.

Additionally, I kept a researcher journal to make notes and write memos about the process and to document characteristics of the radio studio as a physical place, including the relationships between participants as well as any notes from the interviews, workshops, and critical media training process that I felt might contribute to the analysis.

### **Ethical Considerations**

An ethics application was submitted to the Research Ethics Board at the University of Saskatchewan, and was subsequently approved. All participants signed an ethics form (see Appendix A). All of the youth participants were over 18 years of age and therefore they did not need parental permission. All eight participants opted to use their own names rather than a pseudonym in the radio shows and in the reporting of research results and this request was respected. Because the study focused on taking social and ecological justice actions, the participants were potentially faced with the challenges of current environmental and social problems. This research attempted to foster an approach that provided the participants with the

critical capacity to find answers for themselves and to take action as a supportive group through creating radio shows. However, participants were cautioned not to take on more than what they felt they were reasonably able to manage.

All participants came from a different starting place in their understandings. The collaborative process accommodated these differences, and respect throughout the process was demonstrated by all group members. This research took into consideration how the participants could become engaged environmental citizens without using it as another opportunity to perform white superiority (V. St. Dennis, 2011, personal communication). As such, students were asked to reflect on their own situated location in society. The recognition of the privilege that they have was potentially a painful process; however, every effort was made to ensure that throughout the study each participant had the supports that they needed.

As much as possible, this research was participatory which means that my role in the process was one of a facilitator who shares control with the group members. However, I recognize that even with my best intentions, there are always issues of power to negotiate because I was older than the youth and have been in the position of “teacher” in relation to them. As well, I am in the position of academic researcher in relation to the research participants, facilitating a research process that may feel intimidating. As Rudkin and Davis (2007) point out, youth often bring a differing frame of reference than adults and this may be challenging to negotiate (p. 109).

### **Data Analysis**

I approached data analysis by considering the data as three interwoven mini-studies nested within the larger study. I did this by examining the first research question as a mini-study focused on the activists’ descriptions of place in their activism. The second mini-study addressed the second, third, and fourth research questions focused on the youth participants’ learning

through participating in the research; while the third mini-study summarizes my own learning and changes in practice due to the research. Below, I summarize my analysis techniques in three parts, using the *Evaluate* step of the McNiff & Whitehead Action Cycle (see Figure 1). In *A Realist Approach to Qualitative Research*, Maxwell (2012) describes many researchers (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Seidman, 1998; Weiss, 1994; Smith, 1979) approaching qualitative analysis through two distinct activities of *categorizing* and *connecting*. For example, “Seidman (1998, p. 101) described two main strategies in the analysis of interviews: the categorization of interview material through coding and thematic analysis, and the creation of several different types of narratives, which he called ‘profiles’ and ‘vignettes’” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 110). Next, I will describe how I used both of these strategies of categorizing and connecting within my analysis.

**Mini-study 1: Experienced activists’ descriptions of place in their activism.** Mini-study 1 addresses the first research question: how did the experienced activists who were interviewed by youth describe the role of material places (and associated social interactions) in enabling and supporting their activism?

To attempt to answer the above question, I transcribed the radio shows verbatim using the youth-created scripts as a starting place. I also brought together additional data from the youth field journals and my own journal to help make meaning. I read and re-read the transcriptions of the two radio shows several times and listened to the podcasts of the shows several times while trying to look for relationships among what the four activists said while referring to the specific context and characteristics of the places that supported their activism. This could be considered a *connecting* strategy as described by Maxwell (2008), who states, “Connecting strategies, instead of fracturing the initial text into discrete elements and re-sorting it into categories, attempt to understand the data (usually, but not necessarily, an interview transcript or other textual material) in context” (p. 238). After recognizing some broad overarching themes, I began to fracture the



data by grouping parts of each transcript into the broad categories that were co-created through the connecting process.

Data from the radio shows were “fractured” into categories using a constant comparison or *categorizing* (Maxwell & Miller, 2008) thematic analysis of the experienced activists’ responses to the youth’s interview questions. Data were physically copied and pasted into separate areas of a document. Maxwell states that the point of creating categories by coding is to sort the descriptive data that is collected so that the relevant details on a topic can be physically separated from other data. Maxwell (2008) describes,

The goal of coding is not to produce counts of things but to “fracture” (Strauss, 1987, p. 29) the data and rearrange it into categories that facilitate comparison between things in the same category and between categories. These categories may be derived from existing theory, inductively generated during the research (the basis for what Glaser & Strauss, 1967, term grounded theory), or drawn from the categories of the people studied (what anthropologists call “emic” categorization) (p. 237).

In the case of the current study, the themes emerging from the data were recognized as characteristics of places that supported activism. As a theme emerged, I would do more research in the area in order to describe the theme more thoroughly and to make sense of it within the context of the current literature. For example, I recognized relationships as a common theme throughout the text, and that influenced me to read more about concepts of relationality, and that reading allowed me to be more sensitive to possible sub-categories. This aided the organization of activists’ descriptions. I would call these inductively generated, theoretical categories (Maxwell, 2008). Similar to what I did, Maxwell (2008) states that many researchers find ways to combine the different categorizing strategies to suit their analysis. Theoretical categories “place the coded data into a more general or abstract framework. These categories may be

derived either from prior theory or from an inductively developed theory (in which case the concepts and the theory are usually developed concurrently)” (Maxwell, 2008, p. 238). The categories that I will describe in the next chapter were derived from what the participants said as it interacted with my own thinking, but were informed by current literature and theory in the area of social and ecological justice education.

**Mini-study 2: Youth participants’ learning and change.** Mini-study 2 addresses the remaining research questions: 2) did the youth participants perceive the process of interviewing activists on the role of place in their activism as having contributed to their own activist identities or sense of community? If so, how?; 3) what other aspects of the process of making a radio show and the place of the radio studio did the youth find as having an effect on their identity or sense of community?; and, 4) what steps, if any, do the youth participants plan to take to maintain their activist identities and communities beyond the current study?

A different approach was taken to attend to this second set of questions. For each of the above questions, I created what Seidman (2013) calls a “profile” for each of the four youth participants (p. 121). Seidman explains that profiles are a way to present what the researcher has learned during the process by telling a story. It is a narrative analysis technique. The story is both the participant’s and my own, as the story is told in the words of the participant but is shaped by me. I wrote a separate profile of each youth participant for each research question. This helped organize the manner and clarity of the data presented. Rhodes (2000) refers to the way interviews are considered from a narrative analysis perspective by stating, “personal narratives must be seen as situated and context-dependent performance practices that textualize experience” (p. 519). In other words, the interview is a story that is co-narrated through conversation between the researcher and the participant.

**Mini-study 3: Self-study.** Mini-study 3 addresses my own learning and uses my own reflexivity as a way to analyze my learning. Similar to mini-study 1, I fractured the data by physically copying and pasting into a separate document any of the text from the one-on-one interviews with the youth where I felt was an opportunity for me to reflect and learn. I described some key areas of my own learning and included evidence of that learning in the form of quotations from the youth participants' interviews. This chapter described the design of the research project and the methodological groundings for carrying out the current action research study. In chapter four, I will highlight the main findings from the study.

## Chapter 4: Research Findings

In chapter 3 I outlined how the current study is grounded in action research. I also described the methods used to gather and analyze data for this study. In this chapter, I summarize the research findings as three interwoven mini-studies. Mini-study 1 addresses how experienced activists who were interviewed by youth describe the role of material places in enabling and supporting their activism, the final product of which is two radio shows. Mini-study 2 addresses how the youth participants perceived the process of interviewing activists on a radio show, as well as other aspects of making radio shows, including how the radio studio may have contributed to their own activist identities. It also looks at how the youth planned to stay involved in activism beyond the study, if at all. The third mini-study invites the reader on my self-reflexive journey as an educator and researcher committed to social and ecological justice.

At this point, it is necessary to remind the reader that this study tries to answer the “where” of activism, and not the how or why. Earlier, in Chapter 1, I defined place as the “ongoing composition of traces” (Anderson, 2004, p. 5). As Anderson describes, traces are marks, residues, or remnants left in place by cultural life, leading places to become dynamic entities: “they are in fluid states of transition as new traces react with existing or older ones to change the meaning and identity of the location” (p. 5). The data analysis process was undertaken with this in mind.

### **Mini-Study 1: Experienced Activists’ Descriptions of Place in Their Activism**

As previously presented, research question 1 asks, “how did the experienced activists that were interviewed by youth describe the role of material places (and associated social interactions) in enabling and supporting their activism?” In order to answer this question and to organize the research findings for mini-study 1, I have drawn four themes out of the data: *relationality*, *the act of making place*, *normalizing transgression in everyday life*, and *using power*. This section begins

with a short description of each research participant followed by the core data organized under each of these four themes. It ends with concluding remarks.

The study involved four experienced activists who have each been working on issues of social and ecological justice for at least 5 years. Below I will give a brief description of each of the activists involved in the study. All of the activists in the study are white, middle-class with steady income and benefits.

Chris, age 39, describes himself as an anarchist, anti-capitalist, anti-state-ist, and a bio-centrist. He considers himself to be a red diaper baby<sup>7</sup>, a child raised by left-wing organizers. He recently completed his PhD in anthropology, studying the relations between people and plants. He has been involved in forestry activism and civil disobedience, using his body to stop the points of destruction in the forest, as well as hanging banners and attending shareholder meetings in urban settings. He has also been involved in homelessness activism, helping people struggling with housing set up in abandoned homes and buildings, and feeding people through the Food not Bombs campaign. He grew up in San Francisco and moved to Regina three years ago.

Crystal is in her early 30s and is involved in labour and union activism in her workplace, focusing on workers' rights. She has also been involved with political campaigns trying to get progressive candidates elected in winnable ridings. She has a degree in journalism and focuses her activist energy on communicating, creative messaging, and organizing rallies. She is part of the communications team for UpStream, a newly formed progressive think tank based in Saskatchewan, trying to change the narrative in political conversations. She expressed a connection with nature and animals, including a close relationship with her dog and horse.

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<sup>7</sup> In their book *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro define red diaper babies, as “the phrase is sometimes used to refer to a child of any radical parent, regardless of that parent's past partisan affiliation (or the affiliation of the child).”

Florence, age 72, learned progressive politics from spending 19 years of her life in Sierra Leone and seeing firsthand the changes to a society by regulations imposed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. She spent her childhood in Regina and returned to the city to teach at the University of Regina after getting a PhD in contemporary African literature. She spent 2 years living and working with the Catholic Worker in New York, where she lived in solidarity with the poor (not earning wages, eating and clothing herself with donations, etc.). Florence has committed her life to world peace and has been involved in the Regina Peace Vigil for 7 years, standing at the busiest corner of Regina every Thursday for 30 minutes, distributing fliers she made herself, with a group of other citizens.

Larry is a lawyer in his 50s, with a history of supporting cases for workers' rights and unions. He has recently begun legally representing Indigenous groups in their legal battles for their rights to land in the face of proposed nuclear waste disposal. Larry has been inspired by the Idle No More movement across the country and has been focusing his attention on the issues brought to light from this movement. Larry's goal is to take the Federal Government leaders to court with the leading climate scientists in order to address the future of the planet in the face of climate change. He does not want his children, friends, and all of humanity to have to live in fear for their future, and believes if we have some answers we can live a more peaceful life.

Four themes will be elaborated by drawing on data from these four activist participants, including *relationality*, *the act of making place*, *normalizing transgression in everyday life*, and *using power*. The first theme to be examined in mini-study 1 is relationality.

**Relationality.** When the activist participants were interviewed by the youth participants about the physical places that helped them to maintain their activism, what emerged from the dialogue was a deep sense of relating to their surroundings and other people around them in a respectful way. Below offers evidence of research findings described under subcategories *relationships with people, relationships with the more-than-human world, and relationships with values and ideologies*. Relationality as a theme included a substantial amount of data in comparison to other categories and therefore is broken down into sub-categories to help with the organization of the data.

***Relationships with people.*** Contained in the subcategory *relationships with people* are the sub-categories *multi-generational community, family, being part of a collective and social movements, models and mentors, and those experiencing oppression*.

***Multi-generational community.*** When asked about what inspired him to keep going after years of activism and if he had ever burnt out, Chris spoke of the influence in his life of multi-generational community gatherings and in particular how spending time with older activists inspired him to keep being active in his world:

One of the things that I learned when I was young, was from a multi-generational community, right, which I have to say, was probably the most inspiring thing, right. Like, so having little kids running around base camps, to people that are older than my parents, and you know, the people who have taught me the most were people who had been doing it, you know, when I was 18 they had been doing it for 20 some odd years, you know. And so learning from the generations and working, like, together as a multi-generational movement, because you learn like, everybody has different positionalities - different ways of accompanying each other and working together. And I think that that becomes very important. And it does make you, like, when you have somebody who's

like in their 80s or 90s and they've been doing this stuff, how can I, at 39, think that I can be burned out? You know, I mean you get burned out, but how can I give up if they've been doing it for like twice my life? (Podcast 1, 2013)

Similarly, when asked about a time in her activism when she may have felt like giving up, Florence describes multi-generational interactions as being a sustaining force to her activism, specifically interacting with youth:

Uh, one thing that's really been wonderful about Regina Water Watch is a whole bunch of young people, with all kinds of capabilities have joined the campaign. It's now, I mean, it's huge! Our, our email list is up in the hundreds and lots of, lots of the people are young people. Very, you know, savvy with Facebook and so on, which people like me, you know, aren't so good at. And equal; we are equally passionate. We've all got our skills, we cut across, uh, the generations. (Podcast 1, 2013)

Larry, an older activist, answers the youth radio interviewer's question about inspirations by referring to younger generations being active:

What you are doing. I mean, I'm inspired by the fact that you are here, on a radio show, at your age, as a young woman, both of you, and Crystal, I mean look who organized this, Karen, you're, you're voicing for yourself and saying to the world, I want to make it better and here is how! That's inspiring! (Podcast 2, 2013)

As the above examples demonstrate, places that foster a multi-generational community have benefits to both younger activists who can learn from and be inspired by older activists, as well as to older activists who find youthful energy and optimism inspirational. As Florence hinted, a multi-generational community of activists is enriching for all parties involved and helps cultivate an active community working on justice issues.

Crystal did not explicitly state multi-generational relations as contributing to her activist



identity, but did refer to learning from generations older than her in a family setting, as described in the following section.

*Family.* Family interactions and experiences can also support developing and maintaining an activist identity. Larry spoke of the different generations of his family as developing characteristics within him of compassion and respecting nature, both key in his ability to sustain himself. Larry also discusses how his father reminded him of characteristics that he did not want to carry within himself, while also contributing to parts of himself that he identifies with today:

I mean, I grew up in a traditional family where you know the male was the dominant one, my dad was. He was in the military; I mean that doesn't nurture a lot of collective deference to human feelings and experience. But he stood by certain principles, uh, my mother...she was essentially a single mom most of the time because my dad was away...And they made me, uh people might be a little sort of surprised to hear this but my dad made me go to bible school. He made me learn what Jesus stood for. And you know, damn it all, (*laughter*) there's some good stuff there! Um, my mom made me go to boy scouts. And there's sorta, sort of moral things there that I learned including respecting nature, and and, uh, and you know, and respecting other people. So there is a lot of ways that my family, and you know, because I was the oldest of five children I had to, I HAD to, whether I wanted to or not, I had to learn how to care about other people, including my brothers and sisters, so you know. (Podcast 2, 2013)

In the above, Larry describes how he learned from his family including caring about nature and about other people. He also described how he learned lessons from his family that he is actively trying to resist, including male dominance.

When asked about the role of family as contributing to her activism, Crystal gave credit to her mother, "like I said before, my mother, very very influential woman in my life, and I would

say, my best friend” (Podcast 2, 2013). She goes on to describe the type of family that she grew up in, “Um, my family has always been a very kind, community-minded family as well. We have a tendency to get involved. And uh, I think that uh, that’s definitely had an impact as well” (Podcast 2, 2013). Later on, Crystal illustrated how hearing stories from her grandfather sparked her to feel like she needed to keep up the collective pressure on government to defend what past generations fought for. She viewed this as helping to affirm her activist identity:

With the recent anniversary of Medicare I actually had, it was a great jumping off point for a great conversation with my grandfather about what it had been like for them before it came in and what it was like afterward and how my family was very much in support of it. My great grandfather had been in a farming accident and needed to be flown into Saskatoon for extensive surgery and care. And the health bill for him was astronomical. And uh, it definitely set our family back at that time. It was a huge point of stress. With Medicare coming in, that, that outstanding bill that we were paying every month had been dissolved. And, and the incredible, you know, thing that we could all work together for everybody to get health care, um, ya that that was pretty neat and it was a great conversation. (Podcast 2, 2013)

For Crystal, hearing stories about her family’s history and knowing how her relatives contributed to their communities in the past seemed to inspire her identity as an activist. Both Crystal and Chris also spoke about their relations to their parents as being an influential social interaction that has inspired them. Crystal spoke of her mother inspiring her: “she, uh, became a single mom and managed to pull herself up, with some help, cuz she, she didn’t necessarily have the boot straps to pull herself up by. Uh, and I think that she made a big difference to me, um, she showed me a lot about equality being part of the world” (Podcast 2, 2013). While Chris said,

Well I am sort of a red diaper baby of sorts. Um, my parents were community organizers

and...were very active in the Bay Area and in San Francisco. So, ya, I mean , that's all I've sorta known, kinda thing...I kinda always grew up sitting in meetings and going to city council and watching my parents at the city council defending their position. (Podcast 1, 2013)

These examples show that parents can play an important role in developing their children's subjectivity as a justice-oriented (Westheimer, 2004) citizen through modeling, whether it be through personal struggles and using community supports like in Crystal's case or through community organizing and direct action, like in Chris' case.

Although Florence did not mention family in the radio interview, a few months after the radio show she was awarded a global citizen award from the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation (SCIC) and she said inspiration came from “[her] Grandmother: during the Great Depression she went down to Victoria Park regularly to invite unemployed men to her house for a meal” (SCIC, 2014). These relations to family are often linked to particular places that have allowed the activists to feel maintained, including Crystal's relation to Saskatchewan, Chris' relation to City Hall and San Francisco, Florence's connection to Regina and specifically Victoria Park, and Larry's relation to natural spaces. Thus, these familial relations appear to be part of the non-material traces that give meaning to the material traces in places.

*Being part of a collective and social movements.* Chris, Crystal, Florence, and Larry mentioned the importance of feeling like part of a collective and of a greater social movement as a sustaining force to them. Crystal spoke frequently throughout the radio show about the power of collective action as being an influence and inspiration to her: “seeing collectively what people are able to do if they can work together. There are movements all over the world that have been able to make amazing change” (Podcast 2, 2013). For Crystal, feeling like part of a group and relating to others was significant to her sense of maintaining her activism. Crystal was not only

inspired by global movements, but also described the power of being from Saskatchewan:

But ya, Saskatchewan is a great place, uh, to grow up. And even if you don't get a chance to reflect on what you have and how you can be a part of things or, or the historic movements it had when you were younger, there are plenty of opportunities to explore that as you get more educated in high school or further in university or even in your own communities, right. You open up conversations and then you learn that we have this proud history of making change. And making change for the better. (Podcast 2, 2013)

Chris and Florence also joined Crystal's description of feeling inspired by a sense of community. When asked what keeps Chris going when he's feeling tired, he answered with "um, and then yeah, just community, I mean and, which obviously changes right. But, I mean, I think that sort of the community that you build around you and but not just like an activist community as in you go and protest and do stuff together, but how you live your life" (Podcast 1, 2013). When asked the same question, Florence added, "I mean, there's, I think as Chris said before, there's, there is the community which, uh, keeps one going" (Podcast 1, 2013).

In addition to Chris being influenced and supported by his community, he also mentioned being empowered by knowing that groups of people all around the world are working together as part of a social movement for change. He gave a specific example:

I think that, um you know, seeing different people at different levels that are, I guess like, if you are talking about inspiration, right, seeing people at different, different places and different times standing up and doing things right? Like I know in right now in Pelican Bay<sup>8</sup> just recently they um, uh, there's been a hunger strike that just ended. But

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<sup>8</sup> Pelican Bay State Prison (PBSP) is a supermax California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation state prison in Crescent City, California. The 275-acre (111 ha) facility is explicitly designed to keep California's alleged "worst of the worst" prisoners in long-term

there was a long hunger strike by prisoners. And so you know, watching where people sort of are in their lives actually, active and doing things and trying to change the world no matter where they are, I think that's an inspiring thing right? (Podcast 1, 2013)

Similar to Chris describing the Pelican Bay hunger strike, Larry also described a specific social movement that has influenced him in his activism: "Idle No More, um, it, it, it awakened something in me that I hadn't really paid much attention to as I should have, and I, I can't describe the journey that's happened since that awakening, uh, has been sort of brought to me" (Podcast 2, 2013). The four activist participants all had motivation and inspiration from the power of the collective and seeing social movements in action, both in their home communities and on a global scale.

*Mentors and models.* At the same time as being inspired by collective energy, the activist participants were also inspired by mentors (people in their communities that support them and teach them) as well as models (people that they look up to for something that they did or said). Florence listed models that provide her with excitement:

There's also, uh, inspiring people outside one's immediate world. I was thinking of, you know, the current whistleblowers: Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden and, uh, Julian Assange. They're, they have put their lives on the line. And they are young people, unlike me. I mean, their whole lives may have been wrecked by their dedication to getting information out there. Information which we who live in a democratic society should, or so called, should have. I mean, there's no reason for that information to be withheld from us, and they have, well as I said, put their whole future on the line, uh, to

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solitary confinement. On July 8, 2013, prisoners resumed the July 2011 hunger strike, due to alleged broken promises and cruel conditions, with upwards of 29,000 prisoners across California joining in the hunger strike.

get that information out there. There's also people like Noam Chomsky who regardless of the kind of rubbish they have to put up with from the mainstream media they plod on... Even though they are called, uh, names by the mainstream media. So I find those kinds of people inspiring. As well as people in my immediate environment who provide a community. (Podcast 1, 2013)

Florence finds support to maintain her activist identity by seeing others fight in difficult situations and risk their lives for a better world.

Larry describes the models and mentors he has met since his "awakening" by the Idle No More movement, "particularly by the four women that are in, well the ones that started, if you could, I mean, they didn't really start Idle No More, they triggered and ignited, it. I've listened to, have got to meet [them]" (Podcast 2, 2013). Larry also described the medicine people, elders, and other members of the Idle No More movement as being models for him in general, as well as developing close friends as a result of the movement who are now mentoring him.

Chris describes his partner as a major support and mentor: "Um, well I have an amazing partner uh, who I've been active with for many many many years" (Podcast 1, 2013). In addition to his partner being a mentor, his parents and the older people in the activist community that he grew up in mentored him along the way. Chris also described viewing people taking action in certain times and places, such as his reference in the previous section to Pelican Bay prisoners being on a hunger strike, as an inspiring model of action.

Crystal did not describe particular mentors and models outside of her references to her family (her mother and grandfather) and collective action.

*Those affected by oppression.* The activist participants described interacting with people experiencing violence and oppression as being fuel for them to keep fighting for justice. The participants showed empathy for people with less privilege than they have. It seemed that they

did not pity those affected by oppression, but wanted to walk alongside them to fight for equality and justice. For example, Larry remembers the place and the social interaction that ignited his concerns for justice:

I think that I can track it back way way way way back to high school. I was uh, I was a football player and all that stuff, a jock. I got invited to a party organized by, you know, the popular kids. And I had a friend, one of them anyways, who, he was just an amazing person. Like we, we could talk about anything. And he came with me, and I'll never forget. I, I could probably take you to the doorstep of that house south of Montreal, to this day.

When we showed up, they said he couldn't come. Because he wasn't, I dunno what their reasoning was, he just was, you know, he didn't look good enough. He didn't, he wasn't cool: a nerd, I don't know what the reasons were. But I'll never forget that. That, I mean, why people assume they have the right to treat someone else that way. And that place. I'll never forget. Obviously, it is almost 50 some years ago. I haven't forgot it. (Podcast 2, 2013)

The situation that Larry referred to happened many years ago, but he can vividly remember details of the place that the interaction occurred. It may have been the first time that Larry recognized that there are injustices and oppressions experienced by those who do not fit into the dominant cultural norms. Later in the interview, Larry described specific injustices that he encountered regularly and how they motivated his need to act. The injustices also induced his impatience for meetings and conferences without taking action:

To act: it's uh, it's helpful to talk but it may be my impatience right now because of climate change or global warming or the contradictions that are facing Aboriginal people and the extent and depth of oppression, meanness, cruelty that so many groups are

facing: um, transgender community, the GLBT community, women, Aboriginal people, young people, people in other countries. Where we have the arrogance to dare to tell them how to live and to steal the resources and murder. (Podcast 2, 2013)

It is the awareness and understanding of issues that kept Larry going and feeling the urgency to act. Larry found it difficult to witness the depth of oppression experienced by people and felt a sense of urgency for change.

By seeing poverty grow over time in the same place, Florence feels the need to keep raising awareness about these issues. She witnessed an increase in the number of people experiencing oppression, leading her to share similar feelings to Larry of impatience and frustration with local political leaders who do not seem to take the issues seriously:

The growth of poverty in this city over six plus years has been so very noticeable. Many many more people who feel the need to have to ask others for money because they don't have enough. Uh, many more homeless people. Uh, and homelessness is certainly an issue that we have taken up at the vigil time and time again. (Podcast 1, 2013)

Florence's peace vigil members brought attention to homelessness over and over again because of their personal relations with the increasing number of people struggling in the place they meet each week – downtown Regina. She explained, "I'm not sure I have experienced activist fatigue. Uh, there are just so many injustices and so much violence in this world, how could one get tired?" (Podcast 1, 2013).

As he reflected on his home, Chris also described being motivated to take action by his relations with people who experienced oppression: "in California, where we actually have a lot of, you know, farm workers. They are people getting paid, you know... very little money and living in horrible conditions" (Podcast 1, 2013). He then discussed the neighbourhoods in which he lived in San Francisco: "so in those neighbourhoods, there is disproportionate violence against



people of colour and women, and that actually needs to get addressed” (Podcast 1, 2013). Chris’ knowledge and understanding of the people in his own immediate surroundings being mistreated played a role in what maintaining his activism.

Crystal’s inspiration to stay active comes, in part, from her personal experience of being raised by a single mom who struggled to stay afloat. She reflected, “I guess you have to kind of stop and recognize that not everybody has what you may have had, um, and that it’s the ability to empathize” (Podcast 2, 2013). Crystal suggested she was motivated to stay active by knowing that not everyone has what she has. The activists were prompted to take action because of the relationships they had with people. The places where they encountered a multi-generational community, family, being part of a collective and social movements, models and mentors, and those experiencing oppression were key to keeping their activism alive.

***Relationships with the more-than-human world.*** The activists described their *relationships with the more-than-human* world, including their senses, as significant to the places that support their activism. Chris, Crystal, and Larry all made explicit mention of some of the specific relations to the natural world that preserved their activist identity. Florence, on the other hand, described her relation to land as the changes that she noticed by visiting the same place, week after week.

Chris explained his sense of the interconnected network of humans and more-than-humans. Below is an interaction between Chris and Kennedy (a youth participant) that further explains the ways he relates to the more-than-human world:

**Kennedy:** Chris, can I just ask if you found yourself with a connection with, you know, with plants or animals or something else in our living world, other than humans?

**Chris:** Ya for sure... I do. Um, I uh, especially plants. I’m very obsessed with them. My research was on sort of rice and uh, I’m very obsessed with plants. I love plants. I love animals.

Um I love rocks and trees. Uh, I mean, so, um, I think a lot of moving beyond sort of human-centric relations and ways of thinking, I think are important, right? And looking at things as living entities, and, relationally, right, is important. So I think um, uh, definitely it is not just individual plants and animals. Just like it's not individual humans that are important, right? It's the relationships and the way that everything is sort of networked together that is much more important to understand how to see, in my opinion, to see sort of, life, as sort of this interconnected network of things and people. And giving the, finding the importance of the, of what, even non-living things actually interact and affect ways of being in the world right? So rocks, water - these things actually matter, even though they aren't living right? (Podcast 1, 2013)

Chris' activism, working on issues relating to environment, appears to be maintained due to his belief system, which allows him to relate to the interconnected network of things and people. For Chris, his inspiration comes from not a specific geographical place but the relationship he feels for the more-than-human world. Kennedy asked him if this was a spiritual connection to the forest, and he explained, "I don't know if spiritual is the right word. I mean... I love the forest. I'm definitely more connected to the ocean and to, uh, some other, you know wilderness areas than forests, but, uh, forests are where campaigns happen" (Podcast 1, 2013). The forest was a place Chris was connected to because it was where activists gathered to work on campaigns. Chris' relationship to the more-than-human makes up a large piece of his identity; he calls himself a bio-centrist:

When one is in the wilderness with other beings, uh, there is definitely a connection with the larger life that is out there... I mean, I look at all beings as connected and, and they themselves should live for their own desires and their own lives as much as we should. So, in that sense, I have a connection that is more-than-human. (Podcast 1, 2013)

Similarly, Larry spoke of the importance of interacting with the more-than-human world:

The other thing that inspires me, I mean, so many things do... I mean it may sound cliché to some people, but, the sun. Watching it. Or a tree; its beauty. Uh, animals. Just, you know, interacting with the world. And a song; you know, music, a sound. Things like that... And I can't, I can't say it enough - a beautiful sight, a beautiful sound, a beautiful touch, a beautiful, a taste even, I mean chocolate inspires me sometimes, but when my senses are triggered. (Podcast 2, 2013)

Similar to Chris, the interaction with the more-than-human features of a place was a sustaining force for Larry's activism. Embodying the world around him and experiencing an interaction beyond a cognitive one seemed to be inspirational for him to remain active. Larry hinted at his connection to the more-than-human aspects of places as being spiritual for him: "Idle No More, um, it, it, it awakened something in me that I hadn't really paid much attention to as I should have. And I, I can't describe the journey that's happened since that awakening... The relationship to Mother Earth and the honouring of the relationship to all living things, amongst all living things, in a way that nurtures, rather than seeks to control, dominate, or oppress" (Podcast 2, 2013). His relationship with the more-than-human seems to be initiated by the Idle No More social movement.

Crystal brought up the natural world as a constant source of inspiration, strength, and connection for her throughout her radio interview. She used "nature" as an answer to four different questions that the youth participants used to find out more about her activist identity. For example, she attributed her passion and inspiration to the physical environment where she grew up:

The, the natural world, um, nature definitely inspires me. I grew up in a community that is basically on the edge of the Northern Forest, and I spent a lot of time playing outside and

in the woods as a child. And I grew to really deeply appreciate that part of the world, and the world around me. And that I was a part of it too. I feel like that has definitely inspired me. (Podcast 2, 2013)

The above quote suggests that Crystal considers herself to be part of the natural world, and not separate from it, thus she has developed relationships of respect and honour rather than domination and control. This can be seen again when she talked about what got her interested in activism:

What has always fuelled me is a very deeply ingrained sense of appreciation for the natural world around me. Uh, that I'm part of it; that it needs to be honoured. That it needs to be shared and that it needs to be preserved for future, for future generations and for those that are here now as well. I I feel a very deep connection with nature because I grew up closely to it. (Podcast 2, 2013)

Crystal's relations to the more-than-human aspects of place may contribute to why she takes action to protect and preserve the natural world. For her, where she grew up and formed relationships to the land seemed to be crucial to maintaining her activism.

Crystal added more layers to her relationships to the more-than-human world when she explained, "for me, my, my family farmed. Right away from the start, you do have the connection to nature because you're, you are part of it. You are relying on it for your livelihood" (Podcast 2, 2013). Here, she described how her feelings of being part of nature come from her family relying on it for their needs and income. She described how their family plans depended on the crops and the weather and therefore they needed to respect the natural world. She continued to describe her relationships with the more-than-human world by bringing in a tradition that started from her childhood:

Um, as well my my family took me out into nature a great deal. We, uh, we spent time

fishing. We spent time, uh, camping and, and being close to it. So obviously I come from a family with a tradition of honouring nature and to this day, generations down, we all still have to go camping and fishing each year. Together if possible, which is really meaningful to me. (Podcast 2, 2013)

Crystal's relationship with the more-than-human world seems to be deep and complex, including feelings dependent upon nature to camping and fishing and feeling part of it. Her relationship to the natural world is what continued to keep her fuelled as an activist.

Florence offers an alternative way to relate to the more-than-human aspects of a place. She did not describe a wilderness area or a sensual experience such as Chris, Larry, and Crystal did, but she explained relating to one piece of land in an urban centre:

Well it's the busiest downtown corner in Regina; which is why we selected it. But uh, it's come to have, I suppose, special meaning, um, as we have been there week after week for going on seven years now. Uh, it's uh, sometimes winter and very cold and sometimes the weather is a lot better. (Podcast 1, 2013)

Florence is connected to this particular downtown corner of land, and a special meaning has been created for her by visiting it often. This special relationship to a particular place brings her back every week, regardless of the weather, to promote issues relating to social and ecological justice.

***Relating to their values and ideologies.*** In several instances, the experienced activist participants brought up values, discourses, or ideologies that they believed in or opposed. Having a relationship to these became a foundation for their activist identities. Their beliefs guided their actions in many cases. The ideas that Crystal brought up throughout the radio aligned closely with an ideology of social democracy and environmentalism. She brought up her personal values of universal social rights to attain publicly funded services such as health care (see previous section about family), workers' rights, and the labour movement: "I'm currently active in the

labour movement. I'm involved in my union through my workplace" (Podcast 2, 2013). Her values of environmentalism were developed when she was a child, as can be seen in the *relationships with the more-than-human world* section.

Similarly, Florence expressed her ideas of valuing public services such as keeping water public. She explained that this was due to her 19 year experience living in Sierra Leone and watching the public domain disintegrate due to corporate globalization and the negative impacts of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund: "During my time in Sierra Leone, uh, it was the time when the ...IMF and the World Bank imposed all kinds of economic conditions on countries in Africa and other parts of the world which, uh, totally wrecked the economies." Florence also described being influenced by Noam Chomsky who is known for his ideas aligning with anarcho-syndicalism (Nevins, 2014), a view that understands grassroots organizing as a viable strategy for social change. Florence modelled a relation to this idea in her practices as an activist.

Chris and Florence shared similar ideas. Chris mentioned that while growing up he had the freedom to have any idea that he wanted, as long as he could defend it:

I was a teenager, so there were lots of things that were difficult to discuss with my parents, but uh, politics was never one of them. (*laughter*)...those taboo conversations were the best conversations in my family. We fought about religion and fought about politics and fought about all these things. That, that was fun, right. Like we learned to have critical analysis. And debate, that was something, you had to defend yourself. You could say anything but you had to defend. Probably the only thing that my parents would disown me is if I came home either, you know, either a soldier or a Nazi or something like that, I would probably get disowned. But beyond that, any form of political spectrum that you could defend and stand by. (Podcast 1, 2013)

Chris' parents encouraged him to have any idea that he could defend. Chris' beliefs aligned most closely with anarchy and a goal for a future self-managed society (i.e., no state) (Fieldnotes, August 20, 2013). He also stated his belief that capitalism is the problem causing many injustices: "capitalism itself is an act of violence and an act of exploitation" (Podcast 1, 2013).

Similar to Crystal, Larry related to ideas of workers' rights and the unionized workplace. He also specifically discussed his ongoing learning and practicing of new ideas. Larry seemed to recognize problematic values and ideas that he considered to dominate Western societies, such as patriarchy. He discussed being influenced by ideas from an Indigenous paradigm learned through the Idle No More movement, which offered an alternative to patriarchy:

If we want to move forward then not only do we have to respect and listen to others but my primary source of knowledge and learning about how, comes from listening to women. It does. I think that men have to spend much more time appreciating not only that women should be treated with respect, but listened to. And uh, I mean, uh, in original cultures, you know women are the ones who know what the, what the society needs to nurture the soul, the spirit, the land, mother earth, how to relate. And it's uh, I have to admit sometimes, it's difficult. I want to think that I have these ideas as well. (Podcast 2, 2013)

Here Larry actively tried to place value on the teachings of women. He admitted that it was challenging for him due to his experiences living in a patriarchal society.

Larry continued to describe his learning about the ideologies of Indigenous peoples in relation to the Idle No More movement:

I've been working with, listening to, uh, learning all about original culture, Aboriginal culture, and realizing that a large part of my life I have spent operating on the assumption that somehow, intellectually or as a left activist or an academic, I could define a lot of

things that needed to be said. Uh, and I realized, listening to an elder, a medicine man, and Aboriginal women leaders. Aboriginal activists, if you want to use that term. Uh, how much we, particularly in North America, have um, buried the original wisdom, knowledge, and experience. And, um, got in the way of living it. The relationship to Mother Earth and the honoring of the relationship to all living things, amongst all living things in a way that nurtures, rather than seeks to control, dominate, or oppress. (Podcast 2, 2013)

Larry was seeking new ideas to relate to because of his negative relationship to current dominant ideologies within Western society such as patriarchy (e.g., when describing listening to women) and neoliberalism (e.g., when describing practices of controlling nature).

The activists all seemed to form the ideas and values that they had due to the places that they grew up or traveled to. For instance, Saskatchewan taught Crystal about cooperation, Sierra Leone taught Florence about capitalism's impacts on a society, California taught Chris about left-wing activism, and the prairies taught Larry about the values of the Idle No More movement. It was suggested from their descriptions that their ideas kept them maintained as activists.

**The act of making place.** The second theme to be examined in mini-study 1 is *the act of making place*. For Chris, Crystal, Florence, and Larry, it would appear that the act of making a place reflect their values was motivating for them. This act of making place included participating in actions such as rallies, vigils, and spectacles and while doing so, temporarily modifying the place to align with their beliefs. The activists used props, decorated statues, wore costumes, and helped bring people together. From the stories the activists told, it seemed apparent that their creative engagement with issues was a way for them to confirm their identities as activists. They talked about the specific places where they participated in an action as what kept them inspired. The evidence in this theme describes the role of the physical traces that were



involved in temporarily taking the place and making it their own. It seemed to be the regular participation in these events that sustained them.

A strong example of *the act of making place* is Florence's Peace Vigil. For seven years, Florence and a group of others have stood in the same downtown corner of Regina for thirty minutes every Thursday at noon, holding a banner, and handing out materials that they have created about particular issues. The act of making the downtown corner their own, for a short time each week, has given Florence and her activist community a ritual to participate in. They have created a regular act of resistance, and have committed to participate in such a way until world peace breaks out. Florence describes how the vigil has impacted her and others:

Well it's the busiest downtown corner in Regina, which is why we selected it, but uh, it's come to have I suppose special meaning as we have been there week after week for, well, going on seven years now... We have struck up relationships with the business people that are on that corner... We interact with the Metro [newspaper] people and then there are the people who take our pamphlets and uh, those that don't take them. There are some of the same people come by every, every Thursday and there are those that say, 'Thank you so much for being here' and there are those that go make a hand motion that is very dismissive. (Podcast 1, 2013)

In addition to participating in the weekly Peace Vigil, Florence, with the help of others, creates a draft version of a brochure that gets sent to an email mailing list of fellow activists on Sunday of each week. She maintains and aggregates this list. Her community of activists proofread it, send her updates or events, and then she edits the brochure and gets it printed in time for the Thursday vigil. Later in the same day, after the vigil, she sends around another email to her list notifying people as to the number of brochures distributed that day, as well as attaching a copy of the brochure and the list of actions and events for the upcoming week. In addition to all of this work,

Florence follows City Council very closely and attends and/or presents at almost every city council sitting to point out the flaws in decisions made, to provide an analysis of current trends, and to offer suggestions for decision making (Fieldnotes, August 20, 2013). Her activism seemed to be maintained by a ritual-like process she developed that is centred around physically occupying the busiest downtown corner in Regina each week to make her own place of activism.

Crystal spoke of two specific places that she was involved in making into places of activism by participating in rallies or protests at them. These events, and her sense of taking and making the place her own for activism, shaped her identity as an activist. Her hometown hospital was the first place that initiated her activism, when she was in high school. The government in power at the time decided to close down the hospital to save money, and she described, “My small town that I grew up in, uh, had a hospital. Now this is at a time when hospitals seemed to be put in every community whether they really warranted one or not” (Podcast 2, 2013). She volunteered at the hospital, and because it had a special meaning for her, she participated in a protest, “I was a high school student at the time...I remember taking part in a protest because I thought we should keep our hospital” (Podcast 2, 2013). Upon reflection she realized that if the same situation happened now, she would be on the opposite side of the issue, but regardless of that, she attributed this experience as contributing to her activist identity because it was the first time she became publicly vocal about her views, and she spoke out because of the special meaning the hospital had for her.

Crystal also discussed a rally that she helped to organize at Victoria Park in downtown Regina and expressed her pride in its success. This suggested a strengthening of her activist identity because she was able to carve out a place where she belonged:

When I helped organize the anti-robocall, anti-democracy-suppression rally that we had a few years ago, we did, we did do a few things. Like, you know, we put something on the

statue of Sir. John A. MacDonald to make a point...We, we brought a few things in and used a little bit of creativity. And how we organized the speakers and some of the things we said and we asked the crowd to interact with us as well and to respond to what we were saying or to ask questions...it was an effective rally. (Podcast 2, 2013)

Crystal was inspired by taking over the hospital to try to protect it as a first-time protester. She was then re-energized as an activist when she organized a rally in Victoria Park in which many people gathered together and used their creativity to modify the physical space to make it more in line with their values. They decorated a statue and brought in their own materials to make the park a place where they felt more comfortable. For Crystal, it seemed that the process of shifting from a “passive recipient of dominant place-makers” (Anderson, 2010, p. 8) to an actor who leaves her own traces is part of what sustained her.

Like Crystal, Larry also spoke of using creativity to help contribute to the non-material traces in a place that resists dominant ways of knowing and shows an alternative. He described a rally that he attended in Victoria Park where he wore a mask that looked like Stephen Harper to create a performance as part of the event. In the following quote, he noted that having fun, through the use of performance, while trying to make the world a better place is necessary to sustain his own activism:

I am learning from people who are artists - either musicians, artists in terms of painting or drawing, um, creative people - to accept that, that's probably one of the more important aspects that's missing a lot of times. And, we are supposed to have fun. Mother Jones said that I'm not going to be part of the revolution if it's not going to be fun. And it's true. There will be times it's not fun, but it would be nice if it could be more. So, it wasn't my idea. I was asked, and uh, I thought that the idea had merit, so I dressed, I studied up on things that the Prime Minister had said, and personified him so that people, the media,

whoever, would see that these are actually the words of, actually this man. And it helped that he looked, I looked, as much as possible (*laughter*) I mean I, I'm a lawyer, I have suits, so that's not hard. (Podcast 2, 2013)

Larry suggested that creativity is an essential component of the act of leaving traces in places that resist dominant culture, and temporarily makes a place align with one's values.

Chris offered a story on the radio interview that suggested a similar sentiment. He described the moment when he had the most fun as an activist, participating in a spectacle in Vancouver at the site of an annual general meeting of a forestry company. He was protesting the destruction of the forest. He and his friends threw horse manure at shareholders of a logging company:

It was definitely a fun event...it was kinda a mix of a lot of different things. I was living in Vancouver at the time, and we were working with some folks who were working on Burns Bog and a few other places and uh, a lot of our actions were tied to sort of, forest actions or hunt sabs which is uh, a hunt sabature is where you disrupt big hunts. And so we had been doing that for awhile. But there was MacMillan Bloedel<sup>9</sup>, which was the big, uh, logging company on the on Vancouver Island, were having their AGM and there was a bunch of us from all of these different groups that had worked together and networked...And there was a protest, um, planned where people had banners and were just sitting in front of it. And at that point, the night before some friends of ours that we lived with in this house had pulled up with this truck load of horse manure, and we had all been sitting around cooking dinner cuz we lived in a co-op house and we had all decided, well we should have some fun with this. And so some other friends of ours from

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<sup>9</sup> MacMillan Bloedel Limited was a Canadian forestry company headquartered in Vancouver, British Columbia. It was bought by Weyerhaeuser in 1999.

this group Forest Action Network were hanging a banner. So someone was hanging a 40ft banner off of a skyscraper with a person hanging on the end that said, 'Stop the destruction'. Well that night before we had made all of these little signs that had every exploitative and pun related to manure, written not as 'manure.' And so, you know, 'blank day for the forest,' 'same blank different day,' that kinda stuff.

So we plastered her entire truck with that and we show up right in front of the AGM as people walked in, and my partner tried to warn all of the activists that they might want to go upwind instead of down wind and they didn't listen. And we started throwing manure at the people as they entered the AGM, or the shareholder meeting. And as we were doing that of course the police came up and asked us to stop and we said no. And they said, well we are going to arrest you. And we said, okay. And they said, get down. And we said, no. And they refused to climb in with us, and so they actually let us finish because they didn't want to get dirty. And as we were getting carted off to, um, get arrested that day for our civil disobedience, another friend of ours entered in with two pies underneath her shirt as she had bought one share in MacMillan Bloedel so she could get into the meeting. And she threw two of the pies at the board members that were sitting in there. So it was sort of a spectacle. It was four different elements of a spectacle to bring attention to what they were doing. (Podcast 1, 2013)

The above passage, spoken by Chris, demonstrated the passion he expressed from remembering what it felt like to be an actor in an event that carved out a physical place that he and his fellow activists temporarily controlled. He seemed proud to have publicly showed his opposition to the dominant-trace makers (i.e., the shareholders of the logging company). For him, being a part of a spectacle that brought attention to what the company was doing appeared to have made him feel like he was making a difference. This may suggest that being part of the above act gave him the

encouragement or agency that he needed to want to do more actions.

To dig deeper into the role of the physical places involved in the temporary taking and making of a place into one's own, Chris described the need to take on different tactics in different physical settings. Chris' physical location helped to determine the type of tactics he used as an activist:

If you are working on a forest campaign, you are working on, uh, in some form of wilderness, not in the city and not in the areas that are getting logged. And the activism is actually tied to stopping the point of destruction. So it would be barricades, um, something that actually stops the logging trucks from getting through, versus, uh, in the city, you do a lot more of, instead of stopping, more of focusing on the point of production or the point of destruction depending on which form of stuff you are working on. You instead, you're usually trying to start a spectacle. So when you are in an urban setting, you are trying to draw attention and when you are in a rural setting or a wilderness setting you are actually trying to physically stop it, whether it's living in trees or sitting in trees so they can't cut them down, or blocking roads, building camps.

(Podcast 1, 2013)

Chris felt that the places which encouraged him to stay passionate about his activism were places where he participated in a creative spectacle that defied dominant culture and allowed his own alternative culture to flourish for a little while. In addition to this, the type of spectacle or event that was created was largely dependent on the geographical location. He considered if they either wanted to stop a destruction or to draw attention to a behaviour of a group. He and his community of activists chose specific tactics to alter a place in line with their values, in order to get the most attention and therefore to create the most change.

The activists not only attended the events they described as participants, but they were

actively involved in the organizing or creative performances that contributed to taking and making the place. Crystal, Florence, and Chris described leaving material traces that altered the physical place where they participated in activism, from handing out fliers, to modifying a statue, to hanging banners and throwing manure. Larry, on the other hand, described the non-material traces that he tried to leave in activist spaces, including performing and improvisation. The activists seemed to be consciously aware of the physical location in which these events occurred, in order to bring the greatest amount of attention or attract the largest number of people.

**Normalizing transgression in everyday life.** The third theme to be examined in mini-study 1 is *normalizing transgression in everyday life*. For the activist participants, activism was not something that they did only on weekends or in their spare time. They took their roles of contributing to a better world seriously, and lived out their values in their day-to-day life. Chris explained the importance of paying attention to everyday practices:

There is an anarchist notion of propaganda by the deed, um, which historically has been taken up as sort of this question of violence, um, because that's the way the state and and media and people have um sorta portrayed it. But, if you look at traditionally anarchist ideas of propaganda by the deed, it's actually propaganda by living, right? So by the deeds you do. So, setting up free schools, setting up food programs, living, living cooperatively in houses, right? So my partner and I have lived in a lot of...for years we lived in houses with 13 other people and big coop houses where we ate meals together and did things. Um, and building, if you can, building it cooperatively. (Podcast 1, 2013)

Chris explained that everyday life is very important in living out an alternative to the dominant ways that Western societies are living. He lived cooperatively rather than individually. These daily actions challenge neoliberalism and capitalism. He explained, "living your life in the way that you want the world to be. Building those relationships, egalitarian relationships, relationships

in which you respect and work together with people and don't put power over...So that form of building those kind of relationships are really important right" (Podcast 1, 2013)? Daily life is activism when it enables transgression, and it can influence change in others through building relationships and practicing equality. Chris reflected on many activist practices: "you see a lot of activists that are active...but when they come home, sort of the politics goes to the side. Or it's easy to fall back into traps of privilege or hierarchy when you are not in that relationship or not active at that moment. So building those day-to-day relationships I think are sort of central to the politics that we are trying to create" (Podcast 1, 2013). Chris was hinting at the idea that all of his activism was contributing to a new emergent culture and politics where equality is central.

Florence has normalized transgression in her everyday life by building and maintaining a network of engaged residents through her daily work on the Peace Vigil. This was described in the previous section as a type of ritual. She explained, "But if you are living an activist life, your bills are less. You save" (Podcast 1, 2013). She offered advice to youth that if they are really concerned about making the world a better place, their daily practices will be reflected in that, and suggested they do not have to be solely focused on finding a high paying job and giving up their values in the process.

Larry took up normalizing transgressions by listening to those who have experienced injustice in order to inform his practice as an activist and lawyer: "And so I spend a lot of my time listening to why people are treated like that themselves. I like to hear their stories and do what I can to make it a safer place for them to be" (Podcast 2, 2013). Larry tried to live out the values that he was developing as an activist in order to make a new normal for himself. He made a distinction between acting and just talking about issues:

A quote from someone that I don't know their exact name, I saw on a screen at an event I was at. And people were talking about how do we know what to do to, sort of, change the



world or make things better? And it was about suffering. People are suffering, um, and the quote was, ‘Get out of that meeting, leave the room, go learn how to suffer, and then you’ll know what to do’...That’s the space that I try, always, to be. I, I, I look for those spaces...if we want to move forward then not only do we have to respect and listen to others but my primary source of knowledge and learning about how, comes from listening to women. (Podcast 2, 2013)

Rather than just attend a rally to vocalize his opposition to dominant and destructive forces such as patriarchy, Larry is trying to live out his values of respecting and learning from women.

Crystal gave specific details about living out her values in everyday life: “we also grew and raised a lot of what we ate. We didn’t have a lot of money, um, and so we relied quite heavily on what we could grow and produce ourselves” (Podcast 2, 2013). This was not a choice for her; she had to do these things because she grew up in a modest home. During the pre-interview that Amanda had with Crystal before the live radio show, Crystal described how she still grows a garden, cooks from scratch, makes preserves, and sources her meat locally (Fieldnotes, August 30, 2013). She valued the practice of supporting herself without relying solely on purchasing foods, even though she could now afford to. In addition to this, she nurtured connections to the more-than-human world within her everyday practices by having a horse and a dog that she spends time with outdoors every day (Fieldnotes, August 30, 2013). It appeared Crystal put value on taking the time to slow down and live her life intentionally. In relation to living intentionally, Chris brought up the importance of being aware of green capitalism and the false sense that buying organic foods will change the world:

I think that the activism, as I see activism, or being active in the world, is one that goes everywhere from the streets, to information giving, to the way you cook your meals, to the way you live. And that’s not to go into, sort of, the consumptionist politics like green

capitalism: if you purchase organic food then the world becomes a better place. Like obviously its better cuz there's not chemicals but it doesn't actually change the power relations, right? There's still farmers that are getting ripped off, there's still workers in farms, at least in California, where we actually have a lot of, you know, farm workers, they are people getting paid very little money and living in horrible conditions... Happy capitalism doesn't work, right? Capitalism itself is, is an act of violence and an act of exploitation. So there isn't a way to have consumer based things actually change the world, except for minute little things. So in that sense, how you live your life is central to it. So, lockdowns and you know direct action is all really important on one level then the other level is how you live your life daily. (Podcast 1, 2013)

Chris provided an analysis of the ways in which he saw class intersecting with activism. He described addressing what he thought was the root of the causes that he works on: capitalism. In a variety of ways, each of the activists mentioned the importance of paying attention to their daily practices and seemed to believe that they were contributing to making the world a better place by normalizing practices in the everyday lives that were alternatives to dominant ways of living.

**Using power.** The final theme to be examined in mini-study 1 is *using power*. The concept of recognizing one's privilege came up throughout the radio shows and this demonstrated that the experienced activists were aware of their privileges due to their positioning in society as white, middle class, employed, able-bodied, healthy people. The discussions during the research process on privilege always led into conversations about power, including individual and collective power. The places that the activists described as being supportive to their activism were ones with a history of settler colonialism, and could be described as white spaces (i.e., spaces that privilege whiteness). McLean (2013) defines whiteness as “a socio-spatial process that constitutes particular bodies as possessing the normative, ordinary power to enjoy social

privilege” (p. 354). Each of the activists problematized their privilege to various extents, and characterized the places where they are active, as places where they have privilege, including white privilege. This may be seen as a non-material trace however, many non-material traces may leave some material traces that contribute to the physical place.

Crystal viewed her privileges as “luck,” which can be understood as a way to describe her unearned privileges, and felt that she should share that “luck” in order to give back to society:

I think maybe they drive you to recognize that not everybody was as lucky as you were and how far you can get on that luck, and how it can be so different for other people. Uh, I guess you have to kind of stop and and recognize that not everybody has what you may have had...I know that if I didn't, you know, have probably the spare time that I had, having the job that I have, and uh you know the skills and the knowledge that I do, maybe I wouldn't be able to be as much as an activist as I am. I feel I'm lucky, but, but, I'm trying to share, take that and try and share what I can and give back, what I can.

(Podcast 2, 2013)

Here Crystal described her unearned privileges as contributing to her ability to be an activist and to live the life that she currently does. She characterized her privileges as her job, spare time, and skills. She does not suggest it is related to white-settler colonialism.

Larry described privilege as a way for activists to look good for caring about injustice. He suggested that for middle-class white folks, activism is something to be praised for, however for people without as many privileges it is not an option to resist and struggle for justice. For many, activism is often a matter of survival (e.g., activism relating to missing and murdered Aboriginal women). Below are Larry's ponderings on privilege and activism:

If you define activism as protests, rallies, demonstrations, marches, going to meetings, and so on, which is, it's an element, obviously I have more access and time and ability to

do that than people who are struggling in all kinds of ways. Um, you can, if you define activism solely as those kinds of things, there is a certain elite-left kind of culture that can develop, where privileged people who have the time and the money, it takes money, you know, if I want to go to a blockade in some part of the country it takes money to do that. Uh, and I mean I could go to those things and uh that makes me look, seem to be like, wow, what a sacrificing activist. I'm not making sacrifices. So um, it's important to appreciate that what you have to sacrifice in order to make change in the world is what primarily should be honored. And that's the hardest thing. Um, the other, the hard part for me as well though is like we were talking about sort of being on this show. I get access to things that others don't. I mean, it's nice to sort of honour your privilege and you know, wow that's super cool that you do that, but I think it's more important about how you use it, cuz we have it. So if you have that privilege, then use it. (Podcast 2, 2013)

Immediately before the radio show began, Larry told me that he almost did not show up because he questioned why he was the one talking about activism and why not a woman of colour or someone with less access to having their voice broadcasted publicly. He explained that a friend of his who is an Indigenous woman, encouraged him to use the privilege that he has to talk publicly about the issues of Idle No More. It was an interesting moment for me to reflect upon, because during the purposive sampling, I attempted to get more diversity within the activist participants, but the Indigenous activists I asked to be involved were busy with other activist priorities. The result was a relatively homogenous group of activist participants. The activists who had spare time to participate in the study were all white, with jobs and free time.

Chris, like Larry, talked about using the power that he has as a white, middle-class man. In the below quote, Chris problematized his privileges due to his whiteness and class and spoke to how using power motivates him:

I mean, uh, your positionality and privilege always feeds into what you can and can't do, um, and what you can and can't get away with. That said, um, I actually do believe that utilizing the privilege that I have is a good thing. So if I can actually physically stop something or be a part of an act of civil disobedience in a way that I don't have the same risk as somebody else, um, that's a good thing, right? Um, at the same time I do think that there is sort of a fear that, uh, folks of colour or people that don't have the same privilege as me don't do civil disobedience. Or at least that is a myth that gets put out. And living in a place like San Francisco, that's definitely not true. Um, most of the people I did activism with were, it was a very diverse group of people right? Especially coming from homeless issues, right, where disproportionately people of colour are living in poverty. And when the neighbourhood I lived in then was also predominantly a neighbourhood of colour and so when we were doing stuff against gentrification and all of these things and against sort of evictions and things like that all of these were people doing direct action that were more than just middle-class white kids.

I also think the idea of class also needs to come into perspective when we talk about these things and many folks that might automatically get identified as having privilege, uh, because of their skin colour or whatever, might come from working class or, uh, sort of underemployed families as well which often gets ignored right? So uh privilege itself is definitely something that needs to be addressed but is also something that is much more complicated than I think the push, uh, at sorta the centre. But as a fear of getting arrested? No I've had enough privilege in those cases...I mean more in my neighbourhood, my privilege came through when I would walk down the street and cops wouldn't throw me against the cop car cuz I was a 16 year old boy which they would if I there were a Latino boy, right? Like, so it's more day-to-day life that I think that comes

out. Which is living in, you know, a police state in which race is a huge signifier and poverty is a huge signifier for who gets attacked. And I think that is a more important place to talk about class is the daily violence and attack on people in poor neighbourhoods. (Podcast 1, 2013)

In the above quotation, Chris is getting at some of what Bowers (2004) calls the root metaphors that are embedded in the places where he does activism, including the idea of “a police state” and a white state where “race is a huge signifier for who gets attacked.” With these characteristics in mind, Chris suggested that it is not only how privilege and power are addressed and used within activism, but that there is a need to consider how power is acted out in normal dominant society. He related *using power* back to the previous theme of *normalizing transgression in everyday life*.

Florence gave an account of the ways in which globalization and capitalism used power to take and make place in the daily lives of Sierra Leoneans while she was living there for nineteen years. Below she described how the use of power for financial gain impacts people’s lives and identities:

During my time in Sierra Leone, uh, it was the time when the, what are they called? When the IMF and the World Bank imposed all kinds of economic conditions on countries in Africa and other parts of the world which, uh, totally wrecked the economies. When I went, somebody of the job as a clerk, his kids were in school, his kids were healthy, he could at least afford a bicycle, if not a car. By the time I left, the same person - and actually exactly the same person, I’m thinking of an individual - his kids were dying because of malnutrition. So they caught measles, they caught anything going around. Uh, they weren’t in school any longer. Now those kinds of things just cut back on all kinds of public services. There was free health care when I went, that was gone. There was reasonably cheap education. The uh, school fees just skyrocketed. (Podcast 1, 2013)

Florence's experiences with seeing globalization exert power over people with less privilege inspired her to use her own power to speak up against these powerful structures.

She also reflected on the concept of whiteness and how it had given her privilege in the places where she traveled in the world:

Well, I was regularly a minority of one, you know, on the bus, in the classroom, at social events and so on. But, uh, I think white privilege has a long reach. The white Western world rules the rest of the world, so that I don't think, even though I was often the only white person around, that I lost my, lost that privilege. I also had, uh, you know, an education, and a reasonable income, which the majority of Sierra Leoneans didn't. So I also had class, class privilege. Um, in terms of how it influenced me when I came here? Possibly it made me more aware of students in the classroom when I was teaching at the U of R who did not have white privilege...now, I'm not sure I dealt with it very effectively in the classroom. I was aware that they were probably feeling or possibly feeling isolated, but how you break through that isolation, I don't think I ever really figured it out. (Podcast 1, 2013)

For Florence, although she was a minority, she still experienced being in a privileged positioning while she lived in Africa and she suggested this was due to her whiteness and class privilege. Having the experiences that she did made her realize the ways in which she could attempt to use her power, for the better, when she came back to Canada. Florence admitted that she had more to learn about the ways she could effectively use her power for the better.

Acknowledging their privileges was a step that Crystal, Chris, Larry, and Florence had all taken to various extents. They were trying to move beyond acknowledging privilege to figuring out how to use their own privilege in a responsible manner. They described using power as something that could be positive if used with the right intentions. Florence suggested that power

should be used with an open mind and with a willingness to learn. Rather than using power for looking like the “good activist,” as Larry mentioned, using power to join in the struggles of those suffering seemed to be the way that the four activists involved in the current study had decided to move forward. The places that maintained their activist identities were ones with a history of settler colonialism and therefore gave the activists more privilege than others to use their power.

**Mini-study 1 conclusions.** The places that the activists described as allowing them to maintain their activism were ones with which they had a relationship, whether it be to people, the more-than-human world, or an ideology. The activists related to a multi-generational community, to family, to being part of a collective and social movements, to mentors and models, and to those experiencing oppression. These relationships to people triggered them to act. The activist participants also described relations to the more-than-human aspects of places, whether it be to a tree, the ocean, the woods, the weather, or to a bodily sense. Having an embodied and sensual connection to something more-than-human was suggested to nurture their activism. They also felt motivated by their values and ideologies that were alternative to dominant cultural ideas.

It was their relations to alternative ideologies that inspired them to organize and participate in creative events and spectacles. These creative activist endeavours left both material and non-material traces behind in the places they were active and this seemed to contribute to the activists’ sense of temporarily making the place align with their values. Their stories suggested that it was in the act of making places their own, when they could feel that it was a possibility that the world could be changed for the better, that they found inspiration.

Not only did participating in activist events inspire participants to maintain their activism, but practicing transgressions in their everyday lives helped to fuel their activist fires as well. The activists tried to practice alternatives to dominant ways of living their daily lives, and in doing so, normalized these practices in their own homes and immediate communities. Their homes and



places they spent the majority of their time thus became places that helped maintain these practices.

Last, the places the activists described as maintaining their practices were drenched in a history of settler colonialism, globalization, patriarchy, and capitalism. All of these conditions worked to give the activists privileges and therefore, power over others in those same places. The activists acknowledged their privileges to varying degrees, and concurred that they should use their power to make the world better. However, they did recognize that it could be complicated to figure out how to do this with the least harm. The activist participants' descriptions of the role of place fit under the themes of *relationality*, *the act of making place*, *normalizing transgression in everyday life*, and *using power*. These themes suggest ways to prevent activist burn-out and fatigue, and in addition, the themes create openings into new ways of teaching for a justice-oriented citizenry committed to social and ecological justice. They could become the grounding for the way educators design learning experiences, or a framework for a living theory of education.

### **Mini-Study 2: Youth Participants' Learning and Change**

In mini-study two, research questions two through four were addressed. They were: 2) did the youth participants perceive the process of interviewing activists on the role of place in their activism as having contributed to their own activist identities or sense of community? If so, how?; 3) what other aspects of the process of making a radio show and the place of the radio studio did the youth find as having an effect on their identity or sense of community?; and, 4) what steps, if any, did the youth participants plan to take to maintain their activist identities and communities beyond the current study? In order to answer each of these questions, I wrote a short narrative profile for each of the youth participants using direct quotes to examine whether and how they perceived creating radio shows to influence their identities. Before addressing the

research questions, a brief description of each of the youth participants involved in the study is presented. All of the youth in the study are former female students I have taught in integrated programs with a focus on social and ecological justice.

Alexandra (a.k.a. Alex) was in a new course that I co-developed in 2013 called Social Justice, which integrated content from psychology, law, native studies, and social studies. She lived part time with her mom and part time with her dad and described her mom as being supportive of her ideas. She identified as struggling with co-dependency as a result of her father's injection drug addiction. Alex was 18 years old at the time of the study and was trying to finish enough credits to graduate high school. Her social justice issues of interest include injection drug use and harm-reduction.

Amanda was in a program called Trek School in 2012, which educated grade 11 students outdoors and experientially in the subject areas of social studies, physical education, biology, geography, and communications media. She was 18 years old at the time of the study and started university shortly before I interviewed her about the radio show process, with a major in psychology. Amanda had very supportive parents and identified as being passionate about equality, especially in terms of sexuality. She had a special interest in HIV prevention. She was also very connected to trees as a result of participating in the Trek School program.

Micheala was in the Trek School program in 2011. She was 19 years old at the time of the study and worked at the YMCA and at a small photography company that takes school pictures. She spent one semester in University in Vancouver enrolled in a forestry program focusing on the ecological and cultural aspects of forestry, but ended up dropping out and moving back home. Micheala was interested in women's rights, especially regarding young women and their perceptions of beauty. She is very passionate about fungus and can identify many species of mushrooms and lichen and knows of their special medicinal uses. She lives with her mom and her

grandparents who she described as being respectful of her alternative ideas.

Kennedy was in the Trek School program in 2011. Kennedy presented herself as mature for her age and had friends older than her. She maintained good grades and good behaviour in her school years. Kennedy lives with her mom and her step dad. Kennedy described her mom as a helicopter parent, and while she was in Trek School, her mom texted her more than 20 times a day to ask how school was going. Her step dad has conservative values that he tried to impose on her. After graduating from high school, she spent the year as the nanny to her father and step-mom's baby. She is now studying psych nursing at SIAST in Regina. Kennedy and Micheala met while in Trek School, and are now close friends.

**Research question 2.** The second research question is: did the youth participants perceive the process of interviewing activists on the role of place in their activism as having contributed to their own activist identities or sense of community, and if so, how? In an attempt to answer this question, I present short profiles for each participant.

*Alex.* Alex enjoyed the process of interviewing the activists:

Um, it was really cool. I loved interviewing people and hearing some of their stories and stuff like that. It was really cool...it was really fun to learn different ways of talking to people and talking to people I never would get to, like when am I ever going to talk to a lawyer? Unless I'm in trouble, right? So it was really fun, I liked it, it was different.

When asked about interacting with the activists who were quite a bit older than her, with completely different life experiences to hers, she exclaimed,

That was really cool! I think that's what I enjoyed the most. How old was Florence? Like when am I going to go talk to someone like that cool and that age, like come on, that's really dope. And then just talking to Larry and the other girls, like, cuz they are older than me and they've done so much more and, like, just the cool things that they've done: their

past experiences, seeing their personalities shine, everything, it was really cool. I really liked it.

In other words, the experience made Alex feel good about herself and she seemed to have felt it was an experience that taught her more about how to interact with people of different backgrounds, ages, and genders.

The below excerpt from the one-on-one interview with Alex gives an example of the way in which Alex saw herself in relation to the activists that she interviewed. It starts off with her discussing what she learned and ends with her feeling uncomfortable to be labeled “activist”:

**Karen:** what types of things did you learn from the process of doing the radio show?

**Alex:** From the process I learned, like, more strategic ways of, like, journalism pretty much, like asking people questions, to make it sound better. And I learned more of, like, the emotional part of it. They kept saying, like, we're not activists. Yes, we're activists, but so are you because you are taking the step forward. I don't see myself as an activist. I'm not an activist, I don't really do much. It was really cool learning that and just that emotional aspect of telling their stories, and their perspective on things.

**Karen:** So, you don't consider yourself an activist?

**Alex:** I don't! I dunno.

**Karen:** But you are interested in social justice issues?

**Alex:** Yes, very much so.

**Karen:** And what makes you, well where is that gap? So you show an interest in it, but you don't feel like you're?

**Alex:** Well, I'm not out there picket signing. I'm not doing things on a daily basis, I'm just doing it here and there. And it is something I am passionate about. I like doing it and I like learning but I've never actually like went and taken steps - like one girl handed out like

how many condoms [at an HIV rally she organized]? Like, I've never done that, so I'm not like an activist.

**Karen:** Could you see yourself being an activist in the future?

**Alex:** I could. If I, like, knew where to start, and knew what to do, and knew other people. Most definitely it is something I could do. But I just, I don't hang out with those kinds of people. But, I dunno. I hang out with, like, the stoners and not the best behaved group of people.

This discussion shows that Alex is interested in social justice issues, and trying to make the world a better place to live, but she felt like she does not do enough action to be labelled an activist.

This may be because she was comparing her own present identity to the activists', and sees she is not doing as much as they are. She also appeared to be struggling with the label of activist because her friend group does not do activism. She could imagine herself as an activist in her future, and she was interested in doing similar work as the activists she interviewed in the study, but she was missing the tools and the support network to get started. Here she tried to find a label for herself, without throwing out the "activist" part completely:

I would call it, maybe a budding activist because I want to do more and I want to help out and do cool things like this but I just don't necessarily have the resources and how to do it myself, so I wouldn't call myself an activist because I'm not as involved as I should or could be, but I'd love to see myself doing that in the future.

In other words, Alex used the process of interviewing activists as a way to reflect more about what she currently does for the issues that are important to her and looks forward to her future in which she hopes to take similar actions as the activists she interviewed.

When I asked Alex if the research project made her think differently about who she was or what she could be in the future, she said:

Not really. It kinda confirmed for me, like it confirmed that for me, like at one point in time I wanted to be a nurse and this just, like, told me that I'm not going to enjoy that; I like the people part. Nursing you get the people interaction, but I want to like seriously sit down, and debate things and discuss with them. And as a nurse I can't do that. I just want to listen to their stories and be empathetic with them, and feel the way they are feeling. It just confirms to me that that's what I want to do.

In the past year Alex transitioned from having no personal motivation for getting good grades or attending school to setting a personal goal for herself to become an addictions counsellor. She explained that when she started seeing her own addictions counsellor just over a year before the current study commenced, she realized she was already supporting her friends in a similar way and that she may be good at this role herself. This transition in her life was supported with taking the Social Justice program, and then participating in the current research project. She explains:

Like I never used to have goals, like my goals were let's get a 49 in class at least, otherwise you are going to get in shit. It wasn't even a personal goal. And now I'm like, I'm going to go to University, I'm going to do this thing, I'm going to be great, and be a good person. Whereas before I just didn't give a shit.

For Alex, the process of interviewing the activists made her see what was possible for her future, and contributed to her imagining herself as an addictions counsellor to make a difference in peoples' lives. Her interview suggested that interviewing the activists contributed to her identity as a budding activist.

***Kennedy.*** For Kennedy, the process of interviewing the activists was a meaningful learning experience because she actually participated in it, rather than just read about it in a book:

You remember stuff you learn when you are actually doing it, instead of just like reading a book and writing down notes or answering questions that are in the book that have

been there for like, you know, a hundred years. That is boring. Nobody actually remembers what you learned when you do that. But like this, and then you remember, and it's conversational and you know, I'm always going to remember how Chris was or how Florence was, you don't just like erase your memory when you've had, like, personal contact with people. But with books, it's just like, OK I'm reading and I'm bored and stuff.

The personal interaction and dialogue of creating radio shows seemed to have an impact on Kennedy. When I asked Kennedy what she thought she learned throughout the whole experience, including the introductory meetings, the media training, writing the scripts, and hosting the live radio show, she described how she saw herself being exposed to new knowledge and new ways of seeing the world. To her, this helped her make up her own opinions:

I just learned like, I dunno, about other people and how I can be influenced by other people. And like with Chris, he doesn't really have any boundaries: He just kind of does what he wants. You know? Which I think is kind of cool, but you know, could get you in trouble at the same time...His opinions are so like, out there, compared to, like, you know, people that I meet and stuff. He just has so many different ideas that I didn't think that people actually had, except maybe like on the movies or something like that. I'm like, people don't actually think that, but he did! I haven't really hung out or talked to or know anyone, like, even does anything even remotely activisty, you know?

The above quote suggests that Kennedy used the process of interviewing the activists as a way to reflect on her own identity and the ways in which she is influenced by other people's point of view. The process also helped Kennedy become aware of alternative ways of interpreting the world. The experience encouraged her to grapple with various viewpoints in order to make up her own opinions and perhaps contributed to her own paradigm.

When I asked Kennedy if she considered herself to be an activist before the study began, she responded, “not really. I still don't really.” I clarified my question by asking, “But you see yourself as someone who cares?” She responded with the reasons why she felt that she could not wear the activist label:

Yeah, I care. I feel like to call yourself an activist, you have to let people know what you're doing, and that's what I lack. But I care, I definitely care, and I definitely have opinions, but the facts to back up – that's where I lack.

Kennedy is not apathetic about issues relating to social and ecological justice but she did not feel confident in her knowledge-base to be credible in a public setting. Below, she demonstrated how the interdiscursivity she experienced throughout the research process contributed to her grappling with her own identity or subjectivity. I asked Kennedy if she could see herself doing similar things to Chris and Florence, and she responded with:

I don't know. Well, definitely not like Chris. I don't think I could go that far. And part of me, like I don't know if I agree with how he does it because, yes he's getting his message across but did it really help in the bigger problem? Like, you know? You are creating more problems for yourself, the clean-up of whatever you happen to do, you know? So, yes you are making a point but it's not really helpful. It's not really doing anything, you know? But then Florence, it's all kinda a time thing. Like if you have the time to do it, then you'll do it. Like I won't have the time to organize or put together a peace vigil, or look up facts. Like, I don't have time in my life, so I feel like that's a factor in what you can or can't do.

Here Kennedy has acknowledged that Chris has one set of values and acts on those, but suggests that she could not act similarly because her values and morals do not align with his actions. She demonstrated that she was learning from being exposed to contested points of views. She also



discussed not having the time for activism as she is focused on other areas of her life. The below excerpt from the interview I had with Kennedy provides an example of how she seems to be negotiating who she is by hearing and interacting with new discourses:

**Karen:** So, did you feel when you were in that radio studio with Chris, and even Jim, and

Florence, and Micheala, that the world could be a better place? You know, that you saw people do care and they are trying to do their best to, kind of, make change? Or did you feel like, you know, does any of this even matter?

**Kennedy:** Well I think it's empowering to see people that care, but more people need to care.

Yes, one person can make a difference but if you want to make a big change then more people, I think.

**Karen:** So being around them, did it make you care more than before? Do you think?

**Kennedy:** Yeah, I think so. Maybe more because we could like discuss and I could form more opinions rather than just me being in my own world.

**Karen:** So even though you don't necessarily agree with what Chris said, it opened your mind to things to make your opinions on those things, because you might never have thought about them?

**Kennedy:** Yeah. Like, the opposite side.

Thus, the experience of interviewing Chris and Florence on the radio gave Kennedy an opportunity to learn about new ways to see the world, suggesting that the experience contributed to her identity as a future active citizen.

*Amanda.* Amanda found the process of interviewing the activists provocative: “yeah, they are very interesting people. Sitting down and talking to them was very interesting; you didn't get bored listening to them that's for sure...Listening to how Larry dressed up as Stephen Harper was too funny.” She also suggested that she identified with Crystal: “well, I know Crystal definitely

talked about how nature inspired her, and that was really cool because I feel the same way. I feel connected to nature, and it was really nice to hear that.” Amanda suggested that interacting with Crystal affirmed the part of her identity that is connected to nature. She also enjoyed interacting with Larry and sensing his passion: “And with Larry, just his wanting to save the world and find out about global warming was really cool, and funny, but just shows that he actually cares about it, which is nice.” Amanda described seeing Larry care about issues as “nice” but further elaborates,

It was definitely interesting to hear their perspectives on a lot of the topics. Like to hear Larry talk about how he wants to sue the government, for 71 trillion, was it a trillion? Like, that amount of money, was kinda, like, funny but at the same time serious. It was interesting to hear someone else’s perspective on it, who actually had knowledge of what was going on and wanted to find out more.

Amanda addressed being exposed to new perspectives but did not describe the experience as changing her opinions.

Upon reflecting on the process of interviewing the activists, Amanda found it stimulating to hear new perspectives but these perspectives did not seem to contribute to labeling herself an activist. In fact, it would seem to have done the opposite:

**Karen:** So did you ever consider yourself to be an activist?

**Amanda:** Not overly to be honest.

**Karen:** Like you'd never say that word, like you'd never say, ‘oh I'm an activist.’

**Amanda:** I feel like it wouldn't be fair to all of the people who put in so much time in to call myself an activist because they put in like hours a day and they try so hard and they are so passionate. And I am passionate about issues but I don't put in the time or the, like, work for it, so I don't think I should - if that makes sense.

Amanda expressed that she is not apathetic. She is passionate about issues but she does not take action on a regular basis and therefore did not feel comfortable identifying herself as an activist.

To follow up with Amanda's statement, I asked her if she could see herself being involved in activism in the future, similar to Crystal: "I see myself as being involved. I don't know if I could do as much as her, because she, like, organizes all those things, right, so I don't know if I could do as much as she does, but I definitely would love to be involved." This quote demonstrates that the process of interviewing Crystal got her thinking more about who she might be in the future. Amanda sees herself as being involved but suggests not as a lead organizer.

Amanda's favourite part of the process of interviewing the activists was an in-between time during the radio show when everyone in the studio bonded while listening to the song that played during the break. Amanda chose the song *Love* by Macklemore and Ryan Lewis. She said it was about equality and gay rights. Below is an excerpt from the interview that I had with Amanda:

**Karen:** What do you think the best part of going through that whole experience was? Not just the radio show but meetings. We met a few times, we met with Larry, we met with just us, we met to talk about the study, we saw Larry's office, like all of those steps, what do you think the best part is?

**Amanda:** They were all really good but I really liked the moment where we all connected over that song. And Jim, he messed up and didn't play the commercials! Like it was, that was my favourite part!

**Karen:** And that wasn't planned at all! Like you guys just picked that song, and then everyone just.

**Amanda:** We just sat there, and we absorbed it. That was my favourite part personally.

Amanda's favourite part of the alternative educational experience of making radio shows went

beyond what was planned. It involved an embodied experience where she seemed to have felt connected to the other participants. Amanda enjoyed the process of interviewing the activists and seemed to have compared her interests to the activists that she interviewed, especially Crystal. She described the experience as allowing her to consider future identities for herself but did not explicitly state that it had an immediate impact on her.

*Micheala.* Micheala was excited to discuss her experience of interviewing the activist participants, which is evident below in her expressive descriptions:

It was so empowering! I was literally in, like, this vibe for the rest of the day about, this like, 'I'm awesome, radio's awesome, everything's awesome and I can do anything!' I was just in a really good vibe after. It was really great. Um, I honestly don't think there was anything that I would have changed or anything that I thought could have been done differently and it was great. It was fun because, like, you were put on the spot and like, but it was ok if you screwed up and, or if you stumbled over your words.

The above excerpt from Micheala illustrates a sense of empowerment and excitement because of successfully hosting a live radio show. She seemed to have the perception that she could do anything after she successfully overcame the challenge of hosting a live radio show. She expressed having agency when she explained,

I just felt like I could ask them anything and like in that space, it was totally fine. Even though the producers were probably sitting on the edge of their seats thinking 'OHHH what are these kids going to say?' So, it was fun. It was really fun. And it was fun because I'm so young too.

With this quote, it is apparent that Micheala was proud of herself for hosting a radio show at her age. She liked having power in the radio studio: "And it was just like totally cool, and it's because I had, like, this special power torch that I could be like, this is what I'm doing, and you're

going to deal with it. It was really cool to have that power.” Micheala thought the experience was fun because she was in a role where she was able to ask the activists anything that she was interested in, and everyone had to listen to her. When I asked Micheala about interviewing people older than her, she responded with,

I love talking to people who are older than me and asking them, like, as many questions as I can because, like, I learn so much from them even if I don’t agree with everything. I feel like I learn so much and that’s my favourite way to learn.

Micheala suggested her learning from the experienced activists came from new ideas being presented to her and having the option to decide if she agrees or not.

Micheala described several instances where she changed her way of thinking as a result of the interview she conducted on the radio with Chris and Florence. One instance that demonstrated a change in her thinking was when Chris discussed the idea of a worker and how everyone needs a job as a result of living in a capitalist system:

That was really like, just when he said that, I was like oh my gosh. Cuz like, I just get so grumpy going to work. But really, I should be grateful that I can go to work. So it was like really inspiring. It inspired me with being okay with getting up in the morning, it inspired me to not be such an asshole, just go to work.

As a result of Micheala encountering new perspectives, she had the opportunity to reflect upon her own ways of thinking. Another instance where Micheala described her learning was from being questioned about her opinions by Larry:

And Larry, he even asked, like, ‘what are you passionate about?’ And I had to say I am passionate about other people treating other people like shit. And he's like, ‘well why?’ And I literally was like, ‘I have no idea.’ So, that was really helpful for me, because now

I'm thinking about it. I've been thinking about why I'm passionate about making people feel better.

For Micheala, being directly questioned about the ideas that she had was a way for her to think more about why she has the beliefs that she does. It is possible that Larry's prompt to describe her ideas made her question her identity as an activist.

Micheala did not see herself as an activist before the study began nor after the study was complete. Below is a dialogue I had with Micheala about what it meant for her to be an activist, and it demonstrates that she was grappling with her activist identity:

**Karen:** So when you went into this project, like, when I first asked you about the project, did you see yourself as an activist?

**Micheala:** No, I didn't think I was, in fact, I was almost embarrassed to like, when people were like, 'what are you doing tonight?' I was like, 'I'm going to this meeting thing, for like old activists, and like she wants to interview like old activists, and like talk to new activists and like.' And then people would be like, 'oh you're an activist?' And I'd be like, 'nope.' But I guess maybe, like, I think that article<sup>10</sup> that you gave us about the activists with like beards and bare feet and stuff like that, that was my view of activism without knowing it. So, then for me to think of myself as an activist got me to look at myself differently. Whereas, like, the things I do, the way I dress, or not eating meat and stuff like that makes me, like, a quiet activist. A budding activist. That's like the best way to put it. Cuz like

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<sup>10</sup> Natalie Gerum's chapter *Finding the "I" in Action: Defining Activism to include me* in the book *Cullis-Suzuki, S., Frederickson, K., Kayssi, A., & Mackenzie, C. (Eds.). (2007). Notes from Canada's young activists: A generation stands up for change.* Vancouver: Greystone.

I'm just starting to, like, dip my toe into all these small activist puddles that will eventually lead to or give me an activist lifestyle.

**Karen:** So you could see yourself in the future being kind of like Florence or Chris or?

**Micheala:** I want to! (*laughing*) I want to be those people when I get older, and I think that lately that's what's pushing me to really consider my future and consider the things that I want to do because I want to be like these people. I want to like, I just want to do something that I'm passionate about, and that's really hard for me because I'm passionate about everything. And stoked about everything so yeah, I totally want to be like them because they are just so, they know they are passionate. And they kinda have geared their lives to that and it's giving me just a lot to think about and it's given me just, like, the power to push myself to be an activist, if that makes sense?

**Karen:** mm hmm

**Micheala:** And it's also really opened my eyes to like who I am. Which is like, mildly lazy, to be totally honest, or like even like the first night we were supposed to come out, I was like, I worked all day, I was tired, I was grumpy, and was like there's so many things I should be doing and I should probably just stay home, I shouldn't go, I should just like. And then I was like wait wait wait. And then I came and then I was just like, wow, you were not going to come because you had to do laundry, are you serious? It's just like, I guess inspired me to do things that I don't feel like doing. Like empowered me to maybe, to try new things. I guess that's what it has done.

The above discussion with Micheala suggests that she identified as an activist-in-the-making. The experience of interviewing the activists offered her the opportunity to imagine herself doing things differently than her current norms. Micheala was able to see models of activists doing work in areas that they were passionate about and she expressed wanting this for herself one day.

She struggled with taking on the label of activist but made a concession to call herself a budding activist with the intent of working towards being more active in her future.

Micheala described how she changed her behaviours since developing a relationship with Chris and Florence:

And like, another thing for me is that I'm noticing, like, when people say things that are inappropriate, racially or sexist, or making fun of disabilities, like I don't take part in it. And like, before it was just one of those things that (*fake laughter*), like whatever, so you don't look like the asshole in the group. I've literally gotten to the point where I walk away from people...I'm not going to stand for that, I'm not going to let things like that be said in front of me. Cuz I don't want to be part of that. I think it's so wrong that you could say those things and think it's funny.

Micheala's story suggests she became more confident or perhaps developed the agency to stand up for what she thinks is right or what she is against. The process of interviewing activists may have contributed to her action competence.

On several occasions Micheala mentioned that the radio show process helped her to know who she is. Thinking about the radio show process, she reflected,

Little things like this are just so empowering because it makes me realize, like I said, like I could do anything...Life is what you tell yourself it is, I think. And all these things have just helped me realize so much. I learned so much about life and stuff and actually who I am: Especially who I am.

Here, Micheala recognized some of the ways in which the alternative educational experience of making radio shows had allowed her to consider her own identity as a budding activist.

**Research question 3.** In addition to the youth describing how interviewing the experienced activists has contributed to their sense of identity or community, the youth also



described other aspects of the process as having an effect on them. Below each profile will address the third research question of the study: what other aspects of the process of making a radio show and the place of the radio studio did the youth find as having an effect on their identity or sense of community?

*Alex.* Alex described the best part of the alternative educational experience as:

Meeting all of the people because that's not people I would ever talk to in a regular day-to-day, and getting to meet these people who have the same interests as me and are passionate about the same things. Like, I don't have a lot of friends who are like 'yo, let's kick addictions in the butt.'

Here Alex described how she enjoyed being around people with similar interests as her, because she lacked having regular discussions about issues that she is passionate about. Meeting the other research participants seemed to have contributed to Alex's sense of community: "I found people, like, I don't think I've ever talked to before." In other words, she appreciated being part of a group organized around similar interests.

When asked about the other conditions of the radio studio that she felt supported her, she described Jim, the sound technician and volunteer from Amnesty International:

Most definitely, Jim. Uh, this probably sounds so horrible and I don't mean it offensively but my dad is an intravenous drug user and one of his buddies while I was growing up looks almost exactly like him! That sounds so bad, but I just went in and I was like, 'yaaa!' (*laughter*) It just made me feel happy. And it just, I don't know, made me feel happy and calmer and like a little girl. And the small space was very calming. It wasn't bombarded with things and people.

Alex suggested she was comforted by not only the small, uncluttered space of the radio studio but also because of the characteristics of Jim and how he made her remember an old friend. This

seemed to have contributed to her confidence at the studio. I asked her to elaborate on the physical aspects of the radio studio, and asked about how she would have felt if it was more professional: “I probably would have been like, ‘oh god, I got myself into too much here.’” *(laughter)*. But no, everyone was really laid back and casual.” She went on to describe the features of the radio studio setting that she remembered:

When I first went there it kind of wasn't what I was expecting. But it was cool. It was smaller, which I liked. I was thinking I was going into, like, I don't know, like a regular radio station that like everyone listens to, and I was very intimidated thinking it was going to be some big production. But, then I was like oh this is OK, this is just like a little room that everyone fits in and then, like, a little hall thing. And it was cool, it was better.

She was nervous by the idea of being live on the radio, but when she got to the actual experience, she felt like she could handle it because it was smaller scale and more casual than she had imagined. The physical space, in addition to Jim, contributed to it being a successful experience for her.

Alex explained that the setting of the media training workshop that involved all of the activists, the other youth participants, and the journalist contributed to her sense of community:

It was more like the community. Like, I could tell that there was people there that shared the same interests as me and just wanted to help out and be genuinely good people. And I really liked that and it felt really, not necessarily intimate, but very close and there was just that happy-go-lucky feeling between all of us which I really liked.

Being around the others and working on a collective project seemed to encourage Alex to “want to help out.”

The next excerpt from Alex shows how being involved in the act of creating a radio show and having her voice heard was an empowering experience that made her feel good about who

she is: "I did feel good about myself. It was fun to do and it was a new experience. Like who goes on the radio? Like I've been on what, like 4 times now! Like that's so fun! Who else does that?" Alex's identity seemed to be influenced by how she felt as a result of creating the radio show. She was proud that she was on the radio several times in her life so far (because of the Social Justice program and this research experience). When I asked if she thought she was good at making radio shows she said, "I think I was alright. I mean we were successful in doing it but I definitely think I have things to learn and different questions, and I could tweak things to be better, but I think I did alright." Here Alex allowed herself to experience pride while recognizing there was room for growth. For Alex, the process of creating radio shows was one that seemed to have affected her sense of community and her sense of pride in herself.

**Kennedy.** Besides interviewing the activists, Kennedy's sense of identity and community was affected by other aspects of the experience. She described her favourite part about the alternative education process of learning to create radio shows as "the discussions that we had. Like, I don't get that with other people that I'm around." This may indicate a contribution to her sense of community from being around people she can discuss current issues with.

She also described the physical setting of the radio studio and how that played into her experience. She said it was more low-key than what she imagined:

I envisioned more like, stainless steel or something more kinda like that and it was like an old creepy building (*laughter*). Like, I don't want to use the elevator (*laughter*). But I don't know. I didn't think it was all going to be in the same room, like I thought [Jim] would be like in his own place or we would be...something that you see on TV or something like that.

She went on to express how the more community feel of the radio station made her feel:

It's more comfortable to be like that, rather than if I was in a little cubicle and I couldn't

see Micheala or something like that. That would have been like, panicky...you could feel like you're actually talking to the person. If I was, like, just talking in the microphone I'd feel really dull or unengaged or something. But when you are directing the questions to somebody that you are looking at, it's like more conversational.

The above suggests that Kennedy liked the interaction with Micheala and her guests; it made her feel more comfortable knowing that she could look at them for support. The physical proximity with others during the radio show contributed to her feeling confident as an interviewer.

In terms of Kennedy's identity or change of thinking, I asked her if the research project made her think differently about who she thought she could be in the future:

**Kennedy:** Ya I think so. You know like you never stop growing and stuff. I don't know.

**Karen:** Or did you have those feelings before and maybe this just helped solidify those?

**Kennedy:** Ya, maybe more that.

She suggested that participating in the experience helped her grow. Kennedy gave an example of her growth in relation to her learning about media when she was asked if she thought she would listen to more radio in the future or think about it differently:

Yeah, probably, cuz I already kinda do. I always kinda wondered, like before the radio show or something, like how did they know what to say after someone says something like that, when they are doing, like, an interview. I always thought that they were just, like, live and no pre-anything. And I'd be like, wow they are so good! I wouldn't know what to say...But now I know that they, like, do it before and they kind of know what to expect.

Here she explained how the media training workshop with the journalist, who led them through doing pre-interviews of the activists, influenced her thoughts about radio. Kennedy's identity seemed to be impacted by the physical surrounding of the radio studio including being physically

close to the others involved in the radio show. She also suggested that having the opportunity to be around others who liked to discuss ideas relating to social and ecological justice contributed to her sense of community.

*Amanda.* Throughout Amanda's interview she discussed other aspects of the research project that influenced her sense of identity and community. She described the physical space of the radio studio and how that influenced her. She imagined the radio studio to be different than what it was, but suggested the small, community space added to her comfort:

I really liked the feel in there. It wasn't like a big studio right? It was just a tiny room. How did it feel? It was definitely a community feel. It was nice...I was expecting like a bigger room with like individual microphones and for some reason I had all black in my mind but it was definitely nice. It had a more community radio feel. I guess I was imagining like an actual radio program in my mind for some reason.

Amanda, because of the informal and community-feel of the radio studio, felt like it was not "an actual radio program" and this seemed to help her feel better supported. Another support during the process that made her comfortable during the experience was the interaction she had with Alex, who she met for the first time during the research study. Amanda explained working with Alex: "oh, she was super nice, I really liked her. She could kinda tell that I was nervous so she took most of the lead. It was just difficult getting talking done without talking during the show." Amanda explained how it was difficult for Alex and her to communicate during the live radio show resulting in Alex taking a leadership role. Amanda interpreted this as Alex supporting her to be successful.

Being live on the radio gave Amanda a confidence boost. I asked how she felt after it was done and she responded, "I'd say proud. It was a fun experience for sure. I could be like, yay I was on the radio." Another attributing factor affecting Amanda's pride was knowing that her

parents were listening to her: “the call I got when I had to go [at the end of the show], that was my parents. They were like ‘oh my god this is so cool’ and I'm like ‘thank you.’ Yeah, they really enjoyed it.” Amanda was the only youth participant who described her parents as very supportive of her ideas and actions.

Although Amanda does not consider herself to be an activist, she did use the opportunity to have her voice heard in a public space. At the beginning of the show she was co-hosting, she expressed her disappointment in the Trek School program being cut by the school division by saying “Trek school WAS a program.” This action could be considered an example of her budding activism and perhaps contributed to her sense of identity. Below is an excerpt from the interview that expressed her satisfaction with herself for publicly making this political statement:

**Amanda:** Did you catch that little *was* comment I made about Trek School?

**Karen:** Yeah, I loved that!

**Amanda:** I felt like I had to put it in. (*laughter*)

**Karen:** Waaaas

**Amanda:** Waaaas a program (*laughter*). I had to do that.

Amanda saw the opportunity to be political, and took it. It is hard to say why she took this opportunity: was the setting of the radio studio supportive, or did she feel like she was part of an activist community in that moment, or did she just need to vent her disappointment? Whatever it was that inspired her to take action, the radio program offered her the space to do so. She may not have had a similar opportunity without the research project experience.

I asked Amanda if she developed new ideas as a result of participating in the project. She explained:

They are things I had thought about before but they definitely made me think more into them. Like, how am I when I'm with this group of people versus this group of people?

What changes? Why does that change? Like, I'm definitely different around, say, my grandparents than I am my best friend.

In short, Amanda's thoughts changed in the sense that she thought more deeply about how her identity is influenced when she is around different people and in different settings. She perhaps became more aware of her different selves that she expresses in different locations. Amanda did not develop brand new thoughts, but her thinking did change by getting deeper.

*Micheala.* Micheala's sense of identity and community seemed to be affected by the activities of the research project. To begin with, she felt good about the opportunity to have her friends witness her being successful:

It was really great. It was great for me to know that, like, my family and friends were listening. Like, it was such a, I just felt so empowered by my friends and family, which is like, normally you feel like that when you graduate or when you've got something like big going on. But it was nice to do something, like, not school orientated, that wasn't just about me. It was, like, bigger than me. But to have that support was really cool.

While feeling good about having the support of her friends and family, she simultaneously felt proud that she was contributing to something that was bigger than her. Micheala compared hosting the radio show to an event such as a school graduation and thought it was "nice" to have her family and friends recognize her success in something outside of the formal school setting.

Micheala also described the physical space of the radio studio as possibly supporting her throughout the process:

The space itself was...I'm always going to remember it. It's, it was like an old school radio. It wasn't what I was expecting at all actually. I expected it to be like shiny and sleek. But I mean, like, the chairs were creaky and it had like that old library smell and the radio, and even like the microphones, they were like what you expected to be in, like, movies. It was

really cool. It wasn't what I expected at all...I think all of that added to it because then it was like, I don't know. It was like hippie. It was like a hippie radio setting, ya know? It wasn't like sleek and shiny and business-men. That's what I think about when I think of the Wolf [radio station] with all their sleek stuff. That's what I first expected too, so...It definitely added to the experience that it wasn't brand new and sleek, and that it had like the hippie vibe.

Micheala found the setting to be more comfortable because it was not formal and brand new, but more community oriented or "hippie vibe." The physical setting seemed to have contributed to her sense of community. Micheala also felt relaxed due to the appearance of Jim, the sound technician: "he's just like this tiny little man with like outrageous hair...and I think the funniest part is like how great he sounds. Like he has such a great radio voice and then like he's all like smooth and calm." In addition to the physical setting of the radio studio, having Jim there with a non-intimidating presence may have contributed to Micheala feeling capable of hosting a successful show.

The timing of the research process contributed to Micheala's identity more than anything else. Micheala said, "I think that, like, everything happens for a reason whether it's bad like smashing my car or whether it's good. I think that everything happens for a reason and it happens when it needs to." She described herself as being in a lull without even knowing it:

Just working for money and not really worried about, literally not worried about anything else except going to work. And then like you emailed me and I was just like, I kinda just stepped back and like 'who are you right now?' like 'this is not you.'

Micheala described a personal falling out from being aware of social and ecological justice issues and current events since having left Trek School three years prior. She said she was not doing anything to contribute to a better world and was not even reading articles or books to stay



informed. She described a change within herself:

Since we started doing this my boyfriend thinks I'm nuts. Now, I'm just like wild, but he's totally good about it. But I'm just like spending more time outside, I switched jobs, um, and I'm almost like grumpier at work and people just drive me crazy because they are just so awful... And, so ya, I think I was definitely in a lull and I think that after being with these people who've done, like, amazing things with their lives just has me questioning what can I do with my life?... I know I can do something crazy, like I know I can, I just have to push myself to do it, and this is like that push that I needed... so, this experience was what I needed. And it came right when I needed it.

Moreover, the timing of the experience was influential to Micheala's changing identity. It gave Micheala the boost that she needed to remember different traits of herself that she had let fade out, perhaps due to the dominant cultural influences around her. Since leaving school and supporting herself, Micheala described spending all of her time working for money without considering the greater issues in the community beyond her. She explained that hearing about the personal stories of the experienced activists' lives "really like pushes me to want more for my life. Like, I don't want to just stay in Regina." The timing of the research study and where Micheala was in her life made the experience quite powerful for her.

When I asked Micheala about the best part of the experience, I was surprised to find out that it was "walking to [her] car." Walking to her car seemed to give Micheala a reflective space to imagine herself in new ways:

My brain is like just going a million miles a minute and I'm thinking about all of these things I want to do and I feel so refreshed. I feel so powerful, so refreshed, so just, amazing. I just feel so good after having sit down with these people and hearing their life stories, and have them tell me you can do what you want. And then having the power to tell other

people about this, like on the radio. Definitely, just walking to my car has been my favourite. Cuz I'm just so full of everything we've just talked about, and I'm like brimming. Micheala used the experience of walking to her car to imagine possibilities for her future and to reflect upon what she learned. She further explained, "it's just everything feels good and feels ok and I feel so content with what I am, and what I want to be and what I have and what I want to have." This quote suggests that Micheala felt more comfortable with certain parts of her identity since participating in the research project experience.

Micheala made goals for herself after going through the experience and the goals reflect many of the concepts brought up by the activists and in the resources that were provided at the first meeting:

I want to challenge myself to not have a bad mind set about people: to not have stereotypes about people, to stand up for people who feel like they can't stand up for themselves. Because I am like, clearly in a position of power. I am, like, I am a respectable looking person. I'm white, and I'm a woman. I can do whatever I want. And like, people will listen to me. Even if they don't respect what I'm saying, people will listen to me. And I know that it will stick. And it's totally because of the privilege that I have. For sure!

The above shows that while Micheala is trying to articulate the goals that she has for herself to continue her activism, she ends up reflecting on the learning that she has done within herself about her privileges. She wants to try to use her unearned power for the better. Micheala's identity and sense of community seemed to be influenced by validation from her friends, the timing, and learning from the resources provided to her.

**Research question 4.** The youth participants' answers to the final research question will be examined next. The question asked: what steps, if any, do the youth participants plan to take to maintain their activist identities and communities beyond the current study?

*Alex.* I asked Alex about who she had to help her stay informed on issues. She described her support network for talking about issues relating to social and ecological justice as including her best friend and her addictions counsellor:

I mean my best friend always has to listen to my annoying little rants...you know, I mean, I can kind of talk to my addictions counsellor about certain things just because they make me so angry. And I go to a group every Wednesday night for youth that have addictions touch their life, whether that be personal or people around them and I always try to discuss things like that but it never really happens cuz all the other kids are quiet and they just don't give a crap. But I always put my little two cents in, my counsellor will say one thing and we'll kinda have our little debate.

Beyond her best friend, she explained having no other group of friends to engage in discussion with.

Alex described wanting to work towards living an activist lifestyle: "I'd totally love to do it: I love learning and just helping people. That's what I want to do with my life, but I guess I just don't know the people or the resources to do that." She explained that she could imagine taking up activism in her future, but made no commitments to working on social and ecological justice issues in the present:

I think it will be easier once I get to university because, like, everything is kinda in your face. Cuz, like, I don't know how to do any of this right now. Where am I going to go? Sit downtown and wait for someone to approach me? Like, I don't know. But in university they have more people that are interested in that.

For Alex, she will wait until getting to university before she takes on an activist identity.

Alex explained that she felt as if she had a good handle on some of the issues facing society but that she could do more research:

Like I mean I could be doing more research and, you know, like in my spare time and learning more about it. But I think that the major points I understand. And I understand the emotional aspects of the issues rather than just like, these are the statistics. I understand what the people went through. Like I might not have been there myself but I understand their pain and I just listen to them.

Alex expressed having empathy as a possible way for her to stay engaged; she understands the emotional aspects of the social justice issues she cares about. She made a commitment to receive the Peace Vigil newsletter: “I think I'm definitely going to get Florence's email. That sounds interesting to be part of the community and to understand what's going on and not being blind-eyed and so caught up in my own life that I forget about everything else.” Here, Alex described her desire to stay informed about issues and to try and understand current events.

Even though Alex wanted to be involved and expressed a desire to learn more, she explained:

But I don't ever see addiction and injustice being completely squashed because that is not the world we live in. We have to [be] realistic. It's not going to be rainbows and smiles.

But you can take steps...and then soon we are going to have an alright world.

Alex took a pragmatic view of activism. She understood it to be important to fight for change, but did not see the world as ever being free of all addictions and injustice. Her activism may flourish in a couple of years when she gets to university and finds more of a community.

**Kennedy.** Kennedy frequently described not feeling supported to have alternative views from her parents. With this in mind I asked if she had a group of friends with whom she could talk about social and ecological justice issues, and she responded, “No. Like Micheala. That's, like, it right now.” Kennedy's social grouping did not involve relationships with others that are interested in thinking about or taking action on issues relating to social and ecological justice. I

asked her if she thought she may remain in contact with some of the other research participants, and she explained that she and Chris were now Facebook friends, and she planned to stay in touch that way. Kennedy also asked if she could be added to the Peace Vigil mailing list to keep in touch with Florence.

When asking Kennedy about the kinds of issues she could see herself working on in the future, she sighed, “I dunno. I think it would kinda depend on, like, where I'm at or, like, if something was happening and then I was like no or yes. And then I might jump in and do something.” She made a vague commitment to being involved but only if something had a direct impact on her:

It sounds kinda bad, but like you don't really do something until it's happening to you and I hate that but it's true, ya know? And so if something happened that really psyched me; like once I am a psych nurse, I'm going to have all of these personal relationships with like at-risk people. So, maybe something that they are dealing with.

Presently, Kennedy is focused on her post-secondary education training to become a psychiatric nurse. She mentioned several times throughout the interview about how overwhelming the course work was, and that she currently did not have time to spend working on issues. The above quote shows that she is willing to take action on something when an issue impacts her life, but otherwise, she sees her active citizenship beginning when her career begins because she will have more personal relationships with those affected by injustices.

*Amanda.* Amanda was asked to be a participant in the study because when she was in Trek School she planned a rally about HIV in downtown Regina and got her friends to hand out hundreds of condoms to create a spectacle. I wanted to find out what happened with her activism since her participation in Trek School. The below dialogue between Amanda and myself explains how her focus shifted upon leaving the Trek School program and re-entering a traditional school

setting for grade 12:

**Karen:** You were interested in things in Trek School and, you know, you organized a rally, which is pretty huge for someone your age. You were like 17 or 16 when that happened.

**Amanda:** I was 16, ya.

**Karen:** So you were pretty young for doing that, and then what happened in grade 12, did you stay interested in issues, or?

**Amanda:** Well, I got my job and I just have been workin' non-stop.

The above shows how Amanda's focus shifted from taking action on issues that were important to her, to working at her job in all of her spare time. Although working changed her involvement in organizing events and taking action, she explained how her job does keep her engaged in current events because of the intergenerational interactions with her "regulars." She further explained this point when I asked her about people she felt she could talk to about issues in the world:

To be honest, I do a lot at work. At my restaurant job, a lot of that comes up when I talk to my regulars. Like, I have nothing to do so I sit with them and we talk and we can end up anywhere.

Amanda's work is a place where she can talk about current events in a multi-generational setting.

I asked Amanda if she had plans to stay involved with issues relating to social and ecological justice beyond the study. She paused and said,

Possibly; like, I think I have to see where the world takes me. I'm way too young to that.

So, I'll see where it takes me. I'd like to be more involved and do something about it, but

I remember I took one of those career aptitude tests in like grade 8, and my first one, my top two was like a politician, and my second one was an activist.

Amanda will not commit to being involved in issues in her immediate or distant future. She wants

to see where life takes her, although she keeps activism open as a possibility. She mentioned activism as being part of a career path. She further explained,

I think I'll probably maintain the same level of interest just, I'm not too sure. If there is, like, something going on on campus, like a rally going on about something I believe in, I'll definitely participate in any way I can.

It is as if Amanda feels safer not to make promises for her future, but instead to let it emerge naturally. Admittedly though, Amanda describes her current free time as “working, and school and that is where the majority of my time is spent, working.”

Amanda's imaginings for her future involve completing a doctorate in psychology (Fieldnotes, August 20, 2013). She is currently enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts program in psychology. This may suggest that Amanda has agency to see herself accomplishing at least 3 degrees to get a PhD in psychology. Her future is focused on her career.

*Micheala.* Micheala described not having a group of friends that she could talk to about social and ecological justice issues. She explained that she had Kennedy to confide in:

She's my, I can, literally, literally talk to her about anything...and she's like on board with me the whole time. So Kennedy is totally one of my biggest inspirations. She is amazing. I think she's so great...and she's like made a huge difference in my life. My confidence definitely went up meeting her. She's really impacted my life.

Kennedy and Micheala met during their semester in Trek School and have remained friends in the three years since. Micheala mentioned that if it was not for Trek School she most likely would not have found a friendship in Kennedy because they have different social groupings and came from different schools. Having the common ground of enjoying the outdoors helped to build their relationship: “walking into that room took away all social stuff.”

In addition to having Kennedy as a support person for her to stay engaged, Micheala

explained that she plans to keep reading the Prairie Dog, a local alternative newspaper, in order to keep up-to-date on local issues of concern. She also asked to be added to Florence's Peace Vigil email list. Micheala learned from Florence that when she gets a gut feeling that something is wrong, that she should research it to understand the facts. She thinks Florence's email will be a good starting place:

It opened my eyes because I can be passionate about things, but I should also know why I'm passionate about them...And another thing is just recognizing the things that I think is wrong, and being aware that those things are wrong, and finding out why I think they are wrong.

The research process seemed to give Micheala motivation to value the reasons behind the ideas that she had rather than just acting on impulses. She summarized her future supports as:

I think it will be, you, Kennedy, self-motivation, um, anger, and art. God, I love art. And the thing is, like, I love it...And I let a lot of things slip after high school, and have fallen into this person that sometimes I'm not happy about.

Micheala sees me as being a support for her to stay informed and inspired in the future, as well as her own self-motivation and her relationship with Kennedy. She recognized that her identity shifted since leaving Trek School but that there is potential for it to shift again. Micheala discussed several options for a future career including forestry or international development, although at the end of the radio show that she hosted, she expressed wanting to go into journalism.

**Mini-study 2 conclusions.** The above profiles about each youth attempt to address research questions 2, 3, and 4. The youth participants did suggest that the research study and all of the various actions that made up the alternative educational experience of creating radio shows by interviewing experienced activists contributed, in various ways and to different extents, to



their own identities and sense of community as future activists.

The process of interviewing the activists seemed to have had an influence on each of the youth participants by exposing them to new ideas and different perspectives. Alex, Amanda, Kennedy, and Micheala all mentioned that hearing the activists tell their stories allowed them to think deeper about issues and contributed to them coming up with their own opinions. However, even after the study, none of the youth participants currently defined themselves as an activist although all expressed a desire to stay involved with current issues in their futures (i.e., They all wanted to be put on Florence's mailing list). Alex and Micheala both labelled themselves "budding activists" by the end of the study. Amanda and Kennedy explained that they could see themselves active if something came up that affected them but were otherwise too busy with university and working their jobs. Alex explained she did not have the friend grouping to support her so she would become active in university, which may be several years down the road. Micheala was the only one who made goals for her immediate future to be more active. The youth were not apathetic about issues but demonstrated being influenced by the dominant traces in Western society, evidenced by their explanations of not seeing themselves as agents for change yet because they were too busy with their immediate goals of working to support their university careers.

Other aspects that influenced the youths' identities include: the discussions had about issues and the sense of community fostered as a result: the community-minded setting of the radio studio, including the welcoming presence of the sound technician: getting validation from friends and family: feeling a personal sense of pride: and the timing of the experience. It was suggested that the youth participants got more out of the experience than just hearing what the activists said: they also felt an embodied connection to the others in the group such as Amanda's description of the group connecting over a song or Alex's sense of community felt during the

media workshop.

### **Mini-Study 3: Self-Study**

The current study is an action research project with the ultimate goal of creating practical knowledge. One of the aims of the study was to contribute to broader and enhanced understandings in practice and research of the role of place in maintaining activist identities and communities (mini-study 1). From this knowledge, and from learning from the interviews with youth reflecting on the process of creating radio (mini-study 2), I have participated in an iterative cycle of action that aligns with McNiff and Whitehead's (2010) ideas of action research, "showing that [I am] acting in a systematic way, not ad hoc, and that [I am] developing praxis, which is morally committed practice" (p. 23). In other words, my learning throughout the process has culminated into a living theory of education for social and ecological justice and has made me feel confident to say that I have a better understanding of what I am doing as an educator and why I am doing it. By focusing on my learning I have come to understand youth education differently and I will offer a brief summary of each area of my own learning below, using my own reflexivity as a way to present it.

**Existing practices in schools.** My suspicions about current practices in traditional Western educational settings experienced by the youth participants in the study were confirmed by evidence drawn out of the interview transcripts. I learned, for example, that none of the youth participants could remember a teacher in high school who discussed environmental issues or even mentioned the words "climate change." Amanda said, "other than Trek School? Not overly, not that I can think of. If it was, it was probably just like a passing remark in two seconds. Nothing really stands out." Kennedy added with a similar memory,

We never learned anything about current events, like, at all. It was always stuff that happened forever ago like the Holocaust. And not that that stuff isn't important, but it was

just like we learned nothing that was happening right now...I remember in elementary school, like not that I really remember that much but we had the black history month or whatever.

Amanda and Kennedy both did not remember learning about current events and both noted a lack of attention towards environmental issues. To me, this suggests a gap in current practices and curricula, if my end result as an educator is for a justice-oriented citizen capable of addressing political issues.

Beyond the curricular outcomes of schooling, Micheala described the reasons why she struggled with school after leaving the Trek School program. She said that traditional school is “more stressful because you have so much stress to meet the teachers’ goals...like you know in chemistry, the teacher’s goal is for you to do really well on the test. And like, I don’t care, so then I just memorized it without actually like taking it in.” She explained that participating in the alternative educational experience of creating radio was different because she was meeting her own goals: “that’s what I liked about this learning experience was that, like, I mean, your expectation was for us just, just learn. Just go, you really had none and I think that’s what made it so powerful.” In other words, Micheala did not seem to have teachers who took up empowering inquiry-based learning approaches to meet curricula outcomes, but rather, taught in more traditional ways of rote memorization with the end goal to get good grades on the test.

The chemistry class was also more stressful for Micheala because rules were imposed on her that she did not agree with, such as not being able to wear a hat in school and having to ask permission to use the washroom:

I was 18 and I had to sit in a certain spot? Are you kidding me? I wasn’t allowed to wear a toque? It was outrageous...It stressed me out. I literally probably cried, like, twice a week...I lost participation points for going to the washroom. I had to, like, do all this work

because we *had* to go through it and maybe that's just her style of teaching, but she does not respect my style of living!

The above explains how Micheala did not feel respected in traditional classroom settings but did in the Trek School classroom, as well as the space created in the current research project. She went so far as to say she felt "afraid" in one of her classes in her grade 12 year: "It's so weird how someone can make you feel so uncomfortable with who you are. And I was so afraid. Like, literally, I would sit there and I was like afraid to breathe." Micheala not only felt disrespected for not being able to wear a toque or for being forced to sit in a seating arrangement, but she felt like she could not be herself and express her own identity. She said the school "makes me angry" because "the atmosphere is very controlling and very structured." She explained that if school

had this atmosphere where everybody's like wear what you want, be who you want to be, this is our main goal, this is what you should have – in two weeks, this is what we want you to accomplish, go for it. I think if we all went through school like that we would all be a lot calmer...I think we would accomplish a lot more.

In the above quote, Micheala expressed interesting suggestions for structuring learning in a more empowering and respectful way that would allow students to feel less stress about school.

Similarly, Kennedy talked about feeling uncomfortable in her chemistry class in her high school because her teacher did not develop a relationship of any kind with the students:

He wouldn't talk to you. You'd walk into the classroom and he wouldn't look at you. He'd have on the board 'read chapter blah blah blah, answer questions doo doo doo' and he wouldn't talk to you. He never taught you anything! You, like, self-taught your whole chemistry class. He just never talked...like he wouldn't know that I had a sister.

Kennedy felt challenged to be in a learning environment without any personal interaction with her teacher. She described this as much different from her Trek School learning experience.

Alex experienced her teachers and guidance counsellors telling her that she would not be a good candidate for university because of her low marks and her poor attendance. She said that she had teachers “write her off” before she even started a class, which was different than what she experienced taking the Social Justice course that I co-taught. In a similar way, Kennedy felt pre-judged about who she was when she was in grade 9. She felt like the teachers in the school had “this preconceived notion that every grade 9 student was an idiot and nobody cared about school, all we wanted to do is go out and party and we're not willing or capable of learning.” This judgment, made her feel like she should try less and act the way that her teachers expected her to act. She left the school after one year because she felt like every grade 9 teacher treated her like “an idiot.”

Although each of the youth expressed negative experiences, the youth participants described a couple of experiences that were positive for them in the current traditional educational settings. For example, Amanda had a teacher who taught a unit about white privilege and gave her a quiz based on a Peggy McIntosh article listing the privileges that one gets from having white skin. Amanda enjoyed observing the social implications it had on her class:

She did that and it was very interesting to see how my class reacted to that, how my teacher reacted to that, how I reacted to that. Yeah, it was interesting cuz that's never touched, right, in high school? It's never touched. So it was interesting to get a perspective of that.

Micheala had an art teacher who engaged her to focus a project on “Aboriginal and white and just the, like, different, like, almost power struggle between them.” She was able to do research and look at artwork in relation to whiteness and historical events contributing to the imbalance of power. She noticed that her only teacher in the regular school setting who got her to engage in critical projects was her art teacher, from a non-dominant cultural group. Micheala said her art

teacher also gave her autonomy and did not give her bad marks for handing in a project late. In fact her art teacher, who she described as Métis, kept one of her projects, which made Micheala feel proud. This teacher had a positive impact on her: “It was a great space, and even the teacher was so like, this is YOUR space to learn, this is our goal, make me something beautiful. So art was totally my safe haven after Trek School.”

Although the youth had negative experiences in traditional educational settings, if they had developed positive, trusting, and personal relationships with either a group of people or an educator, they felt like they could be themselves. When parts of their identities and their own goals for learning were denied or disrespected, they felt that it was difficult to learn. The characteristics of the school place, and the relationality involved in the youth’s school experiences seemed to have a big influence on who they were and what they learned. From hearing about this, I learned that it is important for me to work on everyday practices in my classroom setting to build cooperative, respectful relationships that can help leave students feeling more empowered than when they came. I also intend to design future teaching not only around, historical events, but current issues with opportunities for action.

**Places and youth identity.** I learned that the physical place has a big impact on youth and who they enact themselves to be. Amanda talked to me about how her job working at a rehabilitation centre made her really value her health, because each week she entered into a place where being able-bodied is not the norm. She said she was not conscious of that before beginning at her place of work. She also told me she finds herself acting differently around her friends or family outside of a school setting than when she is in the school setting. Therefore, by teaching in community and wilderness settings such as in the Trek School program, students can perhaps develop an awareness of different subjectivities available to them. As Micheala notes, “Trek School gave me the ability to like, adapt to like, know who I am, and ya, just adapt to the

different surroundings around me.”

Alex described changing her personality based on who or where she is. She described manoeuvring herself into her environment to try to fit in and please those around her:

At school, in class, I’m one thing; outside of class I’m another. At work I’m one thing, you know, like, outside of work I’m another. At home I’m completely different, depending on which home I’m at. Like at my mom’s I’m completely different then I am at my dad’s. She described acting more responsible at her dad’s and more her own age at her mom’s. She also talked about a change in her mood based on a certain smell or memory of something that happened in each place. Alex reflected in a global context as well, “I wouldn’t be who I am if I didn’t live in Regina, like, if I lived in Toronto or Africa or something, like who knows. It’s all who you are, your climate; all of these things explain who you are.” I learned about the importance of introducing youth to the concept of multiple identities and to let them know it is normal to be different in different places.

Micheala was specifically influenced by the senses involved in the place of learning:

For me, what inspires me is the atmosphere, and when I think back to those places, when I think back to Trek School I can think of like the school, and I can remember, like, the smell of the coffee. I remember even the smell of the classroom. It was all musty and smelled like old maps...and that isn't just the people. So, maybe things like that influenced me.

It was more than the human aspects of the Trek School setting that influenced Micheala, but the smells influenced her as well. Micheala then related this to the research process and when we met as a whole group in Larry’s office:

Even when I think back to Larry's office, being there, I can remember the cookies, the ginger cookies, and I can remember just the atmosphere that we created was so positive

and so...I feel like I keep using the word empowering, but it was, it really was...I find that the atmosphere creates the place. And so for me it's more like, the people who were around, the mindset that I put myself in.

I recognized that as an educator I can foster some of the positive conditions that were memorable for Micheala. To take her ideas further, Micheala reflected on the role of nature in creating a personal sense of calm:

This weekend I was standing on my deck and just looking at the lake, and thinking about all of the people at the lake, listening to all of the birds, and I just feel this sense of calm. This sense of like, I have a really hard time relaxing. I'm always thinking about what's next, what's next, what's next. But like for me, being outside is like the one place that I can just like, I don't care what's next. Even being out on the canoe, just thinking about the water, just thinking about my canoe, and feeling my own body push me through water, that's empowering. So, I think, to me, the most empowering places that are physical places, for me, is outside.

It seems as if Micheala is referring to a different sense of time that is created from being outdoors and suggests this is a contributing factor to the way places influence her identity. This sense of time was also mentioned by Kennedy and Amanda throughout their reflections on the way interacting with the land affected them. Kennedy discussed thinking about sense of time when thinking back to a canoe trip:

I just kind of remember when we were up north on the Churchill [river] and we were sitting around...Leisha said, 'well it's supper time but I'm not hungry' and you were like, 'well when you aren't stuck to the schedule you do things when you are ready to do them and not just because oh it's noon I need to eat now.' And I always think about that.

Amanda also spoke about the Churchill River canoe trip and the different experience of time:



“not having to worry about your hair being okay, or work, or have to go somewhere, just know that you have nothing to do. That’s nice.” The senses engaged in different places, including the sense of time, influenced the youth participants and the way they felt about learning, which has implications for the way I can plan experiential learning in the future.

**Fostering collective spaces for agency.** Since leaving the Trek School program, both Micheala and Amanda talked about not going camping even once. They had made plans to go with friends but they all fell through. Micheala explained that being part of a “community of weirdos” was one characteristic that she missed from her participation in Trek School: “that was what was so powerful about Trek School too is that we were all working so closely and were so dependent on each other rather than just being dependent on you and [the other teacher].” She went on to explain how difficult it was leaving that collective space where she was working closely with her peers to go back into a traditional classroom setting:

And I miss it sooo much. I miss it every day. And it’s been three years. And I still miss it, every day. And then it was, like, it was almost nerve wracking to go back to regular high school to, like, put myself back into a regular classroom.

To me this shows the anxiety carried within youth from transitioning from an integrated, experiential program and back into a traditional classroom setting, and the need to help foster a sense of collective beyond the program.

This taught me that I cannot teach a program for five months and expect it will change every student’s life permanently. I must try to extend the experience for students by fostering a collective space for youth to come together beyond the programs that I teach. This space could, in addition to helping the students’ transition, possibly support the development of a youth subculture committed to social and ecological justice. I could do this by introducing after school youth groups or clubs that could be offered for students leaving experiential programs committed

to social and ecological justice. For example, it could take the form of a once-a-month outdoor club or youth radio program where the youth involved in integrated programming could come together to focus on issues of social and environmental justice while participating in an outdoor or community-based experience. Additionally, I could make students aware of other clubs, events, and groups that they could join after leaving the program such as programs like Next Up, Generating Momentum, Sierra Youth Coalition, school-based peer support groups, outdoor clubs, student-led governance boards like Public Interest Research Groups or the Students Unions at university or college. It is essential for me to talk to my students about the importance of maintaining a group of like-minded people as a way to help their transition back into regular school or into their next endeavour. I had not done an adequate job of this in the past and this may have contributed to the youth participants' descriptions of feeling like they did not have a support network to discuss social and ecological issues.

**Intergenerational mentoring.** In addition to youth participants having a community of like-minded individuals to support them beyond the programs that I teach, I learned about how important and powerful it was for youth to be linked so closely with the experienced activists and for them to have the opportunity to build a relationship and to learn from them. The four youth participants described in various ways that they “don't have the tools to cope” (Micheala) with many issues that came up in their lives. Even though the youth participants only interacted with the experienced activists twice (once during the media training and once on the radio), they suggested the interaction with them as significant to their learning.

In addition to this, the experienced activists also described being mentored by people in generations older or younger than them such as Chris' descriptions of attending events with older activists or Florence's descriptions of learning about technology from youth. Intergenerational mentoring is something that I am committed to integrate into my practice as a classroom teacher.

I would like my students to develop personal relationships with older community members so that they can learn from them and have someone that they can approach for advice if they need to.

**Radio as pedagogical tool.** I learned that radio is a good medium for getting youth engaged, involved, and empowered. The Human Rights Radio program enjoyed having youth participate, and the youth themselves enjoyed making the shows. I learned that youth radio could be a way to meet any curriculum guide outcomes while also being empowering for the participants. It can offer a space for youth to take power back from adults and use it, as Micheala said:

I think it is really powerful for kids to do stuff like that...I think to have the power to do something on your own, is just, so amazing...no book is ever going to teach me how to have my own power.

The use of radio offered a space for the youth to feel good about themselves and feel a sense of power in an adult dominated world.

**Slow pedagogy and mindfulness.** The youth described being stressed out with regular school because of the controlling atmosphere, the judgment on them by adults, and the disrespect for their identities. Micheala mentioned on a number of occasions being angry, and how her experiences with Trek School helped her with this:

When I'm like so angry about something, I can be like no, you're not that person. I mean the person I was before I was in Trek School. I was shy, I was self-conscious, I was, I had no idea who I was and I still have no idea about what I want to do, but like it's, I REALLY had no idea what I wanted to do. I mean, I didn't want to go to school at all. And then in Trek school I literally hated Fridays. I HATED Fridays because I had to go two days without the Trek School room.

For Micheala, the Trek School room provided a place where she wanted to go that allowed her to feel less self-conscious and more confident about who she was. She went on to reflect on her Trek School experience: “for me to be in the canoe, it’s so, like, grounding, even though I’m on water but that’s just when I can really, like, breathe.” I learned that my role as an educator needs to be one that focuses on slowing down and letting my students have a chance to “breathe” and feel “grounded.” This was confirmed again when Alex described why she liked being at her mom’s house:

I am more calm, like I can just regroup my thoughts...and I just get to like shut up and listen to myself, hear my thoughts more, reconnect my mind to my mouth I guess. I’m just more calm and more serene and I get to be whatever I’m feeling.

I had the privilege of meeting Philip Payne when he was in the province a few years ago, and he described a practice he was working on to provide this grounding space for his students called slow pedagogy:

Our version of slow pedagogy emphasizes the role of the body(ies) in learning experiences and, therefore, takes seriously the corporeal and intercorporeal turns in philosophy and nature discourses (e.g., Grosz, 2004; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). That is, for any pedagogy claiming responsiveness to the ecologically problematic human condition, there needs to be a shift in emphasis from focusing primarily on the “learning mind” to re-engaging the active, perceiving, and sensuous corporeality of the body with other bodies (human and more-than-human) in making-meaning in, about, and for the various environments and places in which those bodies interact and relate to nature. (Payne, 2009, p. 16)

The practice of slow pedagogy could perhaps contribute to youth feeling calm and connected to themselves. This idea also reminds me of an article I read by Heesoon Bai (2009) where she prompted me to think more about how “the world we create is the outer reflection of our inner

psyche” (p. 148). She calls for an emphasis on mindfulness practices to build a sense of appreciation for oneself and for life: “Mindfulness means the participatory consciousness of receptivity, embodied sensitivity, openness, and fully being present to what is here and now” (p. 148). Students such as Micheala and Alex could benefit from practicing mindfulness to deal with their emotions and to learn how to listen to themselves.

**My own style.** I learned more about the specific parts of my own style of teaching that resonated with the youth participants. For example, they all mentioned enjoying doing projects where I would explain the overall goal but would not tell them how to arrive at that goal. They enjoyed learning in a way where they could structure their own learning and own assignments and felt more empowered as learners when they had choice. They explained learning more about the issues when they played a part in the design of their learning experiences. Micheala described my style of teaching:

you’re just like okay here’s some questions and go for it and then we really had to structure it to our own learning kinda...it was like, ‘ok guys this is our main goal, I don’t care how you accomplish it.’ And I just think it’s so powerful because...you meet the school board objectives but then you actually really remember it. I cannot tell you what I learned in any of my other classes. With Trek School, I can tell you like every single project to a T because I made them, they’re mine.

Micheala explained that she was so impacted by the Trek School program that she talked about it frequently as significant life experience: “I talk about it all the time. I’ll meet someone, and I’ll know them for like 5 minutes, and I’m like, ‘you know one time I did this program, it was unreal. You think I’m weird? You should have seen me then!’” She considers the program to have enhanced a particular identity in her of being “weird,” and now she considers herself to be less weird.

Kennedy also described the way that I taught as influencing her experience in Trek School:

I think that with Trek School you didn't bring in people, but we actually learned and empowered us about stuff that we cared about and like with social studies we did lots of stuff that was happening now, and then it was relevant. And like the other stuff is important but not to only learn that, do you know what I mean? Like, the way we learned in Trek School we got a bit more choice and that's what makes it interesting, then you remember what you learned, you're passionate about it or you care about it or you discuss it.

Kennedy also enjoyed having more choice in her learning, similar to Micheala. However, Kennedy also brought up being impacted more when I brought up current events and issues that made learning relevant to her life. For example, I would get the class to role play exactly what was being said in the House of Commons by using the Hansard documents as scripts for a re-enactment. We followed current political debates in the media. She found this part of my practice influential to her ability to learn and feel empowered.

Alex enjoyed the relationship that my teaching partner and I developed with her, and identified this part of my practice as meaningful to her schooling experience: "like the people we were with were fun, the teachers were fun." Feeling like school was fun, and experiencing a relational component to her learning was a characteristic of traditional school that motivated her. Needing an external motivator became apparent in two instances throughout Amanda's interview and made me think more about the role that a teacher can make in a youth's life as a mentor. This can be seen when I asked Amanda if she would do something like this research project of creating radio shows again:

If I had the opportunity, yeah, sure I will, definitely. But if it was just like I had to go out

and find it, maybe not. But if the opportunity was presented to me and someone asked me to, like you did, then yeah, I probably would again.

Similarly, when I asked her about spending time outdoors she admitted to not having gone camping since the Trek School program, and how that was hard for her. She had planned to go on several occasions but the plans always fell through. This shows me the influence having a teacher or mentor to help with the planning has in a youth's acquiring of outdoor and community-based experiences.

In my current practices, I thus have learned that I should maintain inquiry learning and giving students choice in how they demonstrate they have learned. I should also continue to make learning relevant by discussing current events and issues. Finally, I should focus on developing meaningful relationships with my students that make them feel honoured, and that allow me to be a mentor in their life.

**Modify and Move in New Directions.** Below are the actions that I am currently working on or have taken throughout the research process to contribute to my living theory of education. These actions have been informed by the current research and can be considered modifications of my practice that help me to move in new directions. They contribute to the action cycle I referred to in the Methodology section of Chapter 3.

- I met with administrators to propose a new program working with at-risk youth called “Land Education Program” (LEP). This was approved for the Fall of 2014. I will be the main educator/coordinator of the program, facilitating learning experiences in the community and outdoors, emphasizing Indigenous worldviews by having Indigenous co-leaders.
- I have edited two issues of a new journal called *Of Land & Living Skies: A Community Journal on Place, Land, and Learning*. This contributes to a gap in

literature on the role of place in education.

- I continue to volunteer with the board of the Saskatchewan Outdoor and Environmental Education Association to organize nature retreats, reconciliation canoe trips, conferences, and other experiences for educators and the public.

**Mini-study 3 conclusions.** Throughout the self-study portion of the current research, I was able to address many areas of my practice as an educator and a researcher that attention could be given to in the future. These areas included: existing practices in schools; places and youth identity; fostering collective spaces for agency; intergenerational mentoring; slow pedagogy and mindfulness; radio as a pedagogical tool; and my own style of teaching. With all of the learning that I had from the activists' descriptions of place influencing their identities as well as from the youth participants' descriptions of the radio process impacting their identity, I was able to modify my practice in new and refreshed directions towards social and ecological justice.



## Chapter 5 - Significance of the Research

The opening chapter of this thesis described a variety of social and ecological issues including an increase in species-at-risk, missing and murdered Aboriginal women, the use of water for resource extraction, and some of the ways in which these and other issues intersect. Also examined was how education is positioned as one way to address and respond to these complex issues. The current study was designed to engage youth in order to learn from them, as well as for them to learn about the characteristics of the places that have allowed experienced activists to sustain their activist identities. The intention was that the youth would learn about their own identities as activists from hearing about experienced activists' identities. The research lastly aimed to improve my own practice to contribute to youth action competence in the areas of social and ecological justice and to apply these areas of learning more broadly to educational practices.

Using an action research methodology and drawing from the specific area of Youth Participatory Action Research, the study's framework aimed to engage youth in a critical learning experience of interviewing experienced activists live on a community radio station. The study, while braiding together three mini-studies, developed an approach to educational practices that would utilize the descriptions that experienced activists evoked in allowing them to maintain their activism over a number of years. The result was the development of a "living theory of education" that I argue could be applied to learning experiences committed to social and ecological justice in order to foster spaces that support youth engagement. The main question I had as an educator, prompting the four research questions designed for the current study was, if programs committed to socioecological justice, such as the ones that I have taught in, help to change a young person's ideology, how then do the transformed selves manifest within and outside of the school system? In other words, how do these budding youth activists continue to be

activists beyond the confines of an education program that nurtured their active identity?

Qualitative data were collected to provide answers to the four research questions. Data were gathered through radio interviews, one-on-one interviews, and field journals. Thematic analysis of the collected data provided an answer to the first research question, while the second through fourth research questions were addressed with narrative profiles. Specifically, mini-study 1 addressed how the experienced activists who were interviewed by youth described the role of material places in enabling and supporting their activism, the final product of which is two radio shows that are saved as podcasts. Mini-study 2 addressed how the youth participants perceived the process of interviewing activists on a radio show, as well as other aspects of making radio shows, including the radio studio as having contributed to their own activist identities. It also looked at whether the youth planned to stay active beyond the study. Mini-study 3 invited the reader on my self-reflexive journey as an educator committed to social and ecological justice.

Four themes emerged from the data as characteristics of the role of place in sustaining activist identities including *relationality*, *the act of making place*, *normalizing transgression in everyday life*, and *using power*. The data from the one-on-one interviews indicated that the youth participants changed their ideas and ways of seeing the world by being exposed to ideologies of the activist participants. However, the youth expressed that their immediate goals were not of taking up an activist lifestyle, but working towards their future careers by attending university and saving money from working at their jobs. The findings suggest that although integrated experiential programs focused on social and ecological justice are useful to expose youth to new perspectives and ideas, more needs to be done in the practices of educators to build a culture within the school and greater community that will help activist identities to be sustained.

In order to discuss the findings in practical terms and to address the overall aims of the study, I will weave together the previously discussed findings and themes rather than viewing

them as separate topics. The study's concluding chapter is organized in the following way: a) I integrate the project findings in relation to the literature, b) I discuss implications of the study for both practice and research, c) I discuss limitations of the study, and d) suggest areas for further research.

### **Weaving Together Findings and Theory: A Living Theory of Education**

As previously mentioned in the Methodology section, a living theory is “an explanation produced by an individual for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation in which they live and work” (Whitehead, 2008, p. 104). The living theory approach acknowledges that practicing educators have knowledge and should not consider educational research as the only answer to their desire to change, but should acknowledge their own practices have credibility. As Allender and Allender (2008) point out:

The belief that educational research trumps practice, historically and still, is one of the major obstacles. The results of scholarly inquiry have managed to become the top of a top-down world. The not-so-subtle message is that there is a better known way to teach and teachers ought to change their practices accordingly. And, teachers have a way of willingly participating in this system when they persist in searching for the new trick to quickly and magically make their teaching easier. Progress depends on giving up the hegemony of scholarly inquiry. Knowledge has many sources, and they are best honored when they are used as part of a lively dialectic. The obvious shift is for teachers to give themselves credit for having an expertise that is uniquely valuable to themselves, and others. (p. 127-128)

Therefore, while I am hoping to contribute to the research literature in education, my main priority is to improve practices of activists, of the youth involved in the study, and my own – and that will ultimately contribute to youth development. My awareness of the importance of

improving practice is grounded in my passion to see my values of social and ecological justice lived as fully as possible.

Below I will begin to knit together the four themes that the activists described as traces or characteristics of places contributing to maintaining their activist identities, and how these themes may be useful for organizing educational experiences for youth.

**Relationality.** The experienced activist participants in the study described their relationships to people, the more-than-human world, and to their values and ideologies as a characteristic of the places that supported their activism. For example, Crystal's relationships with the place of Saskatchewan including its history of social change in Medicare, her connection to the land, and the ideas of social democracy, all contributed to her identity as an activist. It was the relationships Florence had with Sierra Leonians for 19 years that taught her progressive politics, inspiring her activism. Chris spoke about his belief, not in individuals, but in the connection or relation between all human and more-than-human parts of place. It is this ideology he identified as biocentrism that keeps him aware of issues and being active to contribute to a better world. Larry's activist identity is influenced by the global movement Idle No More and an Indigenous ideology based on relationality. The types of relationships described by the activists aligned with Wilson's (2008) descriptions of relationality. Wilson, in his book *Research as Ceremony*, describes relationality in four categories: relations with people, relations with the environment/land, relations with the cosmos, and relations with ideas. Wilson says, "shared relationships allow for a strengthening of the new relationship" (p. 84).

Similar to the activist descriptions of relationality, the youth participants Alex, Amanda, Micheala, and Kennedy described that a characteristic missing in their traditional educational experiences was strong relationships with their teachers and their classmates. An exception to this was experiencing positive relationships in the integrated programs that they were a part of (i.e.,

Trek School and Social Justice). Kennedy described having a chemistry teacher who did not form relationships with his students. This impacted her ability to learn and feel supported at school. Alex described having impersonal relationships with her guidance counsellor and teachers who wrote her off before she even started their classes due to past documentation of low grades and low attendance. They made her believe she would not be successful in university. What the youth enjoyed about Trek School and Social Justice was the way they could relate to and depend on others, whether it be their peers or teachers. Kennedy, Micheala, and Amanda also described being influenced by having the chance to relate to physical places while participating in Trek School and how it allowed them to feel grounded and calm. Connecting to wilderness settings through camping and canoeing were key in the positive descriptions of learning the youth shared.

Literature within the field of education and more specifically critical and ecological education, describes the many discouraging ties and cultural norms within schools that have an influence on a youth's identity (Bowers, 2001b). Traditional school settings tend to have "root metaphors" or cultural norms of individualism (Bowers, 2001b; McKenzie, 2006), neoliberalism (Kennelly, 2011; McKenzie, 2012), capitalism (Apple, 2004b), patriarchy (Kennelly, 2011), and anthropocentrism (Bowers, 2001b). The findings of the current study (mini-studies 2 and 3) aligned with the literature in many ways, as the youth participants described feelings of frustration due to the individualized and impersonal nature of traditional school (Apple, 2004a).

The youth participants described the best part of the alternative educational experience of creating radio shows as the interactions and relationships they developed with the experienced activists, with each other, and with the radio studio. The youth described that for them being around the activists in the place of the radio studio exposed them to new ideas and ways of knowing which helped them to develop their own opinions or political subjectivities. This finding reflects the literature on agency. Jacqueline Kennelly (2011) in her book *Citizen Youth:*

*Culture, Activism, and Agency in a Neoliberal Era* developed a description of what she calls “relational agency” (p. 112). She explains that agency and action tend to surface with the meeting, clashing, and grappling of multiple subject positions. It exists in the interactions between subject positions (Anderson, 2004; Lovell, 2003). In other words, being exposed to people, the more-than-human world, and ideas can help one grapple with various subjectivities and therefore influence identity formation. Kennelly explores how youth activists in Canada that she worked with were invited into an activist community. Often it was their specific family histories of left-leaning political affiliations or activism, such as Chris described in the current research findings. However, for those from non-activist families it was often through their relationships with other young people who could act as a sort of “cultural guide” within the activist world (Kennelly, 2011, p. 118), similar to what Florence described with her friends in Sierra Leone. Beyond relationships contributing to the youth commencing their activism, Kennelly’s study found that they also functioned as a way to deepen their activist involvement. She described her participants’ relationships playing an integral role in “supporting and enabling them to continue in the often fraught work of activism” (p. 124). The descriptions of the experienced activists in the current study aligns with these statements as they suggested that it was their relationships, not only with people but with more-than-human aspects and ideas, that enabled them to continue with their activism. It also seemed to make their activism easier by being involved in a community of people who already shared their worldviews and values, in line with the ways Chris, Florence, Crystal, and Larry described their sense of community support.

The youth involved in the current study described not feeling comfortable labeling themselves as activists and that they did not have the skills or tools to take action on issues of importance to them. For example, Alex mentioned in her interview that even if she made a newsletter of information similar to the one that Florence makes for her Peace Vigil, who would

she give it to? She felt excluded from the activist network in her community but also felt like she could not build up her own subculture of youth activists. Several theoretical studies (Lovell, 2003) and Kennelly's (2011) research study explain the label activist as having a negative connotation to teachers, parents, administrators, and other members of the public due to media portrayal. This could be embedded into the youth's interpretations of what it means to be an activist even though, during our first meetings together, we talked about why we used the word activist in relation to the current study. We discussed that "schools are not apart from the wider society; they are themselves sites of struggle and social change...[and teachers] can play an important role in nurturing a more active form of citizenship among young people" (Kelly & Brandes, 2001, p. 438).

Both the findings from the current study and the literature related to youth development (Bowers, 2001; CYCC, 2013; Heartwood Centre, 2011) suggest that a way to improve educational practices as a classroom teacher could be to provide opportunities for building relationships between the youth in my class and the broader community, including with people that are activists (see Appendix H: Heartwood circle of youth engagement). In addition to this, allowing youth to develop relationships to the environment/land, whether it be to a tree, a bird, a sound, the wind, or, the weather, could be a characteristic of their action competence (McKenzie, 2000). Having a relationship to the land could contribute to them sustaining their identities once they are invited into activist circles. Youth having relations to ideas and being exposed to new ideas also helps them with developing their own political subjectivities. Creating experiences within a school setting that encourage youth to build healthy, positive relationships could allow schools to be places that support youth activism. This means taking the right amount of time to develop relationships and spending time not only within the walls of the school but in the community and in outdoor settings. In addition, exposing youth to groups, student governance,

activist leadership programs, and peer support groups that are extra-curricular should be part of the practice of an educator committed to social and ecological justice.

Positive relationships can foster creativity, a sense of belonging, and are a necessary part of an emergent culture committed to moving beyond “ordinary.” Kennelly (2011) looks at the well-known Rosa Parks’ action of sitting on a bus. Her action was not individual but was able to make change because of the relationship it had with the civil rights movement and the media attention given to it. What is interesting though is that Kennelly discussed Parks’ history of attending the Highlander Folk School, a training ground for civil rights activists, and suggests that perhaps Parks’ ability to take that action came from a set of relationships developed through attending that school that gave her the resources, knowledge, and capacity to take such a risk. The relationships formed become one of the most important characteristics of the places that support and maintain activist identities and should be a key focus of educational experiences for youth.

**The act of making place.** The cultural geography literature reviewed as relevant to the current study explained that the degree to which an activist self is expressed in a particular place depends on the encouraging or discouraging ties, customs, and cultural norms that influence these spaces (Anderson, 2004). Findings in mini-study 1 of Chapter 4 align with cultural geography literature as Chris, Crystal, Florence, and Larry described cultural norms and encouraging ties that allowed them to express their identities as activists in particular places. The experienced activists in the current study, were inspired by their move from being “passive recipients of dominant place-makers’ intent” into actors who leave their own traces “to criticize one set of cultural ideas, and perhaps offer alternatives to them” (Anderson, 2004, p. 8). Reflecting upon their own shift in identity into an activist offered the suggestion that the physical act of temporarily making a place their own, to align with their values, is a characteristic that maintained the activists’ identities. Each of the four activist participants described particular



events that they were involved in where they used creativity to modify the place by leaving material and non-material traces. In other words, as Valerie Triggs (2014)

explained, it was the experience itself of creating, making, or participating in a protest, rally, or spectacle where the research participants were empowered that allowed them to feel a sense of belonging in this world and in those activist places (personal communication). Therefore, the places



Figure 2 - Amy Rubin, artist

where they took action and made their own are places where they identified activists.

Similarly, in the findings from the one-on-one interviews with the youth participants, it seemed to be the experience itself of creating or making the radio show where they felt empowered to have their voices heard. The process of creating the radio shows made the youth feel good about who they are and offered them an opportunity to express political comments in a public setting such as Amanda and Micheala's comments about the recent cutting of the Trek School program. Triggs (2009) writes that the terms "*workshop, process, model, framework, activity, and event*" could all be interchanged and defined as a "a meeting for concerted activity, a course of action, a particular design of a structure, a basic system which can be built on or changed, or a condition for being active" (p.74, *italics original*). In this sense, the radio show experience for the youth could be considered a "condition for being active."

This brings up the question of what happens to activist identities while the activists and youth are in motion or transition between *events* of activism. Anderson (2004), as reviewed in the

literature review, explained that who we are is dependent on where we are. Who are the activists then, when they are not in a particular site for activism such as the downtown corner where Florence meets for the Peace Vigil or the forest setting where Chris acted? We are always in movement or transition from one place to another place. Perhaps, what sustains the activist identity in the in-between spaces is what happens in everyday life. Everyday life of the activist participants is described as contributing to their identity as activists in the next section.

Anderson (2004) worked with environmental activists in a research study and found that “place for these individuals is thus insinuated into their configuration of self, particular places are considered an extension, or indeed co-ingredient of their identity” (p. 256). Casey (2001) explains that individuals “no longer distinguish neatly between physical and personal identity...place is regarded as constitute of one’s sense of self” (p. 684). Therefore, research on activist identity in relation to place align with the current study’s findings that the places that sustain the participant’s activist identities are the places where they spend much of their daily lives, and that these places are a part of who they are

The regular occurrence of *making a place* by participating in activist events that temporarily made a physical place their own sustained the activists. When I sent my first thoughts of my living theory of education to a colleague, she explained that

An emancipatory pedagogy is predicated on the active engagement (mind, body, heart and spirit) of its learners. It's my belief that students will be authentically and actively engaged if they know that whilst they're learning, they're also contributing to something that's bigger than the sum of its parts. From what you've iterated, this would come under the ‘act of making place,’ as it is done consciously and with the express intention of making change. The great thing is that when learners are ‘making place’ they're also creating new knowledge, or maybe a better explanation is ‘co-creating new knowledge’

(especially as they are with their peers and teachers and doing it together). They all need each other to make it work! (Sylvia Smith, March 13, 2014, personal communication)

Sylvia describes the act of making place as an activity that creates new knowledge (see Appendix I) and I would extend that as creating new senses of self and identity. The *act of making place*, such as Amanda's history of organizing an HIV awareness rally in downtown Regina and handing out hundreds of condoms to passers-by, can be significant in a student's educational career as it can contribute to forming their activist identity as well as allow the student to feel like they are contributing to society "beyond" them.

**Normalizing transgression in everyday life.** The experienced activists articulated that the places where they lived out the practices in their everyday, ordinary lives were places that supported their activist identities. These places were a result of living out their values and therefore their everyday lives were a transgression in themselves (Anderson, 2010). Anderson (2010) explains that "you committed a transgression when, intentionally or otherwise, you didn't keep off the grass, you overtook across chevrons or you jumped the queue...whether you did it intentionally or by accident, you raised the possibility of another way of being" (p. 60). Transgressions help to point out that the dominant practices are not the only way of being but simply one way of being, allowing us to "open up places to alternative futures, enabling the possibility of thinking and acting differently" (Anderson, 2010, p. 60). Anderson argues that transgressions can set in motion significant changes to how places are taken up and made. For the activists, it kept them committed to social and ecological justice by working on the transgressions of everyday life. An example of everyday life practices supporting activism is when Chris explained living in cooperative housing and cooking meals communally with others as having an impact on him because the setting helped them plan actions together and foster a sense of community. Comparably, Florence's daily actions are focused around preparing for her weekly

Peace Vigil by researching, connecting with groups, and formatting a flier.

In McKenzie's (2011) keynote address at a national conference to environmental educators, she discussed the usefulness of Raymond Williams' work on culture in his 1961 book *The Long Revolution*. He suggests in this book that "new areas of reality can be 'revealed' or 'created'" (p. 18) by anyone through their daily practices and network of relationships. As McKenzie (2011) mentions, "routines are made up of social norms...to think about emergent culture that is more sustainable than, is to alter some of these [dominant] routines" (M. McKenzie, personal communication, June 10, 2011). In the current study, Larry described his personal challenge of trying to move beyond patriarchy by normalizing the act of listening and learning from women, in other words altering routines that were embedded within him because of patriarchy in dominant culture. He described the learning that he experienced from participating in Idle No More and how this movement supported him in normalizing practices in his life that transgress dominant culture and are more in line with Indigenous cultures, such as care for land and respect for Mother Earth. The place of Saskatchewan is where the Idle No More movement kick started, and therefore seems to have reached into activist communities, thus influencing activists such as Larry's identity.

As Anderson (2004) writes in literature reviewed for this study in the field of cultural geography, "through inhabitation and dwelling, a person-place relationship is inevitably developed" (p. 255). To further describe the person-place relationship, Casey (2001) suggests that "the human body physically encounters places and simultaneously inscribes traces of location on the human self by laying down incoming strata of meaning" (p. 688). In other words, over time, the daily routines that are occurring in place influence the people in those places, and the places are a reflection of the daily routines and therefore influence the people. Places then are "a medium and an outcome of personalized events and activities" and "human memory and identity"

become bound to place (Anderson, 2004, p. 255). The activists in the study, normalized daily practices that were different than dominant culture and thus many of their daily practices could be considered transgressions.

The daily routines occurring in most places in North America, including schools, put value on making money to support individual careers and, in turn, a global economy (Apple, 2004a). In the current research findings, Chris and Florence described capitalism as one of the main dominant influences in creating injustices in the world: “capitalism itself is an act of violence and an act of exploitation” (Podcast 1, 2013). The literature reviewed in cultural geography is congruent with this view as Anderson describes,

Capitalism takes and makes place throughout the globe, leaving traces that affect the commodities we buy, the livings we earn, our methods and motives for travel, and the meaning associated with them. Capitalism affects our identity, our senses of place...Capitalism, therefore, is not just about making money, it comes to affect who and where we are. (Anderson, 2010, p. 68)

Capitalism has commoditized everyday practices in the western community setting (Bowers, 2001, p. 9).

The research findings supported the concept of identity as a reflection of the routines dominant in places, with the youth participants in the study describing the ways that their every day practices revolved around working to support their future careers. They could not see themselves in their immediate futures being able to live in a similar fashion to the experienced activists that they interviewed. The youth’s normalized practices aligned with dominant cultural practices of capitalism and neoliberalism, to “make a continual enterprise of themselves” (Apple, 2004b, p. 21). The youth showed that even though this was the focus of their daily routines, they personally valued building intergenerational relationships and connecting with the more-than-

human world, practices that transgress dominant routines. For instance, Kennedy, Micheala, and Amanda all participated in the Trek School program which involved taking multi-day trips in natural places, and they described the impact that was had on them by doing things differently such as when they cooked meals, or ate together with their tent groups, or slept in tents next to their classmates. Findings in Chapter 4, mini-study 3 demonstrate this.

Recently, environmental educational researchers have been asking how it is possible in the field of education to move away from the “ordinary” way of operating as educators, students, and citizens who contribute to dominant culture by “being complicit in ways of living that are harming human communities and the environment” (M. McKenzie, personal communication, June 10, 2011), and to move towards contributing to a new way of living and educating (Greenwood, 2003; Kahn, 2003; McKenzie, 2008). For instance, Bowers (2001a) suggests,

an eco-justice pedagogy should address the causes of poverty and the creation of wealth at the community level, which requires an understanding of how to regenerate a sense of local responsibility and mutual support that has been undermined by national and international market forces. (p. 11)

Bowers (2009) advocates for taking up the cultural commons as a way to teach about an alternative to capitalism: “The “cultural commons” are not an abstraction, but rather exist in every community...the cultural commons include activities, knowledge, skills, and patterns of mutual support that do not rely on a monetized economy” (p. 196). Examples of the cultural commons in North America include:

the intergenerational knowledge, skills, and activities that range from how to prepare and share a meal, to healing practices, creative arts, narratives and ceremonies, craft knowledge and skills, games and outdoor activities, and political traditions such as civil liberties and democratic debate. (Bowers, 2009, p. 196)

Education researchers Heimlich and Ardoin (2008) say that “for educators seeking behaviour change is not to change the behaviour, but rather to change the routine that exists around that behaviour. In other words, changing behaviours is not about changing one act; it is about altering routines in which the acts are embedded” (p. 219). They go on to explain,

Many environmental activists strive to make conservation actions routine, default actions supported by social norms. In behavior therapy, these types of behaviors are called *causuistic*. If most people looked askance at driving a car to work, for example, then walking, riding a bike, or using public transportation would be the causuistic behavior. Causuistic behaviors are often considered to be subconscious as they relate to societal – not individual – norms and values. (p. 220)

Therefore, in my practice as an educator, I can alter some of the routines that are normal for students that allow them to consider alternatives to what they currently practice. Two local examples of this in practice would be in a grade 8 program in Saskatoon that does not give number grades, but rather personalized feedback (McVittie, 2013) and a grade 11 program in Saskatoon that expects the students to bicycle or bus to school rather than drive a personal vehicle (Saskatoon Outdoor School, 2014).

**Using power.** A theme that came up in the current research is acknowledging the privileges and powers that the activists have as a result of their subjectivities in society (race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.) and using that power for the better. Anderson’s description of power was used throughout the analysis, as it related closely to the ways the activists described having and using power. The below quote thoroughly explains the term power:

As Maxey has told us, the cultural world is produced through the acts each of us engages with every day. Each of these acts is a demonstration of power. In a basic sense, therefore, power can be defined as the ability to act. As a consequence, we all have a certain level of

power; we can all leave traces in places. Traditionally, however, power has been considered as more than simply the power to act. Power has traditionally been considered as the power to influence others, to change what they do and where they do them (see Weber, 1994; Marx, 1984, 2003). To exercise power in this sense, your acts must transform places. Foucault (1980, 1984) considered power in this way. To him, power is a transformative capacity; it is the ability to transform the traces of others in order to achieve certain strategic goals (see also Cresswell, 200: 264). In a basic sense, therefore, we all have a degree of power, yet the power to transform how we act and how we think is of paramount importance. This is the power to create culture and place. (Anderson, 2010, p. 54)

Anderson (2010) explains that by using power to create acts of resistance, “Traces that were once ‘natural’ can be questioned and contested. Similarly, traces that were once deemed as ‘novel’ can become part of the mainstream” (p. 67). Therefore, both the literature reviewed on power in the field of cultural geography and the current findings show the importance of using power to resist injustices. Anderson (2008) explains that:

Studying place allows us to read power struggles but also to identify who has power to transform them...the power to transform place isn’t exercised by all people equally within a society. Certain groups have more opportunity to exercise this power than others. This power may be exercised by our parents in the family home, bullies or teachers at school, or the police in broader society. (p. 54)

Therefore, the activists as part of the study were capable of using their power to transform places in line with their values because they were of a “certain group”, namely white, middle-class adults.

For the youth in the current study, they described not feeling that they had power in their



traditional schooling experiences, as they felt teachers controlled much of what they did or were allowed to do ranging from what topics they studied to where they sat and what they wore. For example, Amanda described not learning about environmental issues, Kennedy explained not learning about current issues, and Micheala depicted being told not to wear a toque, and having to ask to go to the bathroom. With the comments from the youth participants in mind, the literature reviewed in relation to the role of power in places explains that “we are, and always will be, more than the structures that shape us, even if they intervene considerably in our lives” (Kennelly, 2011, p. 111).

The findings of the current study portrayed the experiences the youth participants’ enjoyed as ones where they were empowered and were given some power. For instance Alex’s explanation: “I got to pick what I wanted to look up and what I wanted to research,” shows her preference for having choice in learning. Micheala discussed being empowered after learning more about the way privilege works in society. For example, she discussed how after she read the Peggy McIntosh article and learned from Chris and Florence through interviewing them, she stopped tolerating her boyfriend’s roommate’s racist jokes. Youth need to be able to learn about the privileges they have in society so they better understand justice and injustice. Apple (1996) suggests the need for “linking [curricula and teaching] to larger democratic struggles, to social movements that aim to overcome gender, class, and race inequalities inside and outside the school, is now more important than ever” (p. 107). While youth are impacted by the culture dominant in society because schools tend to embrace dominant cultural practices, it is my belief that the reverse can happen: that change can originate in schools and then schools can have power to influence the culture in dominant society. My belief is in line with Apple’s (1996) when he states, “schools are not separate from the wider society, but are part of it and participate fully in its logics and socio-cultural dynamics. Struggling in schools is struggling in society” (p. 107).

Schools are part of the social fabric of our communities.

Therefore, youth should be an audience that is targeted for creating social change, and their power should be respected. In fact, Anderson (2004) points out that youth subcultures are an appropriate focus for changing the world because they are already on the outskirts of dominant culture. In the book, *From inspiration to participations: A review of perspectives on youth civic engagement*, Gibson (2001) states that

Even when young people do want to engage in traditional ways, they may not have opportunities to do so because many of the formal institutions of public life either ignore young adults and the issues that matter to them or are not equipped to provide meaningful access into the process. Delli Carpini suggests that if young people are viewed as disengaged, it is “not because they are satisfied with the current state of affairs or because they do not care about their fellow citizens, [but rather] because they are alienated from institutions and processes of civic life and lack the motivation, opportunity, and ability to overcome this alienation. (p. 3)

Current research findings in mini-study 2 align with the above quote, as Kennedy, Micheala, Alex, and Amanda all felt as if they could do activism when they got older but did not feel that they had opportunities or the ability to take action in the present. They felt that they did not have the tools or connections within civic life to be successful activists. Gibson’s (2001) review goes on to describe the way that political engagement for a youth emerges over time as a result of a developmental process:

This process begins with young people having opportunities to develop a strong sense of identity, self-worth, responsibility, and confidence through peer and other positive norm-instilling group experiences. These positive experiences develop in the young person a sense of personal efficacy that can be applied to community and/or political

activities...From this perspective, one does not start the process of civic engagement with political activism, but rather ends there. (p. 5)

Therefore, the review on youth development suggests that the concept of *using power* as the activists described in the current study must be developed within youth through group experiences such as the radio-show-making learning experience in the present study. *Using power* can be translated into “personal efficacy.” Youth must develop their identities as activists through the process of engaging in varied and multiple experiences working with others, including experienced activists. This finding aligns with current research on community youth development (Heartwood Centre, 2011) and youth activism (Soep & Chavez, 2010). The Heartwood Centre co-developed a “Circle of Awesomeness” with a group of youth. The circle identifies five tools for growth that in many ways overlap with the research findings of the current study. The five tools for growth include: supportive peers, meaningful contribution, youth/adult partnerships, adventuresome learning, and empowering culture (see Appendix H). Many educational researchers have recognized the powerful role of mentors in the understanding of ourselves and the world about us (Hart, 2007; McKenzie, 2008; V. Anderson, 2013).

### **Implications**

This study has many implications for the future, including for practice and for educational research. As an action research study, the study is intended to create practical knowledge by taking action and changing the research participants. Therefore, the primary focus of the study included the implications involving the youth participants’ learning, my own learning, and learning to inform my colleagues interested in programming for social and ecological justice. The secondary focus of the study was to inform the research literature including a better understanding of the process of critical place learning, and the processes of youth involvement in critical research. Below, I elaborate on each of these implications in greater depth.

First of all, the study contributed to the learning of the youth participants. The main implication the study had on the youth was the act of making a place within the radio studio and the events leading up to the live radio shows where they could interact with activists from a different generation (i.e., intergenerational learning). The research process benefited the participants involved in the project by allowing their voices to be heard on live radio, and saved as a podcast for the future. As well, the participants in the study gained critical media training and other media skills that may help them develop confidence with sharing their voices in a variety of media in the future.

The youth also described their learning from being around the experienced activists and new ways of knowing. This exposure to different interpretations of the world allowed them to contemplate their own ideas and form their opinions. The literature reviewed in the area of agency describes that the potential for action arises from being aware of the different forms of self and subjectivity that one has (Kennelly, 2012) or the grappling with alternative positionings of identity that allows agency and action to surface (Anderson, 2004).

The second implication of the study for practice is my own practice as an educator. The current research project allowed me to derive a living theory from the results of the study. The theory culminates in the understanding that if schools reflect the values and practices of dominant culture, then educators have to work towards contributing to an emergent culture, beyond the walls of the schools, that is committed to social and ecological justice. For example, when the broader cultures in which we live begin to value people and the more-than-human-world, then education will reflect those values within the curriculum, the lunch programs, the policies, and so on. This argument is grounded in four values that reflect the four characteristics of places that the activists described as maintaining their activism: *relationality, the act of making place, normalizing transgression in everyday life, and using power*. The branches of theory pertain to

four principles for building a culture of activism as well as four principles for developing curricular programming for youth. The study has aided my understanding of the importance of place in curricular design. Additionally, the current study gave me more experience with engaging youth in critical research, which could become a beneficial pedagogy for my future practice as an educator in social and ecological justice integrated programs. Youth provide important insights and perspectives for policy creation and curricular design.

This study has a variety of potential implications for fellow educators working in integrated programming focused on social and ecological justice. By considering mini-study 2 of Chapter 4 of this study, educators may gain a deeper understanding of how and what youth learn while engaging with an experiential education program working with adults from the community. In addition, educators may be able to use the four themes of mini-study 1 in designing learning experiences in their practices. The findings of the study serve as an example to educators of the importance of getting students to help in the planning and design for a program of study focusing on justice. Schools should become more open to giving youth course credits for experiential learning such as creating radio shows.

In addition to implications for practice, the study has implications for the research literature and future research. There was an identified lack of studies examining the importance of place in developing communities of activism. The mini-study 1 findings can contribute to broader understandings of the importance of material places in critical learning. These findings inform educational research on place, cultural geography research on activism, and sociological research on agency. The study also adds to a new, yet expanding body of literature looking deeper into youth involvement in critical research by specifically engaging youth in creating radio and working with experienced activists of an older generation.

## **Limitations**

The present study has limitations that should be considered. First, due to the restrictions of time, the current study did not fully embody a participatory action research methodology. Within the methodology of participatory action research, the research participants would have had a larger role to play in all aspects of the research including choosing the questions and being involved in analysis. Because of this, it could limit the amount of change in identity, specifically in their action competence, in the participants' experience of the research.

The second limitation of the present study is that all 8 of the research participants were white and middle-class. This limits the findings to a specific demographic, and it would be valuable to do a similar study with a more diverse group of research participants. Many of the experienced activists in the community the research took place are Indigenous or new to Canada, and these perspectives would add to the characteristics of place that supported an activist identity brought to light in the study. In addition, the youth participants of the current study were all female. Broadening the research to include the voices of male and LGBTQ(O) youth would contribute to informing educational practices that influence youth<sup>11</sup>.

### **Areas of Further Research**

The present study could be extended by doing an analysis of whiteness on the data collected. For example, McLean (2013) states some of the ways that whiteness is normalized within many educational practices such as:

the disaffiliation of whiteness from the violence of colonialism, reifying Canadianness as

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<sup>11</sup> Although stated as a limitation in this study, having the participants that were involved in the present study brought to light some areas for future consideration including looking at the ways in which gender, class, and race intersect with activism. For example, what does it say that the Indigenous activists that were approached to participate were too busy? Or, how does being in a certain class with more free time factor into activism?

goodness and innocence; the ongoing erasure of Indigenous Peoples and histories from the land; and the reification of wilderness as an essentialized, empty space. (p. 254)

For McLean's paper, she interviewed youth who had recently experienced an educational program committed to social and ecological justice, such as the Trek school program that I taught in. Therefore, it would be useful for more research studies to be done on integrated programs focused on social and ecological justice and to what extent they are integrating an analysis of colonialism into the course content. Many environmental education scholars, as well as McLean (2013) suggest, "as educators seek to build integrated social and ecological justice programs, it is essential to frame curricula by centring an interrogation of the impact of white-settler colonialism on Indigenous Peoples and territories in order to create an anti-colonial pedagogy of the environment" (McLean, 2013, p. 361). My critical colleague for the current study, Sylvia Smith (personal communication) sent me a hand-out she developed for educators to begin thinking about what teaching for decolonization is all about, which could begin to inform this framing of curriculum (see Appendix J).

Similarly, the editorial in a special issue of the journal *Environmental Education Research*, titled, *Land education: Indigenous, post-colonial, and decolonizing perspectives on place and environmental education research explained*,

*Idle No More* has already taught the world about what we hope a land education does and will do: that is, to remind people to place Indigenous understandings of land and life at the center of environmental issues and other (educational) issues; provide an explicit critique and rendering of settler colonialism, treaties, and sovereignty; invite and inspire acts of refusal, reclamation, regeneration, and reimagination; and theorize pathways to living as 'separate sovereignties on shared territory' (Simpson 2013). (Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014, p. 22)

Therefore, within an educational experience focused on social and ecological justice such as the current study, there should be an emphasis within the research process on understanding how colonialism has affected displacement of some groups for the settlement of others, and how whiteness interacts with agency. Therefore an area of further research would be to get the same demographic of youth as the current study to work with Indigenous experienced activists in order to help them to be “actively recognizing, centring, validating, and honouring Indigenous rights, values, epistemologies or worldviews, knowledge, language, and the stories of the people of the Land” (Korteweg & Russell, 2012, p. 7).

## **Conclusion**

The current action research study contributed to the wider community through developing a better understanding of the role of place in the maintenance of activist identities. The study also contributed to the youth participants’ learning by creating radio shows that shared their voices in a public setting. Finally, the study used self-reflexivity on my own journey as an educator struggling with making meaningful connections to place in my life and in my teaching while concurrently being cognizant of my dominant colonizer roots. I have described the findings as contributing to a living theory as an activist-educator committed to an ecologically and socially just world. Throughout the research process my own thinking and ideas have changed and I have deepened insights in regards to the characteristics of places that support and maintain activism. The findings of mini-study 1 identified four main characteristics that describe the places that have sustained activists and their activist communities over several years. The themes include *relationality, the act of making place, normalizing transgression in everyday life, and using power*. These four themes, in addition to informing activists about the ways in which to maintain their activism, can also be considered principles for arranging learning experiences for youth in order to contribute to meaningful youth development and justice-oriented citizenship.



The study influenced learning and change of identity within the youth participants. The youth developed new insights into current issues, their identities as budding activists, and into using media. The current study has also brought to light several ‘aha’ moments for me including a confirmation that existing practices in traditional schools leave youth feeling disempowered, the significance of the physical places of learning on youth identity formation, the need to foster collective spaces for youth to have a sense of community around issues of social and ecological justice, the promising practice of bringing intergenerational mentoring into learning experiences, the concepts of slow pedagogy and mindfulness and how that may contribute to youth stress reduction, and lastly the parts of my own practice that seem to be working for empowering youth.

Perhaps, most importantly, this study linked four activists together with four youth and fostered relationships that may be important in their collective futures. It also shared the experiences and voices of the activists and the youth in a public setting on community radio, which could have potential impacts on many others. As Greenwood (2010) explains, “The real challenge is not to advance the field, but to participate in and help shape the larger movement for cultural and ecological renewal and transformation” (p. 16). While I intend to contribute to the field of environmental education and socioecological education research, the ultimate goal is to shape the socioecological movement and contribute to an emerging participative worldview.

I agree with Marja-Liisa Swantz when she writes, “I do not separate my scientific inquiry from my life. For me it is really a quest for life, to understand life and to create what I call living knowledge—knowledge which is valid for the people with whom I work and for myself” (as cited in Reason & Bradbury, 2006, p. 1). Only the future can reveal how the research process will affect the eight research participants and myself as we critique the current world, imagine a better one, and work with agency to bring it into reality.

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## Appendix A: Recruiting Information and Consent Form

Telephone: 306 –550-9359

E-mail: [karen.mciver@gmail.com](mailto:karen.mciver@gmail.com)



Places of Activism: Engaging Youth to Explore the Places that Maintain Communities of Activism

**HEY! Want to be in a study about social and ecological justice?**

**Want to be part of radio show on activism?**

**I'm looking for youth and activists with at least 5 years of experience!**

I am a Master's student in the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

I am also a high school teacher with an interest in social and ecological justice. I am currently interested in learning about ways to develop active citizenship within youth in our province of Saskatchewan.

The present study aims to involve youth in learning about their own activist identity while working with experienced activists to discuss the places that have helped them to maintain their activist identity over the years. The goal is for youth participants to host a one hour live radio show on Regina Community Radio by interviewing the experienced activists about material places and related social interactions that have enabled and supported their activism.

If you want to hear more about it or if you have any questions, please contact me whenever's convenient (details above).

If you agree to participate in this study, please read over the consent form also included and complete and sign it (keep the extra copy for your records) and send it back to me in the stamped envelope provided. If you might want to participate, but have questions about the study or the consent form, by all means please call or email me by February 20th, 2013.

**I am looking forward to working with you and thank you in advance for your time!**

Best,

Karen McIver



## **Participant Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Places of Activism: Engaging Youth to Explore the Places that Maintain Communities of Activism

**Researcher(s):** Karen McIver, Graduate Student, Educational Foundations, University of Saskatchewan  
306.550.9359 kem980@mail.usask.ca

**Supervisor:** Dr. Marcia McKenzie, Associate Professor, Educational Foundations, University of Saskatchewan  
306.966.7551 marcia.mckenzie@usask.ca

### **Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:**

The purpose of the study is for youth participants to learn about and maintain their activist identities by examining the role place(s) have played in maintaining the identities and communities of experienced activists committed to social and ecological justice.

Specifically, the study will be guided by the following research questions: 1) How did the experienced activists that were interviewed by youth describe the role of material places (and associated social interactions) in enabling and supporting their activism? 2) Did the youth participants perceive the process of interviewing activists on the role of place in their activism as having contributed to their own activist identities or sense of community? If so, how? 3) What other aspects of the process of making a radio show and the place of the radio studio did the youth find as having an effect on their identity or sense of community? 4) What steps, if any, do the youth participants plan to take to maintain their activist identities and communities beyond the current study?

The above research questions will help to pursue the objectives of the study. Three broad objectives guide this youth participatory action research (YPAR) study, including: (a) engaging youth in a participatory, critical learning experience that resists traditional Western education models, (b) co-creating youth radio documentaries that create a space for youth to explore their identities as activists while sharing the voices of youth in a public, community place and, (c) contributing to broader and enhanced understandings in practice

and research of the role of place in maintaining activist identities and communities.

### **Procedures:**

**For youth participants, your participation will involve:**

- A short questionnaire will be distributed to you after you agree to be part of the study. The questionnaire can be filled out in approximately 10 minutes and will be sent back to me electronically or by mail.
- Two introductory workshops will be held for approximately 2 hours each at a community space mutually agreed upon. The first workshop involves only the youth participants while the second workshop includes all participants.
- A media training workshop will be held at a community space, mutually agreed upon, and will be approximately 2 hours in length. Practicing journalists will teach media techniques, and will help put together scripts for one-hour radio shows.
- A radio show will involve all participants with youth participants hosting and adult participants as guests. This will be held at 12pm-1pm on a Friday mutually agreed upon by participants and will be recorded live from the Regina Community Radio station studio. The radio show will be made into podcasts and shared with the public.
- Approximately one month following the radio show, you will each be interviewed individually for one hour at the radio studio. The interviews will be audio recorded however you may request that the recording device be turned off at any time.
- A reflective journal will be used for participants to individually reflect on the radio show process. Journaling exercises will be done each time of meeting.

**For adult participants, your participation will involve:**

- One introductory workshop will be held for approximately 2 hours at a community space mutually agreed upon. It will involve all participants in the study.
- A media training workshop will be held at a community space, mutually agreed upon, and will be approximately 2 hours in length. Practicing journalists will teach media techniques, and will help put together scripts for one-hour radio shows.
- A radio show will involve all participants with youth participants hosting and adult participants as guests. This will be held at 12pm-1pm on a Friday mutually agreed upon by participants and will be recorded live from the Regina Community Radio



station studio. The radio show will be made into podcasts and shared with the public.

Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

**Funded by:** *Saskatchewan Outdoor and Environmental Education Association (SOEEA)*

**Potential Risks:** There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

**Potential Benefits:** Participants will gain experience and training in media relating to creating radio shows. Participants will also be able to learn from one another in an intergenerational space.

**Compensation:**

- By participating in this study, you will receive a one year membership to a social or ecological justice organization of your choosing (under \$50).

**Confidentiality:**

- The data from this research project may be published and presented at conferences and the radio show will be made into a podcast and shared publicly; however, your identity will be kept confidential as much as possible unless otherwise indicated by you in the check boxes below. Although I will report direct quotations from the interview in the write-up, you can choose to be given a pseudonym. All identifying information including school, job title, volunteer position in an organization, etc. will be removed from the report.
- The researcher will undertake to safeguard the confidentiality of the discussions had during workshops and group activities, but cannot guarantee that other members of the group will do so. Please respect the confidentiality of the other members of the group by not disclosing contents of the discussions outside the group, and be aware that others may not respect your confidentiality.
- Because the participants for this research project have been selected from a small group of people, all of whom are known to each other; it is possible that you may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what you have said and by your voice on the radio show podcasts.
- After the individual interviews with youth participants, you will be able to review your transcripts and the write-up that I do of your interview before it appears in the final report. You

will be given the opportunity to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit.

- It is the decision of the research participants if they choose to remain anonymous by using a pseudonym in the write-up a of the research process and on the radio.
- All data collected will be used in the write-up of my thesis, as well as in journal articles.

**Storage of Data:**

- All data gathered from interviews will be kept at the University of Saskatchewan in a password protected electronic file and will be stored securely for at least 5 years.
- When the data is no longer required, the electronic files will be deleted.

**Right to Withdraw:**

- Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
- Should you wish to withdraw, your data will be deleted from the research project and destroyed, if desired.
- Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until results have been disseminated. After this date, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

**Follow up:**

- I will send each participant a copy of the final write up of the study either electronically or a hard copy, depending on preference.

**Questions or Concerns:**

- Contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1;
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office [ethics.office@usask.ca](mailto:ethics.office@usask.ca) (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.



**Consent**

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some or none of them. Please, participant or parent/guardian, put a check mark on the corresponding line(s) that grants me your permission to:

I grant permission for me [my child] to be audio taped:  
Yes: \_\_\_ No: \_\_\_

I grant permission for me [my child] to be photographed for:  
Analysis \_\_\_\_\_ Dissemination\* \_\_\_\_\_

\*Even if no names are used, you [or your child] may be recognizable if visual images are shown as part of the results.

I grant permission to have my organization's name used: Yes: \_\_\_ No: \_\_\_ N/A: \_\_\_

I wish to remain anonymous: Yes: \_\_\_ No: \_\_\_

I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym: Yes: \_\_\_ No: \_\_\_

The pseudonym I choose for myself is: \_\_\_\_\_

You may quote me and use my name: Yes: \_\_\_ No: \_\_\_

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant      Signature Yes: \_\_\_ No: \_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Guardian/Parent Name      Signature  
(if participant is under the age of 18)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature      Date

***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***

## **Appendix B: Questionnaire**

### **YOUTH, PLACE, AND ACTIVISM RESEARCH PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please complete this short questionnaire in order for me to get a better sense of your involvement in your school and to learn more about your experience with social justice and environmental issues. This will help to partner you up with an experienced activist with similar interests.

#### **Background**

Name:

School attended (list additional schools if you have moved):

Grade in School:

Social Justice or outdoor education program attended (i.e., Trek School, Social Justice):

Year attended the above program:

Age:

Ethnicity:

#### **Leadership and Justice in Education**

1. Are you involved in any extracurricular activities at school? Please list them and the number of years involved. (For example, sports, clubs, theater, etc.)

2. Please list any leadership roles you have had in high school.

3. Do you belong to any outdoor, environmental, or social justice organizations? (For example, outdoor club, multicultural club, best buddies, etc.). Please list them.

If yes, why? If no, why?

5. What are some of the main social justice issues or environmental issues you have heard about or learned about? How did you hear about these things?

6. Have you ever taken an action to support a social justice issue or environmental issue such as volunteer, donate, organize a food drive, attend a political rally, etc.?

Has this ever been part of a class that you have taken?

7. List some of the things that you think have been supportive for you to learn about and take action for social justice and environmental issues (i.e., teachers, classes, friends, family members, church, etc.).

8. Any additional comments?

## **Appendix C: Introductory Workshop Protocol**

### ***First introductory workshop - Youth participants (approx. 2 hours):***

Getting to know each other and the project:

- *share with others who we are, program we studied in, issues of interest, etc.*
- *introduction to the study - pieces included, why doing it, concept of place and trace*
- *questions for discussion:*
  1. *What is an activist and what is activism?*
  2. *Who are some famous activists you have heard of?*
  3. *What concerns you the most about the state of the world and do you know any solutions that exist?*
  4. *What are the most important environmental changes do you think are needed?*
  5. *What are the most important social changes do you think are needed?*
  6. *What role can you play as an individual in forming a healthier world?*
  7. *What role can a group of people/collective play in forming a healthier world?*
  8. *What are some of the things schools can do to help form a healthier world?*

Critical research techniques:

- *introduce radio show concept and process*
- *go over interview questioning techniques*
- *show short videos about social and ecological justice issues for consciousness raising, including White Like Me clips, Hieroglyphic Stairway, Earth Hour, Idle No More clips, etc. Provide handout of optional readings and hand out journals with journal protocol*

### ***Second introductory workshop – Youth participants and experienced activists (approx. 2 hours)***

Getting to know each other and the project:

- *Introductions*
- *Overview of research project.*
- *Partner up - experienced activist and youth participant - and get to know each other.*
- *Youth will ask experienced activists the following questions:*
  1. *Why do you consider yourself to be an activist?*
  2. *What type of “activist” work have you done in the past? Where did you do it?*
  3. *What does a good relationship to the planet look like?*
  4. *What does a good relationship to other people look like?*
  5. *What are some of the main issues in the world today that you are interested in addressing?*

Radio show logistics:

- *overview of radio show structure*
  - *youth participants and experienced activists decide on date for a radio show program*
- play excerpts from youth radio shows to get the feel of what it will sound like to be on live radio*

## **Resources for collectively experiencing (Handouts to be distributed to all participants)**

The following resources may be used to help you to think critically about the research process and the ways that people become empowered and take action.

### ***Deconstructing Resources***

- 1) Peggy McIntosh – Backpack of privileges reading
- 2) Bishop - Becoming an Ally reading
- 3) Chris Jordan – [www.chrisjordan.com](http://www.chrisjordan.com) – photos to elicit emotion
- 4) Tim Wise – White like me DVD (Karen has copy)
- 5) Ken Robinson video
- 6) Michael Apple reading excerpt

### ***Inhabiting Resources***

- 1) Earth hour videos - <http://www.earthhour.org/>
- 2) Spoken word poetry
  - a. Drew Dellinger - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XW63UUthwSg>
  - b. Khodi Dill - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UA5Gqnt5iQ>
- 3) Indigenous solidarity - Idle No More videos
- 4) Vandana Shiva video - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYwOTLopWIw>
- 5) Brigitte Depape reading - <http://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2011/09/02/Brigitte-DePape/>
- 6) Canada's Youth Activist (A generation that stands up for change) book readings

## **Appendix D: Radio Show questions**


Below is a list of questions that could potentially be used for your interview with an experienced activist for the radio show. The questions help to ask about experiences in different physical places.

Please include a definition of place to frame the interview in your script for the listeners. You can use the definitions and concepts learned in the introductory workshops.

### **Questions for activists**

- What did the “place” of activism look, feel, sound and smell like? Where was it? Who or what was there with them? What were the daily practices of being there? Where did they spend most of their time within that place?
- What conditions were empowering and supportive of taking action? What conditions suppressed action? How could the supportive conditions be reproduced?
- How are the bigger societal structures (e.g., color of skin) empowering for them, but may not be empowering for others based on class, race, gender, etc.? Where were they able to enact activist identities where others are unable?
- Did ideas about activism change as participants entered different places in their life, i.e., at home, with friends, at school, extra-curricular events, etc.? How did they negotiate this change of attitude in different places?
- What is the intersection of the local action with the global place? For example, was it the ability to travel to a place of injustice or a place of protest? Or is it working in a local community garden? Or perhaps the ability to connect with others electronically about global issues while taking action locally?
- If they could imagine an ideal place for taking action, what would it look like and how would it support them? Who would be there? Where would it be?
- How does the other-than-human world have influences in relation to their activism and identity?
- How can they seek out or create places in the future to support the activist part of their identity?

## Appendix E: The Radio Interview Hand-out from the Journalist



rfi, International training service, 104 avenue du Pdt. Kennedy, 75016 Paris, France +00 33 1 44 30 89 96

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# The radio interview

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### - DEFINITION

The interview – an exchange between a journalist or presenter and a source of information – is a difficult art. It requires good preparation, a knowledge of technique, heightened people skills, in other words paying attention to others. It should be thought of in terms of goal-focused strategy.

### - OBJECTIVES

There are five different types of interview:

- 'Explanation' interview. Get information from your interviewee about his or her expert subject, or about something he or she is well-positioned to talk about.
- 'Portrait' interview. Bring out the personality of the interviewee on the air.
- 'Witness' interview. Have a witness to an event.
- 'Declaration' interview. Ask the reaction of someone involved in the news, or of a politician for their immediate reaction to a story or meeting in which they have taken part.
- 'Vox Pop' interview. Survey a slice of the population to give a reflection of public opinion about a news story.

### - HOW TO PREPARE AN INTERVIEW?

**1<sup>st</sup> Research**  
Research is crucial. The pertinence of your questions and your capacity to resist being manipulated depends on how good your research has been.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Making contact beforehand**  
Making contact with the person before the interview should give your interviewee a better understanding of what is expected of him or her, and in what context the interview will be used. It also means you can assess whether or not someone will make a good interviewee.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Preparing the questions**  
How you prepare your questions will depend on two criteria:

- a) Who am I interviewing?**  
A politician, a colleague, the man in the street, an expert, a celebrity. You will tailor your questions in quite a different way for each.
- b) What is it for?**  
A news bulletin, a current affairs programme, a general interest broadcast. The format and the atmosphere should be adapted for the different types of programme.

**4<sup>th</sup> Preparing your equipment**

- Make sure your recorder is working properly (microphone, cable, tape, cassette, mini-disc, plug, batteries, etc) by doing a quick recording and listening back to it.
- If the interview is to take place outdoors, take along a microphone wind-shield.

### - THREE INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

The non-directive interview: Begin with "Tell me about...", never use a question. This approach leaves the interviewee free to say whatever he or she likes without limiting him or her to the parameters of your own knowledge of the subject. You can then go back over the most important points raised, "sum up" each along the lines of "you were saying...". This method of interviewing is best for bringing out lots information, but it is the most difficult to master.

The directed interview: Only use questions, more or less open ones. The interviewer knows about what they are discussing, and sometimes even knows the answer he will get, but needs the interviewee to confirm the information.

[www.rfi.fr/alenplus/en/articles/066/article\\_129.asp](http://www.rfi.fr/alenplus/en/articles/066/article_129.asp)

1/2

The semi-directed interview: Alternate the questions between those which guide the interview to where you want to go and those which may invite interesting and enriching elaboration.

#### - MAIN TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Closed questions: Reply is either 'yes' or 'no'.

Eg. "Are you in favour of free speech?"

Multiple choice questions : The reply is induced.

Eg. "Are you in favour of the death penalty, or of life imprisonment?"

Semi-open questions: Replies are short and precise.

Eg. These questions in general start with 'How many?', 'Who?', 'When?' and 'Where?'

Open questions: Detailed replies, open to explanation and justification, etc.

Eg. "What do you think about free speech?"

#### - SOME TRICKS OF THE TRADE

##### Think through the strategy of your questions

Start with a question that is more or less innocuous as a sort of 'warm-up' and to put your interviewee at ease. On the other hand you can also throw yourself right in with a difficult one, if you want to knock your interviewee off balance or create an atmosphere of controversy.

Alternate between open and less open questions to re-focus you interviewee on the subject or let him or her a little more freedom. If they are rambling, ask closed questions that demand precise answers. If you want them to open up a bit, ask broader questions to let relax them.

Use the "sum up" if your interviewee is trying to dodge answering an important point, re-formulating it as a question "So what you're saying is..." More often than not, he or she will return to what they were trying to avoid!

Structure your questions, with the most interesting at the start. Then, if you're running out of time, you will have got in the most important ones. This is the same principle as the "inverted pyramid" of news writing.

##### Avoiding the well-known pitfalls:

The interviewee answers your question with a question. Just stay quiet, wait for him or her to answer your question. If he doesn't, ask the same question again. In rare, extreme cases, remind him the rules of the game: You are the interviewer, it's your job to ask the questions. He agreed to the interview, and in doing so agreed to answer them. This should be said firmly, but not in an aggressive manner.

The interviewer starts to answer your questions saying "Yes, indeed...but one important question I feel I should address is..." or "that's an interesting question and it raises another...", and proceeds to ask himself a question he wants to answer. Be vigilant. Keep going back to the issue you want to explore, politely but firmly, until you get a real answer.

#### - THE RISK OF MANIPULATION

A badly-prepared interview can leave the door open to manipulation. The journalist doing an interview should always be vigilant and sufficiently well briefed to be able to exercise judgement and discernment.



**Appendix F: Interview Protocol (4 youth participants interviewed for approx. 60 minutes each)**

- Have participants reflect on the process of creating a radio show
  - *What do you think about making and hosting radio shows live? How did it go for you?*
  - *What do you think about the places that the activist talked about as being supportive to them?*
  - *What did you learn throughout the process of creating the radio shows?*
  - *What was the best part of going through the experience?*
  - *What would you have changed about the experience if you could?*
  - *Could you see yourself being like or doing similar things to the activist that you interviewed?*
  
- Have participants reflect on the place of the radio studio
  - *What are some of the things that you enjoyed about being here in this radio studio?*
  - *Did you feel empowered as an individual by being here in studio hosting the show?*
  - *Did the other people here in the studio help you feel empowered or like you could make change together?*
  - *Do you think people will go back and listen to the podcast of the radio show to learn about the places of activism?*
  - *What other conditions about the studio did you feel were supportive of you?*
    - *In terms of the physical features of the place*
    - *In terms of the technical support people*
    - *In terms of the sounds, smells, sights, etc.*
  
- Have participants reflect on learning from experienced activists and journalists
  - *Tell me your thoughts about the media training workshop with journalists. Did you find it helpful to work with professional journalists?*
  - *What did you learn from the experienced activists?*
  - *Did the experienced activists make you think about the type of actions you could take in the future?*
  - *How did the activists describe the role of place in contributing to their activist identities and communities?*
  - *What was it like working with someone older than you that you might not normally get to talk with?*
  
- Have participants reflect on their own activist identities & communities
  - *Going into this research project, did you see yourself as an activist? Can you see yourself now as an activist?*
  - *What types of issues do you see yourself working on in the future, if any?*
  - *Do you think that the places that you spend time influence who you are as a person? In what ways?*
  - *Do you have a group of friends that you can talk to about social justice and environmental issues?*



- *Did this research project make you think differently about who you are or can be in the future?*
- Have participants discuss next steps
  - *You are entering grade 12 next year (or first year university), what can you do to stay interested in social justice and environmental issues?*
  - *Do you think you will continue to use media in the future, now that this research project is over?*
  - *Do you think you will maintain contact with the other research participants, including the experienced activists you met?*
  - *What other steps do you plan to take, if any, to keep motivated to change the world for the better?*

## **Appendix G: Research journal protocol**

This is to be used as a general format for your research journal. Please attempt to reflect about the process of the research at or after each time we meet. Please date each journal entry that you contribute to your journal.

The richer the journals, the richer the data. That said, you are only expected to write about that which you are comfortable sharing, or, please indicate if you would *not* like me to include certain information in the transcript. You will also be given the opportunity to review all transcripts before publication. You will be asked to lend me your journal after your interview. Journals will be returned to you once analysis is complete.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at any time.

### ***Workshop #1 reflection***

- 5-minute timed free write: What are your thoughts about your identity in different locations? I will time you for 5 minutes.
- Write down whatever comes to mind, as quickly as possible, do not go back to reread during the 3 minutes, do not pay attention to grammar, misspelled words, just keep going. If you draw a blank, keep writing the same word over and over again until something else pops into your mind.
- When time runs out, look over what you have written and circle or underline ideas that you like or that you think might be useful for the research.

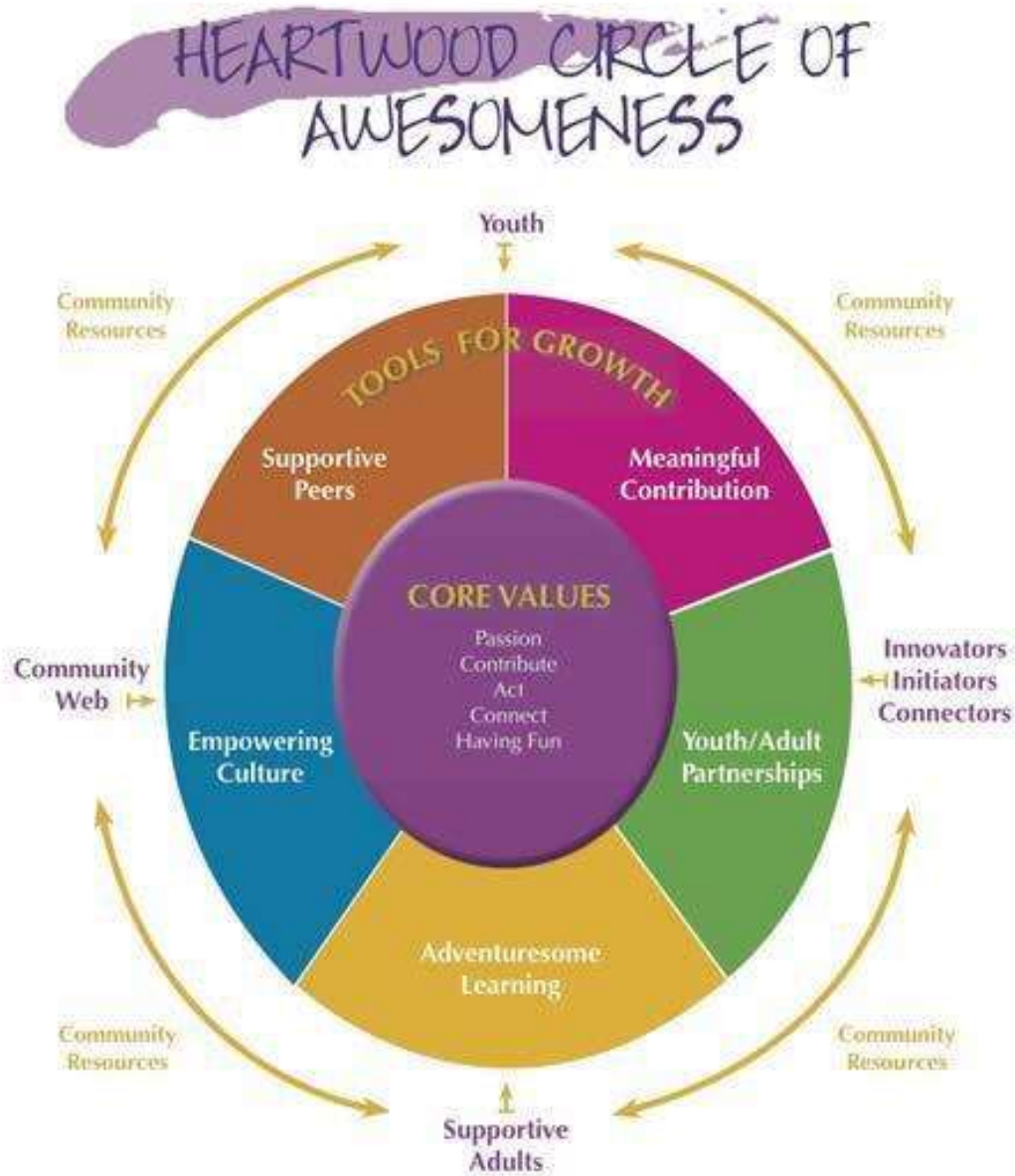
### ***Before the Interview thinking process***

Answer any of the following questions as a way to prepare for the interview and to reflect on the process of creating radio shows by interviewing experienced activists working in the areas of social and ecological justice. Feel free to answer any of these questions at any time throughout the research process.

- What are the dominant voices in your world? Who or what has more rights than others? Who/what are/is marginalized?
- What are your privileges?
- What are your biggest challenges of being a youth?
- How can you contribute to making the world more equal?
- What are your goals?
- How can you keep in touch with others to empower each other when you feel overwhelmed?
- Did you start thinking differently about anything since the research study started?
- Did you change as a person or did your actions change? What changed?
- What places do you see as being beneficial and supportive for you to make changes in yourself and in society?
- How can we move forward with what we know now?
- How can we communicate our learning to the general public?
- If I were to make another radio show, what would I change?

**APPENDIX H: Heartwood's Circle of Awesomeness**

**HeartWood Framework for Community YOUTH Development**



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The **outer circle** – *Community Resources* – concerns the organizing of a systems-wide approach to foster youth engagement. The *systems* may be an organization, institution, government agency, or community.

**Community Resources:**

- **Initiator, Innovator, Connector:** can be an individual, a group of people (youth and/or adults), or an organization that has a specific interest or motivation and is a bright light or energy source to see increased youth engagement in the defined system.
- **Youth:** meaningful roles for youth participation in the system.
- **Supportive Adults:** meaningful roles for supportive adults to help young people navigate the system.
- **Community Web:** a linking of other youth serving and/or community based organizations, government agencies, and individuals who can play a role towards increased youth engagement in the system.

The **inner circle** describes the *Core Values* young people have identified that encourage their engagement, these core values have proven to be helpful touchstones by which to assess youth programs and services.

**Core Values:**

- Follow passions
- Make a difference
- Take action
- Connect with others
- Have fun

The **middle circle**, *Tools for Growth*, describes the tools HeartWood has found to be effective in bringing the *core values* into practice. HeartWood is constantly exploring, in many diverse contexts, various means to apply these tools.

**Tools for Growth:**

- **Meaningful Contribution:** Taking action to meet a genuine need.
- **Adventuresome Learning:** Engaging, real life experiences that challenge individuals to step outside of their comfort zones to learn and grow.
- **Peer Support:** Creating the atmosphere that fosters a strong peer team where individuals feel connected, appreciated, and supported by others.
- **Youth-Adult Partnerships:** Gaining inspiration, support, and guidance through a relationship of mutual caring and respect.
- **Empowering Culture:** Providing opportunities to initiate, commit, plan, and choose paths to work together with peers and the community as active citizens. The outer circle concerns the organizing of a systems wide approach to foster youth engagement. The *systems* may be an organization, institution, government agency, or community.

## **Appendix I: Send analysis out to colleagues/mentors for feedback**

This is very cool Karen. I loved reading it!

For the 3rd characteristic I would add "Normalizing transgression in..." to "Everyday Life and The Commons" so it reads "Normalizing Transgression in Everyday Life and The Cultural Commons". As a characteristic, I think it maintains the consistency that you have with the other 3 characteristics.

I am thinking of these characteristics and how you define them, and it all adds up. An emancipatory pedagogy is predicated on the active engagement (mind, body, heart and spirit) of its learners. It's my belief that students will be authentically and actively engaged (a friend of mine, in one her papers used the word "aesthetically engaged", which I thought was so cool--in relation to "anesthetically disengaged") if they know that whilst they're learning, they're also contributing to something that's bigger than the sum of its parts.

From what you've iterated, this would come under the "act of making place", as it is done consciously and with the express intention of making change. The great thing is that when learners are "making place" they're also creating new knowledge, or maybe a better explanation is "co-creating new knowledge" (especially as they are with their peers and teachers and doing it together). They all need each other to make it work!

I also loved the idea of eco-justice pedagogy as transgressing on a regular basis. In my mind, this is absolutely necessary because our institutions and the practices that contribute to their sustainability and longevity all rest on "us" being complicit in colonizing practices--which is *obedience to authority* (and undeserved authority). It takes all the Anishnabeg teachings (love, courage, honesty, etc) to defy unearned authority, that's for sure!

Ok, I have no idea if what I'm giving to you is just "Sylvia ramblings". Just let it be known that your work resonates deeply with me Karen. It's no easy job distilling the essence of what people are saying, especially when dealing with things as complex as Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies! Wow! I'm off to give participate in a recruiting session for IPSMO (Indigenous People's Solidarity Movement Ottawa) so gotta go.

You and Thomas Jr. and Marc take care of yourselves, ok?

Love and all that other good stuff,

Sylvia

On Thu, Mar 13, 2014 at 1:40 PM, Karen McIver <karen.mciver@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Sylvia,

I consider you to be a fellow activist-educator committed to social and ecological justice. My master study engaged youth to interview activists (live on community radio) about what has sustained/maintained them to keep working towards justice. Afterwards, I reviewed what the activists said and some themes emerged from that. The themes are characteristics of places that support activism. These themes then are informing my practice as an educator, so I will design future planning of educational experiences/courses/etc. around these themes. I guess it is a "living theory" of a sense. I wanted some feedback on them, and as you have developed similar theories, and I really respect and value the work that you do, I'm wondering if you would take a read and see what you think and if you had any additions? I of course have all of the evidence from the transcripts if you would like to see it but these are my general descriptions of the themes that emerged. Hope you are doing great!

Karen

--

Sylvia Smith

Coordinator, Project of Heart Phase 1

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## **Appendix J: Handout about Decolonizing teaching**

Sylvia Smith, my critical colleague, writes: I made up this sheet after being asked to address the public at a workshop organized by Niigaan to look at the First Nations Education Act. I thought you might like/connect with some of my themes, and if you find them helpful in your work, please feel to use them. I gave this talk on March 1st at the Jack Purcell Community Centre.

### **What's this "teaching for de-colonization" all about?**

#### **You know you "get" teaching for de-colonization when:**

1) You inculcate a healthy skepticism in your learners:

A decolonizing teacher instills a love of learning and inculcates healthy skepticism of her learners. She is all about moving learners out of an "obedience to authority".

2) You embrace active citizenship and model it for your learners:

A de-colonizing teacher always acknowledges the original peoples of the territory and thanks them for allowing the learning to happen on that territory (recognition of territorial ownership). She also recognizes the international agreements--nation to nation agreements--that have taken place on that territory and reminds the learners that there are responsibilities that have to be lived up to in order to honour those agreements.

3) You expand the concept of literacy to "reading the environment" and then act in response to your newly acquired knowledge.

A de-colonizing teacher recognizes that literacy is much more than reading/writing/rithmetic. Literacy must be extended into reading the texts of the world in which you live. In other words, knowing what's happening on the land/water that you and your community live on, or gain your living from. Teaching your students to "reading the landscape" will engage their hearts and spirits, and motivate them into action to protect and nurture it.

4) You seek out the Aboriginal Elders in your territory and find ways for them to teach your students.

A decolonizing teacher integrates the Elders and their teachings into the work he's doing.

5) You "get" the connection between the exploitation of Indigenous women and the exploitation of the environment and act on that knowledge.

A decolonizing teacher does everything within his ability to raise students' awareness of the vulnerability of Aboriginal women (and children) and the vulnerability of the environment. He models actions to address the issues head-on and invites student participation.

6) You “get” the connection between *land* and *Aboriginal identity*, *land* and *languages*.

A de-colonizing teacher educates her learners to help protect Aboriginal Rights (enshrined in the Canadian Constitution). Recognition that there is an inextricable connection between Indigenous people and “land” in maintaining their cultural identity is paramount. She also educates her learners to the central importance of maintaining Indigenous languages to the maintaining of cultural identity.

7) You understand that Canada’s desire for assimilation of Indigenous people is as strong today as it ever has been.

A de-colonizing teacher has a circular view of history. She sees that policies that created Indian Residential Schools is currently being enacted in First Nations child welfare, education, and health as well as in the FNEA.

8) You jump at opportunities to involve your students in social justice and environmental justice projects.

A de-colonizing teacher finds creative ways to link what projects he wants to do, to the curriculum. He is not deterred by curriculum documents--he uses them to his advantage!

9) You understand mainstream curricula’s deficits in assessment and evaluation.

A decolonizing teacher recognizes that “heart/spirit” learning must be included in her assessment and evaluation of student learning. She takes concrete steps to decrease her power and increase students’ power regarding assessment and evaluation of their learning.

10) You are vocal in your support of increasing the numbers of Indigenous education workers at every level.

A decolonizing teacher recognizes that the formal education systems need to have Indigenous people working within it. A truly decolonized Education System means that it must be designed and implemented by FN, Inuit and Metis people.

**So, what’s de-colonization all about?** \_\_\_\_\_