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Editorial

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A glance at the titles of the articles in this issue of *in education* (Autumn 2015) brings many words to mind to describe the contemporary educational landscape: eclectic, emotional, complex, and bureaucratic, to name but a few.

A closer look, however, points to some shared visions in this landscape: education as a site of struggle, resistance, and courage; places of respect and reciprocity; places of mentorship and of collaboration and sharing; places that accommodate and even celebrate difference, and places that seek new paths to understanding. All of the articles discuss various *transformative* aspects of the educational work the authors are doing.

The peer-reviewed articles in Volume 21.2 of *in education* serve to remind us that education is above all a human endeavour. This is its wonder and its curse. These articles show not only the initiatives of individuals, but also the flaws in the educational systems and structures we have built. Brenda McMahan's qualitative study seeks to understand the experiences of successful university students whose prior experiences in high school were a struggle. One implication of the study is recognition of "the role that educators can play in creating equitable, democratic schools" (p. 19). Jesse Butler in his analysis of Ontario's Indigenous Education Policy quotes Thomas King's tongue-in-cheek definition of government policy: "For an individual, one of the definitions of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again in the same way and expecting different results. For a government, such behaviour is called ... policy" (p. 27). I am reminded that in education we, by necessity, are in a constant state of flux, understanding the need to constantly revise and re-envision. This is what learning is.

In this issue, human learning is tied to key words such as resilience, relationships, identity, and transformation. In their article on duoethnographic inquiry, Jackie Seidel and Laurie Hill quote Derrida's description of the inability to decide "not as inaction or paralysis in the face of a decision, but as the responsibility and necessity *to choose*. He insists that this is the beginning ground of all ethics and politics." The authors add, "and we propose this as the beginning ground of all pedagogical work, too" (p. 52). The articles in this issue reflect what they describe as "the deeply personal yet public nature of curriculum [and all educational] work" (p. 63).

In a very personal exploration, Michele Tanaka's account of "supporting preservice teachers in their personal journeys towards decolonizing and indigenizing" uses poetic expression to describe her search for courage to leave patterned thinking and knowing aside. She writes, "It would be easier if there were prescriptive steps as to how to decolonize or take an indigenous approach, but this is impossible given our complexity as individuals and in relationship" (p. 82). Similarly, Damara Goff Paris's illustrated article on *Art-Based Ways of Knowing* shows transformation through "identification with Indigenous art forms, strength in spirituality, and evolution of cultural identities" (p. 141). Similarly, using Innu poems and translations, and visuals, Julie Vaudrin-Charette explores post-colonial "pedagogical implications lying within public and intimate

territories of *silenced narratives* and the *narrative(s) of silence(s)* in our various practices as educators” (p.150).

Christine Nelson and Natalie Youngbull’s inquiry uses Tribal Critical Race theory to reveal how Indigenous undergraduates “tapped into their own supply of indigenous knowledge to relate their mentoring experience to building relationships, being a positive influence on their respective tribal communities, and recognizing that learning is cyclical” (p.104). In contrast, Elizabeth Ann Munro, Jennifer Mitton-Kukner, and Deborah Graham’s self-study caused undergraduates “to inquire deeply into their assessment histories.” Students in the study were confronted with competing versions of assessment philosophy that created tension and reflection. They conclude, “Our self-study has raised awareness of how fundamental collaboration is to our work as teacher educators.” Transformation, then, does not develop in isolation, and its achievement takes time. We might take solace, then, in Herman Michell’s explanation of Bush Cree storytelling methodology, which recognizes the inextricable connections between language, story, and philosophy. Michell says, “Bush Cree stories are open-ended, allowing for a diversity of possible meanings with no beginning and no ending” (p. 176). To be immersed in this methodology evokes the key words common to the educational landscape evoked in this issue.

This issue of *in education* provides multiple examples of educational transformations from which we might learn, embracing a diverse range of articles on which to ponder: topics range from schools as sites for personal transformation for at-risk students; an analysis of Ontario’s Indigenous education policy with recommendations for 2016; a duoethnographic inquiry into the highs and lows of the long-term process of implementing a new and innovative field-experience curriculum; and assessment education of preservice teachers to transformative inquiry as a mode of inquiry that resonates with Indigenist inquiry, allowing educators to respond purposefully to issues such as ecological sustainability, social justice, and holistic health and wellness; realizing Indigenous knowledge through a service-learning model; using arts-based ways of knowing to explore the topic of leadership and identity with Native American Deaf women; reading silenced narratives through Innu poetry towards reconciliation of international relations; and finally, using Bush Cree storytelling methods for teaching, healing, and transforming. The idea of a fundamental change in perspective or frame of reference is at the heart of transformative learning (King, 2002).

Our spring 2016 issue will be a special issue on Indigenous education, so there will be more to explore on the theme of Indigenous education.

Possibilities for Students At-Risk: Schools as Sites for Personal Transformation

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Abstract

This qualitative study furthers educational theory and research related to resilience and personal transformation. It develops connections between existing educational resilience research and change theories, and it utilizes these bodies of scholarship to propose a theory of personal transformation. Based on interviews with students who were successful in university after either not graduating from high school or graduating from non-academic high school programs, a metaphor of a Mobius strip is developed to hypothesize a theory of transformation as a means of understanding the students' journeys.

Keywords: education; equity in education; resilience

Possibilities for Students At-Risk: Schools as Sites for Personal Transformation

There is ongoing interest in educational theory and practice about student risk and student resilience (Barr & Parrett, 2001; Downey, 2008; Goldstein & Brooks, 2006; McMahon, 2007, 2015; Norman, 2000; Taylor & Thomas, 2001). Although resilience is almost exclusively associated with risk (Kaplan, 2006), the phenomena of being at-risk or being resilient are typically examined in isolation from each other. Change from being at-risk to resilient is largely expressed in behavioural language or strictly in terms of an individual's relationship to an educational institution. At the same time, despite a body of literature that identifies education as transformational (Mezirow, 1995; Taylor, 2008), extensive searches of educational literature reveal an absence of research in the realm of the personal, social, and emotional transformations that adolescents and adults who are at risk experience as they develop resilience and shift from disengagement to engagement, and/or academic failure to success in schools.

This paper, which is part of a larger qualitative study (McMahon, 2004), addresses these gaps in educational research by articulating connections between educational resilience research and change theories, and by utilizing these bodies of scholarship to propose a theory of personal transformation. The initial study consisted of interviews with university students who had either not graduated from high schools or who had completed high school without credits required for university admission. That study examined concepts of student engagement, resilience, and personal transformations. For the purposes of this paper, I first provide an overview of relevant literature on resilience and identity as related to change, transition, and transformation. Secondly, I present data from participants' narratives of emotional and social journeys from being at academic risk in high schools to being academically successful in universities academic experiences. Thirdly, I use the Mobius strip as a metaphor to hypothesize a theory of transformation as a means of understanding these students' personal transformations. Finally, I identify key issues for educators to consider in the creation and maintenance of inclusionary school environments that foster growth and transformation and make recommendations for further research.

Review of Literature

This section provides a brief overview of literature describing resilience factors and processes, personal identity, change, transition, and transformation.

Resilience

In order to understand how some people overcome, or succeed despite apparent risk factors and processes, educational researchers and theorists have identified either protective factors and processes or proximal and distal factors (Celik, Cetin, & Tutkun, 2015) that are integral to resilience. Some theorists (Barr & Parrett, 2001; Kaplan, 2006; Taylor & Thomas, 2001) emphasize the significance of protective factors, formulated as internal attributes of individuals while other scholars (McMahon, 2007; Norman, 2000; Rennie & Dolan, 2010) focus on protective processes, envisioned as existing within and across relationships. Although not mutually exclusive, both perspectives conceive of resilience as mechanisms that "ameliorate" or "buffer" a "person's reaction to a situation that in ordinary circumstances leads to maladaptive outcomes" (Taylor & Thomas, 2001,

p. 9). Researchers (Barr & Parrett; 2001; Celik et al., 2015; Norman, 2000; Smokowski, Reynolds, & Berzucsko, 1999) identify personal attributes differentiating children who are resilient from their peers who remain at risk. These include an absence of organic deficits, an easy temperament combined with increased responsiveness, adaptability, an internal locus of control, a positive outlook, a social competency, an ability to solve problems, a sense of autonomy, a sense of purpose, and a sense of humour. For adolescents and adults who are members of minoritized communities, positive ethnic identity affirmation is an essential component of resilience (Garrett et al., 2014; Williams, Aiyer, Durkee, & Tolan, 2014). Protective factors are often seen as indicative of an individual's agency and essential to facilitate the process of overcoming adversity.

In addition to individual attributes, resilience is also defined as existing in interpersonal dynamics; specifically, student resilience is fostered by support from family members, peers, educators, schools, as well as social and community organizations. For example, parents' high expectations pressure students to remain in school and work toward high achievement (McMillan & Reed, 1994). Along with family, Johnson (1997) highlights the significance of school and community "as potentially protecting students from risk factors or as potentially compensating for personal and social disadvantage" (p. 45). Westfall and Pisapia (1994) claim that the existence of support systems at home, school, and the community engender "the development of constructive personality traits such as self-efficacy, goals orientation, optimism, internal expectations, personal responsibility, and coping ability" (p. 4). In keeping with efforts to understand resilience processes, Pianta and Walsh (1998) also maintain, "resiliency is produced by the interactions among a child, family, peers, school, and community" (p. 411). They caution against the dangers of "locating the successes of children in one (or even two or three) of these places [child, family, school], in the absence of an emphasis on the interactions, transactions, and relationships among these places" (p. 410). As an arena wherein relationships among individuals, groups, and systems occur, schools have a significant role to play in creating environments conducive to resilience (Bethea & Robinson, 2007). Benard (1995) contends that "reciprocal caring, respectful, and participatory relationships are the critical determining factors in...whether a youth feels he or she has a place in this society" (p. 3). Similarly, Smokowski, Reynolds, and Bezruczko (1998) find that the "relational bonds" between teachers and resilient adolescents were important in buffering risks and facilitating adaptive development. Schools as sites of resilience include colleges and universities (Walker, Gleaves, & Gray, 2006) where resilience is seen as important for student success.

The concepts of risk and resilience and of personal identity can be further examined through scholarship regarding vulnerability, adaptation, and agency. From an ecological perspective, Adger (2006) describes vulnerability, or risk, as a mechanism to describe "states of susceptibility to harm, powerlessness, and marginality...and for guiding normative analysis of actions to enhance well-being through reduction of risk (p. 268). Resilience factors and processes can be understood as adaptation or agency. Nelson, Adger, and Brown (2007) identify adaptation as "concerned with actors, actions, and agency and is recognized...as an ongoing process" (p. 398). They further claim that instead of focusing on reducing vulnerabilities associated with risk, "a resilience approach recognizes that vulnerabilities are an inherent part of any system. Thus, rather

than trying to eliminate vulnerability, the challenges are to identify acceptable levels of vulnerability and to maintain the ability to respond when vulnerable areas are disturbed” (Nelson, Adger, & Brown, 2007, p. 412). An ecological or systems approach to resilience conceives agency as operating at individual, organizational, and system levels. As individuals, Bandura (2000) states, “people are partly the products of their environments, but by selecting, creating, and transforming their environmental circumstances they are producers of environments as well. This agentic capability enables them to shape the course of events” (p. 75). *Agentic*, as defined by Lester (2004), “is a force expressing itself, rather than a pawn of other forces” (p. 94). Because individuals live their lives in community with others, at institutional and systemic levels, forms of agency also include proxy agency, as when others work as advocates on behalf of individuals, and collective agency, whereby individuals work in a community to create change (Bandura, 2000). These agentic forces work in concert so that individual resilience factors and organizational resilience processes co-exist in order to reduce risk and adapt to conditions of vulnerability.

Identity

Personal identity has complex intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions. Kroger (2000) contends that “identities are formed through the mutual regulation of society with individual biology and psychology; thus the range of variation in the identities that will be sanctioned and fostered lies in the hands of the culture itself” (p. 66). Consistent with the concept of resilience processes, critical identity theorists (Kelly, 1997; Hemmings, 1998, Widdershoven, 1994) emphasize the impact of external social forces on identity formation. While not negating the significance of personal agency, and consequently resilience factors, Kelly (1997) claims that identities “are not forged through personal and psychic claims only; and...are never formulated outside the political dynamics of the social and the symbolic that mediate all signifying claims” (p. 108). As a precursor of these ideologies, theorist Vygotsky (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001) adopted a socio-cultural approach to education that emphasized the role of social influences on children’s cognitive development. He maintained that interactions with others form the basis for development, as dependent on the influence of external social environments as it is on internal processes. In keeping with the situational nature of resilience processes, Agnew (1996) claims that “the perception of who one is and of one’s location vis-à-vis other social groups can change in different contexts” (pp. 62 – 63). Students’ identities as learners are shaped by interactions with educators and other students and some schools and classrooms are conducive to resilience building for students at risk while others are not. As Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) demonstrated, teachers’ beliefs about students’ capabilities become self-fulfilling prophecies and students can become the learners teachers anticipate.

Similar to notions of identity, conceptions of change and development have various meanings. However, “unlike identity, in which the core of the concept concerns sameness, the essence of development is change” (Grotevant, Bosma, de Levita, & Graafsma, 1994, p. 15). Theorists (Brammer, 1991; Bridges, 2001; Jick, 1993a & b) differentiate between kinds of change. Developmental change is change in its most superficial form. Transitions are deeper than developmental changes and involve letting

go of identities and the beginnings of a redefinition of self and transformational change occurring at the deepest level.

Change

Developmental change is seen as growth as in “the improvement of a skill, method or condition” or the ability to “do better than’ or to ‘do more of’ what already exists” (Jick, 1993a, p. 2). This happens in schools as students understand new concepts and develop skills. Developmental change theory adaptation and growth can be seen as an actualization tendency (Kegan, 2000). Change in this sense suggests adaptation and modification to existing internal and external conditions such as when students adapt their behaviours to policies and practices in schools. Anderson and Hayes (1996) extend the temporal dimension of development, reporting that identity development is a continuous process throughout adulthood and that “new sources of self-esteem are found through a reappraisal process that highlights areas of one’s life that have yet to be fulfilled or have changed in personal meaning” (p. 23). Although expressed in developmental terms, unlike child development theories, which imply definable, linear, age-related progression, literature examining adult developmental change “suggests movement and fluidity, a back-and-forth motion that may be best observed in general as opposed to trying to capture change in age-specific categories” (Anderson & Hayes, 1996, p. 8). For adults, in particular, changes do not occur within a prefixed timetable. While changes may entail situational shifts, they do not require alterations in perceptions or beliefs and for many adults in university, change occurs without concurrent fundamental paradigm shifts. Kegan (2000) suggests that it is possible for “changes in one’s fund of knowledge, one’s confidence as a learner, one’s self-perception as a learner, one’s motives in learning, one’s self-esteem...to take place without any transformation because they occur within the existing frame of reference” (pp. 50 – 51). However, shifting to a new frame of reference is indicative of either a transition or a transformation as opposed to a developmental change.

Transition

The distinction between change and transition, according to Bridges (2001), is that “change can happen at any time, but transition comes along when one chapter of your life is over and another is waiting in the wings to make its entrance” (p. 16). Examples of this in education could be moving from high school to college or university. Bridges (2001) maintains that “transition invokes the psychological dimension of change,” and “even the prospect of change can put us into transition,” and “the change itself may immediately go from old to new...transition always makes us spend a surprising amount of time in that uncomfortable in-between neutral zone” (p. 3). The resulting qualitative changes in identity only take place if development as adaptation is no longer feasible. In this case, a person’s “identity may be expected to be disequilibrated and to undergo an accommodative process when it can no longer assimilate successfully new life experiences” (Marcia, 1994, p. 71). Transitions may occur if students move from small homogeneous high schools to large, racially, culturally, and experientially diverse universities.

Change theorists (Brammer, 1991, Bridges, 2001, Frankel, 1998) describe the instability of transitions. Even those that are self-initiated and seen by the individuals as positive are accompanied by feelings of grief and loss, which is a by-product of letting “go of our old outlook, our old reality, our old values, our old self-image” (Bridges, 2001, p. 5). Quoting Scott, Frankel (1998) reports that during “transitions, there are times of unusual suspension, loneliness, [a] sense of being vaguely out of joint, [a] heightened sensitivity to pain and loss, [and] symptoms of grief” (p. 83). These emotional discomforts are some of the reasons that individuals resist transitional changes, “not because we can’t accept change, but because we can’t accept letting go of that piece of ourselves that we have to give up when or because the situation has changed” (Bridges, 2001, p. 3). By focusing on the need for transformation, and by developing resilience coping mechanisms such as acquiring a positive outlook, problem solving, support building, and managing stress, individuals are able to navigate transitions successfully. According to Bridges’ (2001) archetype, this transition involves not only new attitudes and self-images, but also it entails “a new sense of ourselves, a new outlook, and a new sense of purpose and possibility” (p. 6). Similarly, Brammer (1991) sees “experiencing a paradigm shift” (p. 8) as an outcome of undergoing transition that could occur because of a shift from academic failure to academic achievement. In order to navigate transitions successfully, these theorists claim that individuals must overcome the difficult challenges involved in letting go of the past. This is what distinguishes changes from transitions. The distinction between transitions and transformations is more difficult to delineate clearly, since they are different in degree rather than in kind.

Transformation

While developmental change may be part of both transition and transformation, the reverse is not necessarily the case. With reference to education, Kegan (2000) supports a distinction between change and transformation by highlighting the dissimilarity “between assimilated processes, in which new experience is shaped to conform to existing knowledge structures and accommodative processes, in which the structures themselves change in response to new experiences” (Kegan, 2000, p. 47). The former is change while the latter is either transition or transformation. The depth of transformation is evident in that “we do not only change our meanings [but also,] we change the very form by which we are making our meanings” (Kegan, 2000, p. 53). What distinguishes personal transformation from change and transition is a complicated process involving cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and social dimensions that have practical consequences for the way individuals interact on intra- and interpersonal levels.

Change theorists (Brammer, 1991; Bridges, 2001; Porter, 1999; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992) have attempted to delineate this process. The models they developed are important in that they recognize the agency of the person who is changing as well as the visible, external, and behavioural components, and the invisible, internal, and motivational components involved in change processes. As opposed to linear change models, these paradigms propose a gradual spiral through stages, which, although fixed, present the time spent in each and the direction of movement as individual phenomenon. Brammer (1991) speaks of envisioning life, not as a lifeline or circle but as cyclical, proceeding “like a spiral; thus events tend to repeat implying that if this opportunity is not grasped another one will come along in due time” (p. 11).

Movement from one stage to another is nonlinear, ambivalent, and individual and may be based on either a desire to move to another stage, or resistance when there is a lack of cohesion between the changer and the current stage (Prochaska et al., 1992; Porter, 1999). The strength of these models is that they focus on the individual and his or her agency in undergoing transitions. This is also their limitation. While they do acknowledge that there may be triggers in the environment that lead to the initiation of transformational processes or that these may be instituted in response to external factors, they ignore ongoing interactions between the individual and his or her social environments. With the individual as their sole focus they fail to explicitly recognize either the multiple identities which constitute and are constituted by the "locatedness" of the individual, or the relevant external enhancers and inhibitors involved in this process.

Methodology

Data were gathered from semi-structured interviews with students currently experiencing academic success in two universities who previously experienced academic failure in high schools. Focusing on the students' accounts of their experiences addresses concerns raised by Gitlin and Russell (1994) who observe that traditional academic institutions use a dominant perspective of knowledge and knowledge creation that "helps create a great divide between those who regularly produce specialized forms of knowledge and those who are supposed to be informed by that knowledge" (p. 184). Furthermore, even though there is an abundance of research conducted on schooling in North America, Seidman (1998) makes a valid contention that in educational contexts, "little of it is based on studies involving the perspective of students [etc.]...whose individual and collective experience constitutes schooling" (p. 4). As a means of filling this gap, the focus on students' perspectives in this study is also in keeping with Norum's (2004) suggestion that narrative inquiry, as a form of qualitative research, "creates a space for and values personal voice and the sharing of personal perspectives . . . people's stories are brought to the forefront and become the data" (p. 4). To understand their stories, participants were asked questions about their experiences with academic failure and success; personal, social and educational factors and events that impacted their academic achievement; personal, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural changes concurrent with or following changes in academic status; and changes in interpersonal relationships with friends, family, community members, and educators concurrent with or following changes in academic status.

Purposive sampling and snowballing techniques (Merriam, 1998) were used in the selection of participants for this study. University transitional and bridging program¹ were contacted and they sent information to their graduates who were enrolled in universities. Interested participants contacted me as a result and some participants referred others for the study. The interviews were created and administered according to university human subjects' protocols. Pseudonyms were used, and subject confidentiality was maintained so that only participants in the study could accurately identify their contributions. I personally transcribed the data and the participants were provided with the opportunity to review, edit, and add to transcript data. Consistent with Creswell's (2009) systematic process for coding data, I read the transcripts multiple times individually and in groups, first to gain a global sense of the data and then to divide responses into sections. Overarching codes relevant to resilience and transformation were derived from the

interview questions. Specific codes within these larger categories became apparent from the interview data. I revisited the data to check for accuracy, and the themes were critically analyzed to ensure that they authentically represented the phenomenon. I integrated the sections, analyzed statements, and categorized them into clusters of emerging themes.

Findings

Although in terms of their current university academic achievements, the respondents who were the focus of this study could be considered an elite sample, from other perspectives this was not the case. The participants consist of two Black females (Deanna, Elaine), one Black male (Anthony), two White males (Frank, Greg), and three White females (Barbara, Carol, Jennifer). All but two (Barbara, Greg) grew up in single parent households, all except one (Greg) grew up in families with low socio-economic status, and three (Barbara, Frank, Jennifer) did not graduate from high school. Those who completed high school had been streamed into non-academic programs that did not prepare them for post-secondary, formal education.

All of the respondents identified intra- and interpersonal transformations they have experienced as a result of, or at least concurrent with, changes in their academic achievements. All the participants referred to increases in their self-esteem, growth in self-sufficiency, and developments in the attainability of goals, some of which is a result of newfound beliefs in their abilities. Changes in their feelings about themselves, other people, and the larger world were expressed with both elation and trepidation. All of the participants articulated experiencing changes in relationships with a family member and/or friends. While all described their journeys as positive, forward-moving, growth experiences, they also referred to external and internal impediments to, and feelings of loss experienced during, their change processes. Analysis of the data revealed three distinct phases of change and transformation. However, their responses suggested that the type or level of change was dependent on the length of time and degree to which they would have been considered at risk, or the extent to which their lived experiences and identities were (in)compatible with their previous educational institutions. For example, although Greg recounts his transformative experiences, his background as a White middle-class male with two parents in professional occupations meant that even when he was not succeeding academically, he did not envision himself as not belonging in academic settings, his effort, and not his ability, having been questioned. Conversely, in order to undergo their transformations, participants who were members of marginalized racial and economic communities such as Anthony, Barbara, Deanna, and Elaine who had received negative judgements about their academic abilities, had to re-envision themselves as academically capable.

Dissatisfaction

For participants in this study, the first phase of their transformations was characterized by dissatisfaction, disengagement, and alienation from educational institutions that began in elementary and/or secondary school and lasted throughout the period when they would have been characterized as at risk. Their narratives identified factors related to school personnel and curriculum that created risk. For example, Elaine

recalled that her Grade 9 principal stigmatized her. “He knew the area I was coming from and I think he believed because everyone else failed...‘You’re supposed to not want anything’” (Elaine, interview, September 2003). This was similar to Carol’s Grade 9 experience when she said, “I don’t know if anyone even paid attention, but I went to half of Grade 9 and dropped out and worked full-time” (interview, October 2003). Of teachers and administrators she suggested, “They could have noticed that I wasn’t showing up and even pulled me aside and say you know, you haven’t been here for two weeks and now you show up today, what’s going on?” (Carol, interview, October 2003) This educational faculty disinterest was echoed by Deanna, who says that in high school, “I had one teacher who would show up to class... you could smell alcohol on him and it was so obvious that the teachers knew—the whole school knew and there’s no way for them not to know” (interview, September, 2003).

Anthony recalled his early high school encounters with school personnel as decidedly negative: “I felt like I was always targeted especially by vice-principals, principals, and teachers. They perceived me in certain ways.” This was magnified by external societal hegemonic structures, “It’s everyday, day-to-day people and how they treat young, especially young Black adolescents are the most targeted. To be young Black and 16, you are a target, 24 hours a day, seven days a week” (Anthony, interview, September 2003). This lack of caring was not limited to students such as Deanna and Anthony who were persistently marginalized by educators. Jennifer also experienced the callousness when an upheaval in her home life had repercussions for her academic performance. Her feelings about this were evident when she said, “If you see a kid going from honour roll down to 30%, you would think that they would notice something and nobody, counsellors, nobody did anything” (Jennifer, interview, October, 2003).

Instead of being equitable sites that mitigate risk, schools further exacerbated Anthony’s alienation through meaningless and irrelevant curriculum. Rather than token references to American Black athletes as possible role models, he said, “It would have made me feel that I could be part of the system knowing that there were other Black professionals who were part of the system and they struggled and they’re there now and they survived and they did it all. I never had that” (Anthony, interview, September 2003). Similarly, Frank speculated that one reason he quit school in Grade 10 was that “everything in school just seemed irrelevant. I never saw myself going on to university and so I thought, ‘why do I have to know any of this?’” (interview, September 2003). Although he saw himself reflected in the curriculum, Greg blamed rote practices and disinterested teachers whose approach was “very dry” and who would tell students to “just do your work” for contributing to his disengagement from school.

The participants’ narratives revealed the existence of a period during which their dissatisfaction with aspects of their lives was augmented by an understanding that they had the power to choose between differing options and to act on those choices. In Anthony’s words, “Students ... need to know of all their options because when you think you can only do one thing you neglect exploring other things that you can get into and do” (interview, September, 2003). The participants referred to their initial awareness of these choices as originating from knowing what they did not want to do. For Barbara this was “a real desire to not do anything that was day to day” (interview October 2003). Similarly, Carol spoke of her desire for a different life than the one she was living.

I was just sort of sick of—sick of living, trying to pay my rent on tips and—just so fed up with it and just not getting any further. I would never have gotten a job that paid me any more than \$15,000 – \$18,000 a year. (Carol, interview, October 2003)

Deanna was also employed in the service sector. According to her, “I was at a clothing store...It wasn’t a pleasant environment and I’m not a fake person and I found it very difficult to be fake every day and push my fakeness on people. So I didn’t do well” (Deanna, interview, September 2003). In keeping with this theme, Elaine said, “I wanted an education...I wanted good things in life. I didn’t want to become like a lot of the people in my area; trapped, poor and with little hope” (interview, September 2003). Anthony recalled the impetus that provoked his shift from this phase. “I feel that what saved me was that I was 19 and thought to myself ‘I’m going nowhere and I’m just going to be another statistic. Another young Black person who is not educated, who doesn’t have a diploma’” (Anthony, interview, September 2003).

Cohesion

The second phase of the participants’ journey was characterized by the excitement and energy associated with connecting institutional learning with their indigenous knowledge. Anthony stated, “I just love knowledge. I like to learn. Especially being within this environment that I am right now there are so many things” (interview, September, 2003). Likewise, Barbara reflected, “I loved the books we were being asked to read and I wanted to talk about them and I wanted to be involved” (interview, October 2003). Carol recalled that one of the things she most enjoys about university is “the actual things we talk about in that class and what I learn in that class. I think I actually apply them to my life” (interview October 2003). While the participants were overwhelmingly positive about this experience, they also experienced it as conflicted as they made connections between politics, power, and privilege. Jennifer and Anthony summarized these feelings. Jennifer located her anger arising from her increased awareness within the learning environment as she reflects, “Sometimes I’d get mad as hell at a professor but they brought the best out in me. They forced me to do well” (interview, October 2003). Furthermore, Anthony emphasized inequities generated by larger societal forces, “Sometimes what you learn really pisses you off... it’s politics and economics and you have to deal with it and learn as much as you can and just go with it” (interview, September 2003).

In addition to meaningful curriculum, educational personnel provided support during this phase. Contrary to her earlier experiences with inauthentic and uncaring educators, Deanna says, “Everyone seems real there. They seem genuine and seem aware like, if you come to them and say, I’m going through a lot of difficulties because of this, they’re like, okay, we understand, you’re not the first” (interview, September, 2003). This level of compassion was juxtaposed with high expectations. Barbara expresses admiration for one professor, “He was so helpful; he was so kind and considerate and gracious. I was just so grateful for people like him who saw something in me and had faith in me and it was people like him who made me think I could do this” (interview, October, 2003). Similarly, says Frank, “I would go to some professors after class and meet with them and I became really engaged in the papers that I wrote.” Beyond this,

“the teachers, [the] faculty there were really supportive and helped a lot but for me it was even bigger with having a lot of other comrades who... felt the same way” (interview, September, 2003). Likewise, Anthony described his experience with educators who supported him, “It seemed like there was a strong community of teachers... Most important of all, everyone treated me with respect” (interview, September 2003). The participants configured respect from educators as constituted by high expectations and autonomy. Greg summarized their attitude with “they would talk to you one-on-one and point out what it was that you weren’t doing well without making it sound like they were making you change. They left the decisions and responsibility to the student, which pushed people to do better” (interview, September, 2003). The respondents’ recollections of interactions with educators and educational institutions assumed absolute dimensions. The extremes of non-supportive teachers and schools were replaced by compassionate and engaging relationships with faculty and institutions without reference to any small steps in between.

Concurrent with their academic progress, they referred to growth in external familial and social supports. This was exemplified in Anthony recollection of his mother’s earlier “nonchalant” attitude toward his returns to high school that changed dramatically by the time he graduated from the transitional program. This is the point at which he recalled, “I started to get lots of love and support” (Anthony, interview, September, 2003). Again, the lines between the primacy of internal and external factors and processes were blurred as the participants spoke of increases to their perseverance and esteem in conjunction with positive support and relationships within and outside of educational institutions. For example, Deanna said of herself, “I adjust according to wherever I am ... I did what I had to do” (interview, September 2003). She also stated that concurrent with her success in university, I have “become more self-assured, more self-aware, self-love – all that positive stuff ... and I’ve become less angry, less judgmental – less of all the negative things and more of all the positive” (interview, September 2003). This optimistic outlook was echoed by Elaine’s claims that success in school “gave me a lot of confidence. It gave me a lot of willpower. It let me know that I could do anything I really want to do and if I’m doing it for myself it makes it a million times better” (interview, September, 2003). Greg’s experience is similar as he indicated, “I think I feel a lot better about myself... I’m a lot more motivated now and happy about my life than I would have been before” (interview, September 2003). As well, Carol linked her increased confidence within academic spheres with other aspects of her life. She credited her accomplishments as giving her “self worth probably more than anything. I just will not even engage with someone that even wants to put me down” (interview, October, 2003). Further to this, Jennifer disclosed, “I have better faith in people. I think my attitude has changed. People aren’t so bad... There are some people in the educational system that do care” (interview, October 2003).

Regrouping

There was evidence of a third phase in the participants’ narratives of their personal transformations. The interviewees all provided examples of times they needed to regroup as they struggled with their identities as successful students that highlighted the non-linear nature of their journeys. Carol and Jennifer returned to and left high school several times before their admissions to their bridging program. According to Jennifer,

“Coming back to school was so hard, there were some days I just wanted to give up and go back to getting my old job back” (interview, October 2003). Elaine’s narrative emphasized the dichotomy inherent in being Black and academically successful. As she recalled:

It has to do with how people looked at me, not just what I did but what people expected of me. Although I identify myself as a Black student, some people say, “You know, you’re not. You could be something else if you want. You could say you’re something else if you want.” I guess some teachers didn’t know I was Black although I don’t know how you couldn’t know and I think that shapes a lot. I don’t think they thought I could be something other than Black. I think they thought I should *want* to be something other than Black. So of things I could chose to identify myself as, why would you chose to identify yourself as Black? That is the experience I have. Black is less than. It should be the least of your choices so if you could choose something better than Black why not choose to be something better? (Elaine, interview, September 2003)

Another aspect of the iterative nature of their transformation processes was evident as the participants made discoveries about the limitations of their programs that resulted in another phase of Dissatisfaction. As Deanna described it:

You’re told, ‘Oh you’re going to go to university. They’re going to welcome you ... you’re just a new budding mind, and then you get there and they want you out. They’re going to do their best to weed you out. (interview, December 2003)

Jennifer articulated a similar experience in moving from the college to the university at large: “This is a totally different atmosphere, and I never thought I would say that. I thought university was the be all and end all. It is great but you’re just a number” (interview, January 2004). Additionally, three of the participants contacted me after the interviews were completed to report that the university programs they were successful in led to degrees that did not allow them to enter teacher preparation programs, even in the universities granting these degrees. They expressed feelings of betrayal and frustration that institutions were once again erecting barriers to the fulfillment of their career goals and spoke of a desire to circumvent these obstacles.

Discussion

The image that emerged from the data to symbolize the participants’ ongoing transformational processes is that of a Mobius strip. This unending, one-edged circle with its illusion that what appears to be internal is external and vice-versa is consistent with a transactional and transformative notion of resilience (Elias, Parker, & Rosenblatt, 2006; Luthans, Vogelgesang, & Lester, 2006). Resilience from this perspective emphasizes the interconnectedness of the individual and the environment over time to the extent that it becomes difficult to distinguish between the impact of the individual’s changes to his or her ability to overcome hardships and the environmental conditions that enable them to thrive. Both aspects are necessary and perhaps, in isolation, not sufficient for the development of resilience and the interviewees’ transformations. Just as educators’ views about participants’ deficiencies in academic capacity had become negative self-fulfilling prophecies in high schools, externally generated high expectations became internalized

positive self-fulfilling prophecies as they experienced success in university courses. Concurrent with the internalization of external expectations, as the students develop stronger academic identities, others experience and treat them differently.

In addition, the Mobius strip illustrates the complex relationship between identity as encompassing sameness and identity as constituted by change. Within this paradigm, change is continuous and individuals' identities exist internally and are influenced by families, peers, schools, and communities. Changes as transitions and transformations can be seen to result from the tensions inherent in moving through overlapping iterative phases, which, although containing aspects of models outlined in the Review of Literature—the phases of Dissatisfaction, Cohesion, and Regrouping—depict the processes that these marginalized individuals experienced as they struggle to develop efficacy within hegemonic structures. Movement from one phase to the next was more likely a result of cumulative issues rather than one singular event.

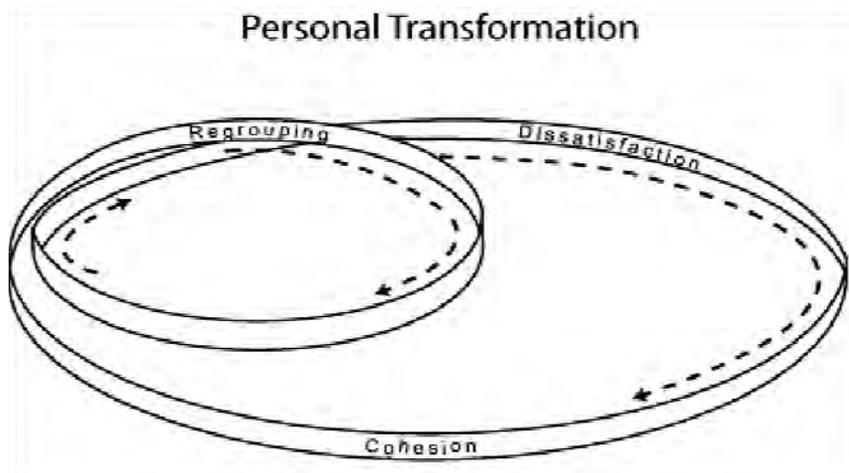


Figure 1. Personal Transformation

The image of the Mobius strip, with its retrograde motion as a means understanding the participants' narratives is consistent with earlier research by Gilligan (1982), who identified the importance of disequilibrium and movement between phases and in women's moral decision making. In a similar vein, the interviewees in this study refer to feelings of dissonance as instrumental to their personal transitions and transformations. In some sense, these phases occur simultaneously, since no one is in one place in all aspects of their personal social and academic lives. Changes from one phase to another occurred when either disequilibrium or equilibrium in one or more significant facets of their lives built to a point where the need for change outweighed remaining in the current phase.

Dissatisfaction

The participants' descriptions of themselves and their experiences throughout the Dissatisfaction Phase is demonstrative of the literature regarding students at risk that examines compounding effects of individual, family, community, and school factors. Risk factors for students that affect their vision of education as a means of achieving

success that were identified by the interviewees include living in poverty, membership in a minority race or ethnic group, single-parent family composition, and parents' low level of education (Barr & Parrett, 2001; Peart & Campbell, 1999). Policies and practices in schools that exacerbate risk and, consequently, dissatisfaction with educational institutions as sites where they could thrive were identified as irrelevant and meaningless curriculum, absence of authentically caring educators, lack of respect from teachers and administrators, and low and negative expectations by educators and the students themselves (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Garcia & Guerra, 2004). The participants were cognizant of the compounding impacts of internal and external sources of dissonance. Participants described a vision for their lives, which they formerly believed only existed for other people; they also believed they could achieve lives that differed from their current experiences, and they began taking steps toward achieving these multiple times. For example, although neither Barbara nor Jennifer completed high school after repeated attempts to do so, Anthony recalled that before he finally earned his secondary school graduation diploma, "I went from school to school, semester to semester. It was kind of sad because I committed to school for a month and then I would just drop out" (interview, January 2004).

The participants were able to move out of the Dissatisfaction Phase when external factors coincided with and supported their internal desire to complete secondary and post secondary schooling. Carol claimed that her return to school was made possible by economic assistance. "I know that sounds rotten to say but it's because they promised me that I would be financially okay if I decided to drop everything and come back to school" (interview, October, 2003). Deanne encountered a teacher who told her about the transitional program that enabled her to attend university despite receiving very low grades in high school. For Elaine the key was supportive faculty. "They encouraged me to come to school. They noticed me and said, 'You're 18 years old and have 3 credits so it's going to be an uphill climb'" (interview, September 2003). Efforts representing initial short-term forays into the Cohesion Phase were sustained when supported and maintained through increased coherence between personal, social, and institutional initiatives. The move to Cohesion happened when they were able to envision and sustain a different and better existence for themselves.

Cohesion

During the Cohesion Phase, individuals took action toward the achievement of their self-selected goals that cohered with institutional and/or social group supportive behaviours. Dissonance was reduced and individuals felt a greater sense of internal and external synchronicity. Similar to the Dissatisfaction Phase, the Cohesion Phase appeared to exist within a continuum, with some aspects of the participants' lives more synchronized than other aspects, rather than as an absolute shift within all intra- and interpersonal dimensions. Internally the Cohesion Phase was characterized by increases in self-esteem and self-efficacy, receptivity and reflexivity. Interpersonally, this phase exemplifies positive changes in relationships with families and friends, and in interactions with educators and educational institutions. Actions, behaviours, and attitudes that the participants enacted during this phase, as well as the external influences that support it, align with factors and processes identified in the resilience literature (Barr & Parrett, 2001; McMahon, 2007; Norman, 2000; Taylor & Thomas, 2001). Consistent

with Action and Maintenance Stages described by Prochaska et al. (1992) and Porter (1999), respondents spoke of the need to remain focused on their goal and sustain their efforts. Although these change theorists focus solely on individual agency, this phase entailed not only the internal, individual actions of, as Carol expressed it, “Just getting out of bed every morning.” It also required supportive relations with educators, the ability to access and find support from external resources, and for students such as Anthony and Elaine, the racial identity affirmation identified by Williams et al. (2014) as important for resilience, was realized as they saw themselves in the curriculum and as Black academics. The ability to move toward their goals, for each of the participants, was a result of coherence within the intersections of increased confidence in their abilities and supportive environmental factors, including family, friends, and educators.

This sense of equilibrium was disrupted by internal or external forces, initiating a move to the Regrouping Phase. The Cohesion Phase ended when either these support systems were no longer synchronized or the participants themselves lost their focus. Deanna referred to a disparity she experienced between the articulations of the transitional program and the actions of the university at large while Anthony claimed that his inactions led to a period of academic suspension from university before he regroup and was reinstated.

Regrouping

Porter (1999) uses the term *relapse* to depict an apparent return to prior behaviours and says that it “is simply a signal for an underlying need to return and complete the work of an earlier stage” (p. 87). This is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, the language of relapse suggests failure and needs to be reframed since, for these respondents at least, this phase is part of their ongoing transformative processes. Additionally, the developmental perspective implied by the notion of “unfinished business,” while it may account for some retrograde occurrences, does not capture the complexity of the respondents’ experiences, which are in keeping with notions of resistance, both internal and external. The term regrouping is more positive and in keeping with the cyclical nature of change identified by Porter (1999) and Brammer (1991). Individuals in this phase are not identical to who they were at an earlier time and their internal processes may be quite different than they were previously. Envisioning transformation in this way facilitates the reframing of those experiences that Porter (1999) constructs as a Relapse Stage, and Frankel (1998) calls *regression* and Bridges (2001), identifies as an inability to let go. What these theorists understood as backward motion involved in change and transformation could be conceptualized as analogous to retrograde motion in a Copernican sense whereby what appears from a certain perspective to be movement backward is actually forward motion. The Regrouping Phase was not, for these participants, equivalent to re-entrenchment, regression, or reversion. Instead, it was a necessary phase during which respondents attempted to reduce internal and external dissonance, reassess and reframe their identities, and come to terms with new, and as of yet, uncomfortable and unfamiliar ways of being.

Jick (1993b) claims that because of an individual’s sense of loss related to the giving up of identities and the need to construct and make meaning of new ones, “resistance is a part of the natural process of adapting to change; it is a normal response

to those who have a strong vested interest in maintaining their perception of the current state and guarding themselves against loss” (p. 330). Despite the dissonance between their lived experiences and their aspirations, there was security in knowing who they were and where they fit. Frank identified his need to regroup as recurring throughout this academic experience. At the beginning of this journey this was because he said, “I didn’t have a lot of confidence. I questioned my mental abilities.” As he achieved success, these thoughts and feelings dissipated. He expresses concern that now, “I’m at the end of it I have a lot of worries or anxiety about what I’m doing next and the fact that I’ll be not a student anymore but just an unemployed 35 year old with no particular marketable skills” (interview, January, 2004).

Carol spoke of the importance of retaining earlier friendships as a means of retaining the core of her identity while undergoing transformations in a manner consistent with Kamler’s (1994) contention that individuals “can only change identifications slowly. Demands for wholesale immediate change are not only offensive but also confused” (p. 260). In spite of the pull she felt toward the university and new relationships, she identified a need to speak in language that would be not seen as “too big” and of the importance to not give the impression she thought she was “better than or had moved ahead of” her friends. She explained how these connections grounded her.

I cried a lot. It was really difficult. Coming back to school was so hard, there were some days I just wanted to give up and go back to getting my old job back. And just being amongst those people again, it seemed so much easier. (Carol, interview, October 2003)

Other participants also spoke of their need to reconnect with family and friends from their earlier “non-academic” days in order to make sense of who they were and who they were becoming.

Frankel (1998) speaks of resistance to change and transformation as an adolescent phenomenon. “One of the inevitable struggles in adolescence is between a regressive pull back to what is known, familiar and safe, and a forward movement out into the world” (p. 6). However, a search for that which is safe is perhaps common to ventures into unfamiliar territories, regardless of age. Jennifer spoke of wanting to quit out of fear of losing friendships and she said that although her husband was incredibly supportive that a couple of times as she was growing and changing they also “had issues.”

Individuals in this phase were not identical to who they had been at an earlier time. Anthony, who became once more enmeshed in “friend and family drama” that affected his academic success in university, was able to articulate clearly these distinctions. Although, at the time of the initial interview he was on academic suspension from university, Anthony described how this was different from when he was in high school.

Back when I was a kid in high school I just didn’t want to be part of the system. I didn’t want to learn anything. I didn’t feel there was anything they could teach me that was relevant. Even though I’m on academic suspension currently, I did learn a lot of things last year. I did attend my lectures. I did do some readings. I handed in a few papers so I don’t think it was a total loss in terms of self-knowledge that I gained. Also there is the Internet, the

library, books and discussions with peers of mine who are in school so it's very much more of an academic environment right now whereas in high school it was more of a rebellion. (interview, January, 2004)

Anthony was reinstated in his program after his suspension, and subsequently graduated from the university.

The Regrouping Phase could be understood in terms of concerns about a loss of identity. Jick (1993b) claims that because of an individual's sense of loss related to the giving up of identities and the need to construct and make meaning of new ones, "resistance is a part of the natural process of adapting to change; it is a normal response to those who have a strong vested interest in maintaining their perception of the current state and guarding themselves against loss" (p. 330). Despite the dissonance between their lived experiences and their aspirations, there was security in knowing who they were and where they fit in order to continue their transformations.

Conclusions and Implications

The participants in this study are active citizens who participate in, question assumptions and actions of, and enrich democratic communities. As they have moved through cycles influenced by internal factors and external processes that mediated varying degrees of coherence and dissonance, the respondents experienced personal and social changes, transitions, and transformations. In response to research questions asking about their academic changes and personal and social transformations, it was apparent that these intrapersonal and interpersonal interactions occurred, and were made meaningful by, relationships with others in families, schools, and communities. Although this research did not claim to establish a causal connection between shifts in academic achievement and feelings of empowerment, the data demonstrated the respondents' increased awareness of their power to effect positive change, concurrent with improvements in academic achievement. At the same time, hegemonic structures continued to impede them and reinforce existing inequities. Seven of the interviewees have a desire to become teachers, to work with and improve the school experiences of students who are disadvantaged by educational organizations. However, the transitional programs slot their graduates into 3- year degree programs while the universities they attend only accept students who have completed 4-year degrees into their teacher education certification programs. As a result, these participants again experienced Dissatisfaction and attempted to come to terms with the dissonance between institutional discourse and action and between their aspirations and organizational barriers.

Knowledge gained from respondents' reflections in this study enriches our understanding of the role that educators can play in creating equitable, democratic schools. This is an admittedly small study; however, the experiences of these students are not unique, as hundreds of students enrolled in transitional program annually can attest. The participants' achievements and the descriptions of their personal and social changes, transitions, and transformations challenge educators to re-evaluate deficit approaches aimed at students' perceived inadequacies and implement strategies that utilize and develop students' strengths as a means of achieving equity of outcomes. Their narratives speak to the importance of congruency between their aspirations and the expectations of

significant others, including, and perhaps especially, educators' beliefs in their capabilities. The data from this sample provide an alternative vision of students who are experiencing risk in schools. There is a need for further research in this under-examined realm of education in general and specifically studies to support or refute the applicability of this metaphor to broader contexts.

The need for a sense of cohesion between the students and their educational environments that the data identifies can be created within supportive school communities demarcated by respect in the forms of inclusionary practices that envision possibilities as opposed to foci on deficits. Within this type of environment, high expectations are combined with academic and social support mechanisms. The participants comments about the presence and absence of authentic curriculum points to a need for teachers (after asking themselves what constitutes meaningful curriculum and what comprises valued knowledge) to enact inclusive, meaningful curriculum. Increased familiarity with diversity, particularly for teachers and administrators from dominant groups, will lead to reduced stereotypes that teachers hold for members of some low income and minority groups. The findings have implications for conceptions of leadership that are conducive to creating climates within which risk is reduced, resilience is fostered, and personal transformations are facilitated. The significance of relationships, connectedness, and feelings of community in the data speak to the importance for administrators to work in conjunction with students, parents, and teachers to examine definitions of success and the means used to measure and achieve equitable outcomes for all students.

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Endnote

¹Although students are able to enroll in university programs without graduating from high school, transitional and bridging or articulation programs have been established to assist students who are deemed to have the ability to be successful in university and who have not yet consistently demonstrated the requisite knowledge, skills, and confidence.

The Gap Between Text and Context: An Analysis of Ontario's Indigenous Education Policy

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the 2007 *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*, alongside its 2014 *Implementation Plan*. Content analysis is used to determine what specific actions are prioritized in each document, first through a quantitative analysis of the various strategies put forth, then a qualitative analysis of what larger purpose these strategies might indicate. The findings suggest a significant shift in the 2014 document away from substantive action and toward data management, specifically in regard to encouraging Indigenous student self-identification. Previous Ministry publications had called for the self-identification of Indigenous students as a necessary first step to developing targeted programming for these students. However, coming just two years before the 2016 target date for the original plan laid out in the *Framework*, it seems unlikely that this belated emphasis on self-identification in the *Implementation Plan* is for the originally stated purpose of establishing baseline data to implement and evaluate specific programs. Instead, it is suggested that the new self-identification data may be used as a type of symbolic policy, to obscure the absence of substantive change. Conversely, it is suggested that the Ministry of Education should establish a new baseline of self-identified Indigenous students and a renewed strategy, beginning in 2016, to implement specific, targeted programming for these students.

Keywords: Indigenous education; educational policy; content analysis; document analysis; Ontario

The Gap Between Text and Context: An Analysis of Ontario's Indigenous Education Policy

For an individual, one of the definitions of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again in the same way and expecting different results. For a government, such behaviour is called ... policy.

—Thomas King (2012, in *The Inconvenient Indian*, p. 95)

The *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (hereafter referred to as the *Framework*), first published in 2007, is premised on the idea that an “achievement gap” exists between Indigenous students attending Ontario’s public schools and the broader student population. In this and subsequent publications from the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME), the “voluntary, confidential self-identification” (OME, 2007b, p. 7) of Ontario’s Indigenous students is proposed as a first step in resolving this problem. The logic goes that by mapping who and where Indigenous students are, the Ministry and school boards can better target programs and initiatives to improve their educational achievement. Furthermore, the *Framework* asserts that, by collecting consistent data on the achievement of self-identified Indigenous students, the Ministry can continually monitor, evaluate, and improve these programs, in order to better help Indigenous students.

Previous studies authored by Cherubini and colleagues have pointed to problems with this line of logic. These authors have argued that the achievement gap perceived between Indigenous and “mainstream” students simply indicates the ongoing colonial legacy of Eurocentric education—and that the real “gap,” therefore, is an epistemological one (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008; Cherubini, Hodson, Manley-Casimir, & Muir, 2010). Furthermore, they have contended that the promotion of *self-identification* in the *Framework* and its companion document, *Building Bridges to Success for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Students* (hereafter referred to as *Building Bridges*), reinforces this colonial legacy, through ongoing practices that isolate Indigenous students in order to evaluate them according to Eurocentric criteria (Cherubini, 2010; Cherubini & Hodson, 2008).

In this paper, I build on the work of Cherubini and colleagues by looking at these issues as they are manifested in the *Implementation Plan* (OME, 2014) that was recently published for the *Framework*. As I demonstrate below, there is a significant increase in the emphasis on self-identification in this most recent document. Coming just two years before the 2016 end date of the timeline laid out in the *Framework*, the emphasis on self-identification can no longer be accepted as a first stage in the implementation process. What, therefore, should be seen as the *Framework*'s (new) role in Ontario's Indigenous education strategy? In order to answer this question, I draw on Indigenous education scholars to map out four possible responses to a gap between Indigenous students and mainstream schooling—*assimilation*, *segregation*, *decolonization*, and *self-determination*. Then, through a content analysis of the strategies listed in the *Framework* and the *Implementation Plan*, I explore the complex relationship of self-identification to these four strategic directions. I argue that, in many ways, the current direction of Ontario's Indigenous education policy moves toward data management in the place of

substantive action. Moreover, in so far as actions are proposed, they mostly suggest a shift back toward colonial practices of assimilation and segregation.

Contextualizing This Paper as Policy Research

This paper began with excitement on my part regarding the pedagogical possibilities presented by the *Framework* (Cherubini, 2009; Kearns, 2013). I have been volunteering as a tutor at one of the Alternate Secondary School Programs (ASSPs) in Ontario run as partnerships with local Indigenous Friendship Centres. Based on my experience, I consider these programs to be immensely valuable as a practical step toward educational self-determination for urban First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. On initially reading the *Framework* document, I was excited by the way these programs seem to be highlighted in the document as a flagship program of the larger policy. I was surprised, therefore, when I subsequently found no reference to the ASSPs in the *Implementation Plan*. On a closer reading, I noticed an astonishing lack of reference to *any* specific programming. Simultaneously, I noticed a curious repetition of the term “self-identification.”

Table 1

Number of References, Per Page, in the Four Ministry Documents

Document (Year)	Total Pages	Term	Total References	References per Page
<i>Framework</i> (2007)	41	“self-identif”	7	0.17
		“program”	43	1.05
<i>Progress Report</i> (2009)	24	“self-identif”	17	0.71
		“program”	20	0.83
<i>Progress Report</i> (2013)	52	“self-identif”	66	1.27
		“program”	20	0.38
<i>Implementation Plan</i> (2014)	21	“self-identif”	23	1.1
		“program”	5	0.24

In order to determine if I was observing a genuine pattern, I compared the four official releases on the *Framework*—the *Framework* itself (OME, 2007a), the two *Progress Reports* (OME, 2009, 2013), and the *Implementation Plan* (OME, 2014). In the PDF version of each of these documents I searched for “self-identif” (in order to catch all the variants of “self-identification”), and “program,” then divided the total number of references for each document by the number of pages in that document. The result was an approximate metric, which suggested a significant increase over time in the number of references per page to self-identification, and a converse decrease in the number of references per page to programming, as can be seen in Table 1. These initial numbers

were exploratory, but they suggest a troubling pattern, which the rest of this paper is intended to unpack. Based on the rhetoric of the *Framework*, which I discuss more in the next section, the implementation of the policy should have focused initially on collecting student self-identification data, then subsequently on implementing specific programming for these self-identified students. My initial findings suggested that the policy priorities actually moved in the opposite direction.

In order to explore the meaning of these patterns, I adopted qualitative content analysis as a methodology. As Krippendorff (2004) explains, content analysis is a methodology for determining patterns in texts, in order to draw inferences about related patterns in the contexts in which those texts are produced or used. According to Morgan (1993), a qualitative approach to content analysis is not characterized by an absence of quantification. Rather, it is marked by a shift in emphasis from simply quantifying patterns to suggesting what those patterns mean. In this sense, my research engages three cycles of document analysis—a qualitative cycle to determine the context for the study, a quantitative cycle to determine patterns in the texts and by inference in their contexts, and a final qualitative cycle to suggest the meaning of these patterns.

Since content analysis is primarily concerned with what texts can tell us about their contexts, it is best used when direct observation of those contexts is not an option (Krippendorff, 2004). In analyzing these policy documents, I am not presuming to infer from them precisely what is happening in schools or in the Ministry—both of which questions are best served by more direct and interactive methodologies. Rather, my purpose is to suggest what discursive shifts can be seen in the documents over time, and how these discursive shifts potentially constrain the range of possible actions open in the future. While it is important to recognize that teachers interpret policy documents in highly variant and situated ways, this does not mean that the text has no impact on their choices and actions. As Krippendorff (2004) explains, “Texts, messages, and symbols never speak for themselves. They inform someone. Information allows a reader to select among alternatives. It narrows the range of interpretations otherwise available” (p. 25). Ball, Maguire, Braun, and Hoskins (2011a, 2011b) have similarly pointed to the ways in which educational policy texts restrict the possible responses of policy actors.

In engaging with the content of these policy documents, I find myself obliged to engage with their terminology. In particular, in this paper I adopt the language of a gap between Indigenous and “mainstream” students. Following Cherubini et al. (2010), I think of this gap not merely as an achievement gap but as a more general gap in educational outcomes—including, for instance, students’ satisfaction with their education. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that this language can be problematic. As Gillborn (2008) argues, “gap talk” is often used to disguise systematic inequality through superficial indicators of progress: “The repeated assertion that the inequalities are being reduced fails to recognize the scale of the present inequality and how relatively insignificant the fluctuations really are” (p. 65). In particular, an emphasis on closing a gap in educational outcomes can disguise the need for broader economic redistribution in order to achieve genuine equality (Gillborn, 2008; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013). The gap talk in Ontario policy, furthermore, is part of a much larger pattern, operating within a globalized neoliberal culture of accountability that negates differences by assuming quantifiable equivalence (Ball, 2012; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013). In spite of these

constraints, however, I believe the analysis of educational gaps can be done responsibly, by acknowledging broader patterns of inequality, and by leaving room for the disadvantaged groups to define their differences on their own terms. In their better moments, I believe the Ministry of Education is pushing their analysis in this direction, and I engage them in this gap talk in the hope that it can be a tool for recognizing and combatting inequalities, rather than for enforcing monolithic accountability.

Finally, my critique here is not intended to question the fact that good teachers in Ontario can and do utilize the *Framework* document to improve the educational experiences of their First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students (Cherubini, 2009; Kearns, 2013). In the words of Kearns (2013):

I want to acknowledge that within the tensions of policy intent and practice, and within the challenges of the legacy of a Eurocentric educational system that continues to enact colonial privilege, spaces have been created that value Indigenous people, which I also recognize as fluid and changing as different people move in and out of these spaces and roles. (p. 88)

Such spaces *are* created in Ontario schools, and the *Framework* has, at least occasionally, been a resource to enable the creation of such spaces. However, precisely because of the important potential of the policy, I am concerned about how this potential may be constrained by discursive shifts in the documents.

Contextualizing Self-Identification in Ontario's Indigenous Education Policy

According to Cherubini and Hodson (2008), the emphasis on Indigenous student self-identification in the *Framework* is problematic at best. In their words:

Aboriginal peoples are being asked to voluntarily self-identify themselves so that a mainstream branch of the government (EQAO) can publish and disseminate the results of Aboriginal students' achievement on standardized assessments that are exclusively emblematic of colonial measures of academic success. (p. 17)

Cherubini (2010) goes on to suggest that it is problematic to treat a student's self-identification as a permanent statement of their identity. According to Restoule (2000), *identifying*, which is specific and contextual, should be understood differently from a permanent, fixed *identity*. It appears, however, that the Ministry is taking students' contextual identifications and turning them into permanent and reified identities by fixing them in student records. In a report on inter-jurisdictional practices in self-identification, the Educational Policy Institute (2008) asked all Canadian Ministries of Education how they accounted for potential instability in students' identities. At the time, only Saskatchewan had established a framework in which students could change their identification year to year. Other ministries had not apparently given the issue serious consideration, but simply filed the information in student records. In the *Framework*, the Ministry appears to respond to the problematic nature of self-identification by framing its data-collection as a limited and contextual undertaking, for the purpose of implementing specific programs. As I discuss below, however, the emerging evidence from school

boards suggests a very limited effort on the part of the Ministry to implement these targeted programs, raising the question of what purpose the collection of self-identification data is serving.

The original *Framework* document makes reference to the importance of having “reliable and valid data” (OME, 2007a, p. 10) in order to achieve the *Framework* goals, and indicates the Ministry’s intention to provide a resource guide on Indigenous student self-identification to help school boards gather this data. *Building Bridges*, published later that year, seems to make clear the Ministry’s purpose in encouraging self-identification. This purpose is explained in a stand-alone sentence on the first page: “The availability of data on Aboriginal student achievement in Ontario’s provincially funded school system is a critical foundation *for the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs* [emphasis added] to support the needs of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students” (OME, 2007b, p. 3). The focus on programming here clearly aligns with the strategies laid out in the *Framework*. However, it also has a pragmatic purpose within this document. *Building Bridges* goes on to explain a three-step process for school boards to follow in creating self-identification policies, in which the first step is building awareness of the significant legal ramifications of collecting sensitive personal student information. Boards are instructed to be cautious about making sure they have a clear purpose for collecting these data. This purpose should directly benefit the students involved and be easily communicable to the public. The document goes on to state that it is “essential” for school boards to communicate to parents that self-identification is for the purpose of creating specific, targeted programming (pp. 12-13).

Despite these stated intentions, the Auditor General of Ontario (AGO) found five years later that very little had been accomplished either in terms of data collection or programming (AGO, 2012). In contrast to other Ministry initiatives, the Auditor General noted a lack of both a clear action plan and a means to measure progress. In particular, little progress had been made in regard to Indigenous student self-identification, mostly, in the Auditor General’s view, because of a lack of centralized leadership from the Ministry. The Auditor General states:

Five years after the release of the Framework, the Ministry has still not developed a formal implementation plan. In our opinion, such a plan should identify the key obstacles faced by Aboriginal students and outline specific activities to overcome various obstacles. (AGO, 2012, p. 133)

The Auditor General specifically calls for a combination of strategic action and targeted data collection, in line with the Ministry’s original statements in 2007.

Despite the Auditor General’s critique, the *Progress Report* (OME, 2013) published the next year claims important steps forward in achieving the *Framework* goals, including Indigenous student self-identification. Initial baseline achievement data for 28,079 self-identified Indigenous students are presented, based on EQAO scores and Grade 9 credit completion. Looking forward, this document states: “The next phase of implementation will sustain the *critical activities* [emphasis added] established in the first six years to support system-wide integration of Aboriginal perspectives into the provincial education system” (OME, 2013, p. 47). The 2013 *Progress Report* states the

Ministry's commitment to release an implementation plan for the following year, and ends with a list of seven priorities. Two of these priorities relate to the collection and use of student self-identification data, while the rest suggest more substantive changes to how Indigenous education is actually carried out in schools, such as a commitment to increase "awareness of Aboriginal perspectives, histories, languages and cultures" (OME, 2013, p. 48).

A recent article by Anuik and Bellehumeur-Kearns (2014) again raises questions about actual progress made in implementing the *Framework*. They conclude:

From our surveys, personal interviews and site visits, we see that some boards are showing that steps can be taken toward recognizing Aboriginal people and implementation of the *Framework*; however, it would appear from the lack of engagement and responses that many boards (well over half) need to begin to work on the initiatives set forth in the *Framework*. (pp. 29-30)

Implementation of self-identification in their findings was not just uneven from board to board, but even within individual boards. Many of their interviewees' comments reinforce Cherubini and Hodson's (2008) concerns that efforts to categorize Indigenous students in this way would simply be seen by Indigenous communities as a return to past colonial education policies. As a result, many Indigenous students and parents choose not to participate in the programs. Anuik and Bellehumeur-Kearns (2014) found that self-identification data in any particular board was so uneven and unreliable that boards needed to supplement these data with data from other sources, including the 2006 census. As a result, they question whether self-identification data in isolation would ever provide meaningful results.

Anuik and Bellehumeur-Kearns (2014) also argue, however, that the primary benefit of the *Framework* has not been the data it has generated but the opportunity it has provided to make Indigenous cultures more prominent in schools and classrooms. A positive emphasis on Indigenous cultures can improve Indigenous students' sense of pride in their cultures, and thereby gradually increase their willingness to self-identify as a positive personal choice. However, this process again suggests the need for self-identification to be understood contextually, according to the situated needs of particular students, rather than as a formal and permanent bureaucratic structure, and for the collection of such data to result directly in targeted and beneficial programming. If, however, as this section has suggested, this programming has not been forthcoming, then what purpose can the self-identification data be understood to serve?

Conceptual Framework: Four Responses to the Education Gap

While there is general disagreement on what the gap between Indigenous students and mainstream schooling means or how to resolve it, most stakeholders in Indigenous education agree that a gap of some sort exists (Cherubini et al., 2010). If, as the Ministry states (OME, 2007a), the purpose of its Indigenous education policy is to close this gap, then any evaluation of the policy should begin with an analysis of what exactly this gap is, and what it would mean to close it. In this section, therefore, I draw upon Indigenous education scholars to theorize the nature of the education gap, and possible responses to

it. This analysis is theoretical and schematic, and the possibilities I indicate are abstractions that will inevitably be complicated in any concrete application. In particular, I want to acknowledge that individual students will relate to the theoretical gap between Indigenous students and mainstream schools in complex and variable ways. As Little Bear (2000) makes clear, Indigenous students must live their lives across multiple cultures and worldviews. Many Indigenous students are highly successful in public schools, and I am not suggesting that they should be viewed as assimilated. My point here is to map out the theoretical implications of the gap that the Ministry of Education has identified, and the broad ethical implications of the various policy responses that could be made in response.

Logically, in order to close any gap, one of the two sides of the gap must be moved toward the other. In the case of Indigenous education policy in Canada, the government has generally assumed that the gap between Indigenous students and public schools must be closed by changing Indigenous students to bring them closer to Western standards. This approach can be called *assimilation* (Weenie, 2008), and it is rooted in the colonial assumption that Western standards are timeless and universal and that other cultures must adapt to fit them (Battiste, 1998). There is no logical reason, however, why the movement to close the gap cannot happen the other way, by moving schools closer to the epistemic reality of Indigenous students, either through broad curricular reform (Battiste, 2011, 2013) or through changing teaching practices to be more culturally relevant (Redwing Saunders & Hill, 2007). Following Battiste (2013) and Aquash (2013), I refer to this approach to closing the gap as *decolonization* (however, for a critique of this use of decolonization, see Tuck & Yang, 2012).

While assimilation and decolonization can be understood as the only two logical options to *close* the education gap, Indigenous education scholars have indicated two other potential responses that allow the gap to remain in place. On the one hand, *segregation* was traditionally used to isolate Indigenous students, and move mainstream schooling farther away from responding to their needs (Weenie, 2008). This can be seen in Donald's (2009) analysis of Indigenous education in Canada through the insider/outsider relations of the frontier fort. More specifically, Donovan (2011) suggests that practices of categorizing urban Indigenous youth as "at risk" can be a form of segregation. On the other hand, some scholars advocate *self-determination* as a way for Indigenous communities to move away from Western educational models by establishing localized control over schooling (Aquash, 2013; Restoule, Gruner, & Metatawabin, 2013). The control involved is not necessarily binary—particularly in urban contexts self-determination must be negotiated in complex ways (Peters, 2005). However, an important aspect is the shift away from a generalized "pan-indigenous" approach to culturally relevant curriculum, and toward curriculum developed in relation to the needs of the local community (Donald, Glanfield, & Sterenberg, 2011).

In what follows, I use these four potential responses to the education gap as a conceptual framework to understand what it would mean to make substantive change to the educational status quo for Indigenous students. Following from my analysis of the Ministry's rhetoric in the previous section, one would expect the early years of Ontario's Indigenous education policy to emphasize data collection, then the later years to emphasize substantive programs to change the educational status quo through some

combination of these four options. In line with my initial findings, however, I find a significant shift in the *Implementation Plan* away from substantive programming and toward data management. Furthermore, insofar as substantive programming is advocated, the *Implementation Plan* also indicates a shift back toward the colonial responses of assimilation and segregation.

Methodology

The second, quantitative aspect of my study consists of a content analysis of the *Framework* and the *Implementation Plan*. Each of these two Ministry documents consists largely of a list of specific indicators regarding what the policy is expected to achieve. These lists of indicators lend themselves to content analysis as they provide discrete units that can be coded and counted (Bauer, 2000). The other parts of each document—front matter and appendices—were utilized for my contextualizing qualitative analyses, but were set aside for this quantitative analysis, on the logic that the indicators are the clearest statement of the Ministry’s intended actions. This content analysis was conducted using a decision scheme, in which “each recorded datum is regarded as the outcome of a predefined sequence of decisions” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 135). This decision scheme was developed partially deductively, through my review of the literature, but then refined inductively through my first cycle coding of the *Framework* (MacQueen, McLellan, Kay, & Milstein, 1998/2009). In the decision scheme, I asked first whether each indicator sought to substantively change the education gap, as defined in the previous section, and then which of the four possible responses best describes it—*assimilation*, *segregation*, *decolonization*, or *self-determination*. For indicators that do not seek to change the education gap, I, then, asked whether they are focused on student self-identification data, and then whether they focused on the *collection*, *analysis*, or *dissemination* of the data. A final category, *other*, was reserved for indicators focused neither on substantively changing the education gap nor on data (Bauer, 2000). The decision scheme is illustrated in Figure 1.

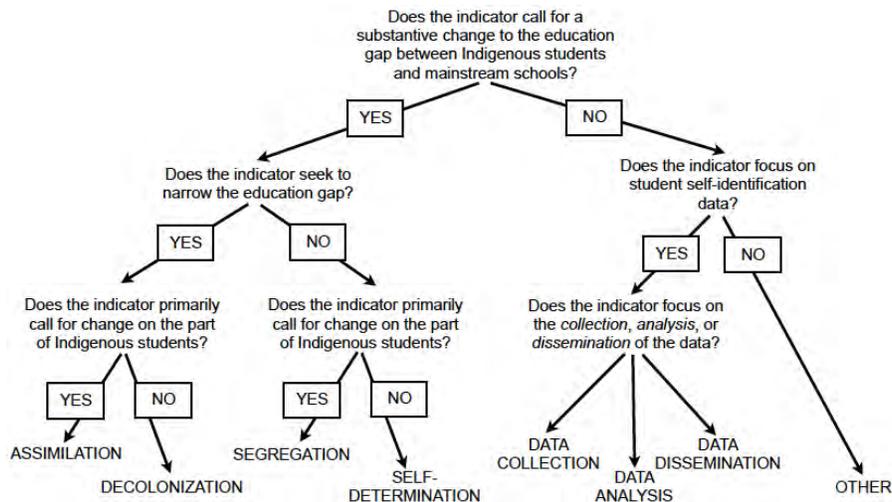


Figure 1. The decision scheme for the content analysis of ministry documents

Presentation of Findings

There are 81 indicators in the *Framework*, and 57 in the *Implementation Plan*. In both documents, these indicators are organized in relation to a series of larger categories, identified in the documents as “goals,” “strategies,” and “measures.” The same 10 “measures” are maintained in both documents, but the *Implementation Plan* replaces the earlier “goals” and “strategies” with a new set of strategies. In Figures 2-7, below, I have copied the goals, strategies, and measures as they appear in the two documents.

GOALS	STRATEGIES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
<p>1. High Level of Student Achievement</p>	<p>1.1: Build capacity for effective teaching, assessment, and evaluation practices.</p> <p>1.2: Promote system effectiveness, transparency, and responsiveness.</p>	<p>1. Significant increase in the percentage of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students meeting provincial standards on province-wide assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics</p> <p>2. Significant increase in the number of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit teaching and non-teaching staff in school boards across Ontario</p>
<p>2. Reduce Gaps in Student Achievement</p>	<p>2.1: Enhance support to improve literacy and numeracy skills.</p> <p>2.2: Provide additional support in a variety of areas to reduce gaps in student outcomes.</p>	<p>3. Significant increase in the graduation rate of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students</p> <p>4. Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement</p> <p>5. Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students' self-esteem</p> <p>6. Increased collaboration between First Nation education authorities and school boards to ensure that First Nation students in First Nation communities receive the preparation they need to succeed when they make the transition to provincially funded schools</p> <p>7. Increased satisfaction among educators in provincially funded schools with respect to targeted professional development and resources designed to help them serve First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students more effectively</p>

Figure 2. Goals, strategies, and measures in the *Framework* (OME, 2007a, p. 21)

GOALS	STRATEGIES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
3. High Levels of Public Confidence	3.1: Build educational leadership capacity and coordination. 3.2: Build capacity to support identity building, including the appreciation of Aboriginal perspectives, values, and cultures by all students, school board staff, and elected trustees. 3.3: Foster supportive and engaged families and communities.	8. Increased participation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents in the education of their children 9. Increased opportunities for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and issue resolution among Aboriginal communities, First Nation governments and education authorities, schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education 10. Integration of educational opportunities to significantly improve the knowledge of all students and educators in Ontario about the rich cultures and histories of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples

Figure 3. Goals, strategies, and measures in the *Framework* (OME, 2007a, p. 22)

As can be seen in Figures 2 and 3, the initial measures are organized in the *Framework* in relation to “goals” calling for clear and measurable changes in the educational status quo—for example, “high level of student achievement” and “reduce gaps in student achievement”—and similarly clear “strategies.” In Figures 4, 5, 6, and 7, however, it can be seen that these same measures are reframed in the *Implementation Plan* in relation to more nebulously worded goals—for example, “using data to support student achievement” and “supporting students”—indicating again a shift away from substantive action and toward mere data management.

Using Data to Support Student Achievement: Performance Measures 1 to 4

1. Significant increase in the percentage of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students meeting provincial standards on province-wide assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics
2. Significant increase in the number of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit teaching and non-teaching staff in school boards across Ontario
3. Significant increase in the graduation rate of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students
4. Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement

Figure 4. Strategies and measures in the *Implementation Plan: Using Data to Support Student Achievement* (OME, 2014, p. 9)

Supporting Students: Performance Measures 5 and 6

5. Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students' self-esteem
6. Increased collaboration between First Nation education authorities and school boards to ensure that First Nation students in First Nation communities receive the preparation they need to succeed when they make the transition to provincially funded schools

Figure 5. Strategies and measures in the *Implementation Plan*: Supporting Students (OME, 2014, p. 11)

Supporting Educators: Performance Measure 7

7. Increased satisfaction among educators in provincially funded schools with respect to targeted professional development and resources designed to help them serve First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students more effectively

Figure 6. Strategies and measures in the *Implementation Plan*: Supporting Educators (OME, 2014, p. 13)

Engagement and Awareness Building: Performance Measures 8, 9, and 10

8. Increased participation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents in the education of their children
9. Increased opportunities for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and issue resolution among Aboriginal communities, First Nation governments and education authorities, schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education
10. Integration of educational opportunities to significantly improve the knowledge of all students and educators in Ontario about the rich cultures and histories of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples

Figure 7. Strategies and measures in the *Implementation Plan*: Engagement and Awareness Building (OME, 2014, p. 15)

While my analysis focuses on the indicators, I also separately coded these ten measures in order to better contextualize the indicators. All of the measures are quite specific and quantifiable, and mostly call for “significant increases” in Indigenous students’ academic achievement or in Indigenous communities’ involvement in the education system. In terms of their strategic direction, I consider them quite balanced, having coded five as decolonization, four as assimilation, and one as other. These measures and their codes can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

The Ten “Measures” Common to Both Documents

Measures (OME, 2007a, pp. 21-22)	Codes
1. Significant increase in the percentage of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students meeting provincial standards on province-wide assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics	ASSIMILATION
2. Significant increase in the number of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit teaching and non-teaching staff in school boards across Ontario	DECOLONIZATION
3. Significant increase in the graduation rate of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students	ASSIMILATION
4. Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit student achievement	ASSIMILATION
5. Significant improvement in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students' self-esteem	DECOLONIZATION
6. Increased collaboration between First Nation education authorities and school boards to ensure that First Nation students in First Nation communities receive the preparation they need to succeed when they make the transition to provincially funded schools	ASSIMILATION
7. Increased satisfaction among educators in provincially funded schools with respect to targeted professional development and resources designed to help them serve First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students more effectively	DECOLONIZATION
8. Increased participation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents in the education of their children	DECOLONIZATION
9. Increased opportunities for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and issue resolution among Aboriginal communities, First Nation governments and education authorities, schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education	OTHER
10. Integration of educational opportunities to significantly improve the knowledge of all students and educators in Ontario about the rich cultures and histories of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples	DECOLONIZATION

My coding of the indicators in the two documents again suggests a significant shift away from action and toward data management. The totals for each document can be seen in Table 3. In what follows, I discuss these coding results, providing examples of how I coded the indicators and providing some initial analysis of what these numbers might mean.

Table 3

Quantitative Results of my Coding for the Indicators in each Document

Codes	<i>Framework</i>	<i>Implementation Plan</i>
Document Total	81 (100%)	57 (100%)
ASSIMILATION	23	8
DECOLONIZATION	34	14
SEGREGATION	6	3
SELF-DETERMINATION	5	0
Programs Total	68 (84.0%)	25 (43.9%)
DATA COLLECTION	2	5
DATA ANALYSIS	0	8
DATA DISSEMINATION	0	7
Data Total	2 (2.5%)	20 (35.1%)
OTHER	11	12

In the *Framework*, only 11 of the 81 indicators did not focus on substantive change to the status quo. Only two of these focused on self-identification data, both of which I coded as data collection. For instance, school boards are instructed to: “consult on, develop, and implement strategies for voluntary, confidential Aboriginal student self-identification, in partnership with local First Nation, Métis, and Inuit parents and communities” (OME, 2007a, p. 12). There were nine indicators I coded as other because they emphasized neither direct changes to the education gap nor self-identification data. Eight of these concerned some form of cooperation with Indigenous communities and organizations—such as the ASSP partnerships with Friendship Centres—but without any detail as to how exactly this would affect the education gap.

The remaining 68 indicators in the *Framework* all call for some form of substantive action (34 decolonization, 23 assimilation, 6 segregation, and 5 self-determination). The preponderance of decolonization and assimilation suggests that the Ministry’s primary purpose is to bring Indigenous students and mainstream education closer together, through movement on both sides. The decolonization indicators primarily refer to increases in culturally relevant teaching practices. Most of these Indicators are clustered under Strategies 1.1 and 3.2, which call for more effective teaching and the incorporation of more Indigenous knowledge, respectively. Indicators coded as assimilation are spread more evenly through the document, suggesting a more general emphasis. Taken together, these two emphases could suggest that the Ministry expects that a specific focus on more culturally relevant teaching will enable Indigenous students to assimilate into Western notions of academic success.

Though they are much less frequent, both segregation and self-determination are present, particularly in Strategy 2.2, which calls for “additional support” (OME, 2007a, p. 15). For instance, school boards are called upon both to “provide First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students with access to programs that focus on Aboriginal cultures and traditions and are delivered by Aboriginal staff” and to “develop lighthouse programs focused on Aboriginal students under the ministry’s Student Success and literacy/numeracy initiatives” (OME, 2007a, p. 16). I coded the former as self-determination and the latter as segregation, due to the question of who is theoretically directing the program priorities in each case—“Aboriginal staff” in the former and ministry initiatives in the latter.

In contrast, my coding of the *Implementation Plan* indicates a significant shift away from substantive action and toward data management. Of the 57 total indicators, 25 were coded as one of the four categories of strategic action (i.e. decolonization, assimilation, self-determination, segregation), and a full 20 were coded as one of the three stages of data management (i.e. collection, analysis, dissemination). In regard to substantive action, decolonization and assimilation remained the most common codes, with 14 and eight, respectively. Decolonization is even more concentrated here than in the *Framework*, with most of its indicators clustered under one of the four strategies, called “Supporting Educators” (OME, 2014, p. 13; see Figure 6, above). “Supporting Educators,” in fact, draws on only one of the measures from the original *Framework*, and expands it to eight total indicators, all of which I coded as decolonization. In this sense, the *Implementation Plan* indicates a continuation of—if not an increased emphasis on—the theme of culturally relevant teaching. It should also be noted, however, that the indicators coded as decolonization in this document are not as easily categorized as in the *Framework*. For instance, one indicator asks school boards to “facilitate professional development opportunities for teaching staff to assist them in incorporating culturally appropriate pedagogy into practice to support Aboriginal student *achievement*, well-being, and *success* [emphasis added]” (OME, 2014, p. 13). The italicized words here are language that normally fell within assimilation codes in the *Framework*. I coded it as decolonization here because the substantive action it calls for involves “incorporating culturally appropriate pedagogy,” with the last phrase serving more of a rhetorical function to remind the reader of the Ministry’s larger purpose. Nonetheless, this detail is important to note, as it reinforces the earlier suggestion that the Ministry is encouraging culturally relevant pedagogy specifically in the expectation that it will aid in assimilating students into Western learning standards. The discursive shift from the 2007 to the 2014 document also suggests a gradual incorporation of neoliberal accountability discourses into the work of the Ontario Ministry of Education (Ball, 2012; Pinto, 2012).

Meanwhile, there is a sizeable increase in the number of indicators related to data management, from two of the 81 indicators in the *Framework* (2.5%) to 20 of the 57 indicators in the *Implementation Plan* (35.1%). This runs directly counter to the Ministry’s previous publications (OME, 2007a, 2007b, 2009, 2013), which stated an intention to build a data management structure in the early years of the policy in order to plan, target, and evaluate specific programs for Indigenous students in the later years. While eight of the 20 indicators in the *Implementation Plan* relate to data analysis and seven to data dissemination (which, in proper proportion to substantive actions, could complement the original plan), five of them relate to data collection. This is up from just

two in the *Framework*. Furthermore, while three of these five indicators are in the plan for Year 1 (2013-2014), the last two are in the plan for Years 2 and 3, taking it right to the stated end date of the policy in 2016. For instance, the *Implementation Plan* states that in Years 2 and 3 the Ministry will: “identify and fund additional strategies to increase the voluntary, confidential self-identification of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students” (OME, 2014, p. 16). This again raises the question: For what purpose is the Ministry pursuing Indigenous student self-identification? If, as they have stated, the purpose is to establish baseline data in order to implement and evaluate targeted programs, then they are apparently still creating their baseline, and will be until the end of the implementation period. When 2016 arrives, will they simply admit that they have taken a decade to establish their baseline, and finally begin to implement the targeted, measurable programs they suggested in 2007?

Contextualizing the Findings: What are the Self-Identification Data For?

The quantitative analysis in the previous section identified a troubling shift from the 2007 *Framework* to the 2014 *Implementation Plan*. First, I found that there was a significant decrease in the number of indicators calling for substantive change to the status quo of the education gap between Indigenous and “mainstream” students, from 68 (84.0%) to 25 (43.9%). Secondly, I found a concomitant increase in the number of indicators calling for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data on the self-identification of Indigenous students, from 2 (2.5%) to 20 (35.1%). Within the indicators calling for substantive change, the amount coded as decolonization, assimilation, and segregation remained roughly equivalent between the two documents. However, the number of indicators coded as self-determination dropped from five to zero. Again, this suggests a de-emphasizing of any substantive change to the status quo, other than continued calls for culturally relevant pedagogy—, which seems to be linked to an intent to assimilate Indigenous students into Western standards of “success.” Finally, within the indicators focused on self-identification data, I found that the *Implementation Plan* continues to call for data collection right up until the 2016 end date of the original *Framework*. This raises the question of whether the Ministry will use this data to continue developing and evaluating programs beyond 2016.

While I certainly do not want to discount the possibility that the Ministry will continue past 2016 to implement targeted programming, the currently available information indicates that they plan to hold to their original end date. The *Implementation Plan* states that in 2016 a third *Progress Report* will address “progress made in reducing gaps in student achievement, as measured against the 2011-12 baseline data on the achievement of self-identified Aboriginal students” (OME, 2014, p. 18). The baseline data presented in 2013 was scant, and any conclusions drawn from it are probably unreliable. However, changing the data-gathering process in the middle of a longitudinal study is not a way to increase reliability. This again raises the question of what the Ministry is trying to achieve with this late push for Indigenous student self-identification. This section will explore this question through a final qualitative analysis.

The content analysis findings indicated a shift in the *Implementation Plan* away from substantive action and toward data management. My reading of how the original measures from the *Framework* are reframed supports this finding. In the *Framework*, the

first goal, “high levels of student achievement” (OME, 2007a, p. 21), contained two measures, calling for significant increases in the number of Indigenous students meeting provincial standards on standardized assessments and in the number of Indigenous teachers and staff in schools (see Figure 2, above). The first of these is an assimilation approach, while the second is a decolonization approach. What these two measures have in common, however, is that both call for substantive change. In the *Implementation Plan*, these two measures are combined with two others calling for an increase in Indigenous student achievement, and all bundled together under the strategy “using data to support student achievement” (OME, 2014, p. 9; see Figure 4, above). These Measures are then explained through a list of 16 indicators, of which eight relate to data management. Only three of these indicators call for a substantive change, and all of them take an assimilation approach to bringing Indigenous students in line with Eurocentric standards of success. It appears that the measures from the Framework have been repackaged in this way to emphasize data management and de-emphasize substantive action, particularly where it requires a large investment in transforming our educational system.

This reframing of the *Framework* to de-emphasize substantive action also extends to the theme of collaboration with Indigenous organizations. Eight of the 11 indicators coded as other in the *Framework* suggest some such form of cooperation, compared to just two of the 12 indicators coded as other in the *Implementation Plan*. Furthermore, the language of the *Implementation Plan* hints at consultation in a way that seems intentionally misleading. On the last page, it states, “The Ministry of Education and school boards, working with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit partners, share the view that conditions for future success have been established through progressive collaboration and specific supports and that significant progress can be achieved” (OME, 2014, p. 19). The actual semantic statement being made here is: The Ministry of Education and school boards share the view that conditions for future success have been established. However, by inserting the phrase “working with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit partners” adjacent to the subject (“the Ministry of Education and school boards”), the reader is given the impression that this statement of progress is the result of genuine consultation, rather than a seemingly unilateral process.

This apparent lack of collaboration can also be linked to the absence of indicators related to self-determination. Of the five such indicators in the *Framework*, two referred specifically to ASSPs in Native Friendship Centres. While there has not been sufficient research on these programs in Ontario, Donovan’s (2011) case study of one ASSP (along with my anecdotal experience in a different ASSP) suggests that these programs can provide a meaningful degree of educational self-determination for Indigenous communities in urban contexts. The ASSPs are also highlighted in the *Framework* through being placed first in the (non-alphabetical) list of exemplary programs presented in Appendix B. This suggests that in 2007 the Ministry considered them a flagship initiative. The 2009 *Progress Report* also mentions the ASSPs positively, stating:

Increased self-esteem was reported by students attending Alternative Secondary School Programs within Native Friendship Centres, although it was noted that the support services and community resources provided in these programs may also have contributed to their success in school and that

additional funding and resources are required to support student needs. (OME, 2009, p. 11)

The 2013 *Progress Report* also mentions the ASSPs, but offers no comment on their effectiveness, only stating that they had more than 1000 students enrolled (OME, 2013, p. 34). Given this declining attention to the ASSPs, it is hardly surprising that the *Implementation Plan* not only fails to mention the ASSPs, but also fails to mention any other meaningful collaborations aimed substantively at self-determination. The language in the 2009 *Progress Report* suggests that the Ministry may value increased student self-esteem, but that their funding priorities relate to quantifiable increases in student achievement on Eurocentric standardized tests (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008). This suggests a general prioritizing of assimilation over self-determination.

Taken together, these findings indicate three potential answers to the question of what purpose the emphasis on self-identification is meant to serve in the *Implementation Plan*. The first is that the Ministry is holding to its original purpose—to establish baseline data then implement targeted programming—but that this purpose has simply been delayed (albeit through their own inaction). If this is the case, we should expect to see a new and more solid baseline of self-identified Indigenous student achievement data in 2016, augmented by “indicators for assessing the self-esteem and well-being of Aboriginal students” (OME, 2014, p. 18) to make sure that programs like the ASSPs do not fall through the cracks. Building on this newer and more solid baseline, we should expect to see a new timeline moving beyond 2016, with clear, actionable strategies to resolve the education gap.

Secondly, self-identification may be a tool to manage expectations and justify a narrowed focus in Indigenous education. This possibility is suggested by some of the shifts in indicators from the *Framework* to the *Implementation Plan*. For instance, the *Framework* calls for school boards to “increase access to Native Language and Native Studies programming for all students” (OME, 2007a, p. 19). The *Implementation Plan* changes this to: “increase opportunities for Native languages and Native studies education, based on local demographics and student and community needs” (OME, 2014, p. 12). As Anuik and Bellehumeur-Kearns (2014) argue, the original emphasis on integrating Indigenous perspectives throughout the mainstream education experience has the potential to improve Indigenous students’ pride in their cultures. By narrowing their programming to focus only on self-identified Indigenous students, the Ministry risks creating an even greater gap between these segregated Indigenous students and the “mainstream” student population. Nonetheless, we will know that this approach is the true purpose for self-identification data if this data starts to be strategically used to de-emphasize initiatives aimed at the general student population without further substantive programs being put forward in their place.

Thirdly, the collection of self-identification data may be for the purpose of data manipulation. The available evidence (AGO, 2012; Anuik and Bellehumeur-Kearns, 2014) indicates that the Ministry has made little real effort to implement the *Framework* over the last eight years, and perhaps they have given up on making substantive changes to the education gap. Aside from continued efforts to increase culturally relevant teaching (which, as I argued in the previous section, appear to be viewed as a mechanism to

assimilate Indigenous students to standardized assessment measures) the emphasis appears to have shifted to data for its own sake, without any clear link to targeted programming. Even the presentation of the 2013 baseline data in the *Implementation Plan* suggests data manipulation. For instance, it states: “Grade 3 and 6 reading scores show gaps ranging from 5 to 33 percentage points” (OME, 2014, p. 4). A consultation of the data in the 2013 *Progress Report* indicates the questionable manner in which this statistic was developed. First of all, the 2013 document presents the Grade 3 and Grade 6 Reading results as separate statistics, but the *Implementation Plan* conflates them for no apparent reason. The original numbers for each test indicate the percentage of First Nation, Métis, Inuit, English-language, and French-language students “at or above the Provincial Standard” (OME, 2013, p. 18). From this range of potential comparisons, the *Implementation Plan* presents the largest possible gap (Grade 6 First Nation and French-language students) and the smallest possible gap (Grade 3 Métis and English-language students), from two different tests. It is not clear what this achieves, other than to muddy the waters.

It is possible, however, that muddying the waters is precisely the intention. If the Ministry has given up on taking substantive action to resolve the education gap, the self-identification data may simply be a way to generate false measures of progress. In a New Zealand Maori context, Kukutai (2004) found that the Maori who were most likely to self-identify were those who were closest to their culture, and therefore often less adapted to Western cultural institutions. My point here is not to determine whether or not this pattern holds in Canada—I am not aware of any existing research that would answer this question. But this logic could offer another explanation of the Ministry’s focus on self-identification. By this logic, it is possible that the first wave of Indigenous student self-identifications used as a baseline in 2013 were students who more strongly identified with their culture, and therefore are not well-served by colonial standardized assessments (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008). By this same logic, it is possible that this late strong push for more self-identification data is done with the expectation that the second wave of self-identifications will consist of Indigenous students who are more adapted to Western forms of education, and therefore rank more highly in standardized assessments. If this is the case, this late push for self-identification could effectively dilute the baseline data, creating an impression of a substantive increase in self-identified students’ achievement, with no actual change in either Ministry actions or students’ experiences. We will know that this is the purpose for the self-identification data if the Ministry attempts to compare their 2016 numbers to the 2013 baseline to claim success for the overall initiative. In effect, this would mean a shift in Ontario’s Indigenous education policy toward “symbolic policy”—a policy not intended to make any substantive change in public affairs but simply to create the illusion of change (Tee, 2008). The policy set out originally to close the gap between Indigenous students and mainstream schools, but in the process it has demonstrated another gap—between text and context, between policy rhetoric and meaningful change (Tee, 2008).

Conclusion

As previous studies have suggested, *Ontario’s First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* is a complex and volatile document. It can be seen as a tool for narrowing the gap between Indigenous students and “mainstream” schools (Anuik &

Bellehumeur-Kearns, 2014; Cherubini, 2009) or for widening it (Cherubini & Hodson, 2008; Cherubini et al., 2010). The 2014 *Implementation Plan* offers a new perspective on the meaning of the *Framework* and the broader scope of Ontario's Indigenous education policy. My analysis of the *Implementation Plan* suggests a significant shift away from substantive action to resolve the education gap and toward the apparent collection of data for its own sake. However, the larger purpose of this data collection remains uncertain. Ideally, these data could be used to establish a new baseline from which to launch a renewed effort at achieving the *Framework* goals, starting in 2016. Such an effort should utilize a combination of strategies aimed at decolonizing the mainstream educational experience and increasing opportunities for the educational self-determination of Indigenous communities (Aquash, 2013; Battiste, 2011; Redwing Saunders & Hill, 2007). It should also gather and maintain the collected self-identification data in a way that allows for variability in how students self-identify over time and between contexts (Restoule, 2000). It is also possible, however, that the data will be separated from its stated purpose of evaluating specific and targeted programs, and used instead in one of two ways to reinforce the *status quo*. It could be used to justify a narrower focus for Ministry funding, through targeted implementation of Indigenous programming only for self-identified Indigenous students. While there is certainly a place for such targeted programming, if it becomes the primary strategy it risks segregating self-identified Indigenous students from their peers. This result would undermine the decolonizing potential of the original *Framework*, with its proposals to incorporate Indigenous perspectives throughout the "mainstream" schooling experience. Finally, the data could be used for the purpose of data manipulation, by comparing the student achievement data from the very different 2013 and 2016 data sets in order to generate the illusion of progress without any real, substantive change. We will see what substantive action the Ministry takes in 2016.

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Thinking Together: A Duoethnographic Inquiry Into the Implementation of a Field Experience Curriculum

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Abstract

This paper examines the experiences of two colleagues working in close collaboration over several years to create, implement, and assess an innovative and integrative cohort-based, preservice-teacher, field-experience curriculum in a new Bachelor of Education program. Engaging a duoethnographic narrative approach, this paper both inquires into the experiences of the authors, and traces the complex interrelational work, and personal work that was required to do “good” work together on behalf of preservice students and partners in the “field.”

Keywords: field experiences; duoethnography; teacher education; curriculum change

Authors' Note

Marianne Burgess (Field Experience Coordinator, 2011-2014) presented an early version of this paper with us at CSSE in Victoria in 2013 and has since retired. We offer her our deepest gratitude for the time we spent working together and for her blessings on this paper.

Thinking Together: A Duoethnographic Inquiry Into the Implementation of a Field Experience Curriculum

In fall 2011, the Faculty of Education (now the Werklund School of Education), University of Calgary, implemented a completely revised Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program (combined and post-degree). The new B.Ed. program consists of four semesters of coursework, with a school-based field experience in each semester. On the surface, this is a simple story to tell.

A Field Experience Curriculum Director (Jackie Seidel) was appointed by the Dean. A Field Experience Curriculum Development Committee, including members from the university and the field, was then assembled. Over the course of six months, a draft curriculum for the first two semesters was written, diverse partners in the field (teachers, superintendents, principals, teachers' association representatives) were consulted and revisions were made. Two Field Experience Coordinators were hired (Laurie Hill was one) and they joined in the process of implementing the curriculum. The new curriculum was philosophically and structurally different from what had been done previously. What was imagined was ambitious and involved greater levels of collaboration between preservice teachers, partner teachers, and instructors. It felt exciting and a bit risky. Prior to the initial implementation, extensive professional development and orientation were conducted with partner teachers and field instructors. Following the first and second semesters, feedback was gathered from preservice teachers, partners in the field, and instructors. The curriculum was revised, in some cases significantly, by the Field Curriculum Committee, which was also in the process of writing the second year curriculum. The cycle of curriculum development, feedback and implementation continued over several years.

Engaging a duoethnographic approach, this paper goes beyond the simple story and dialogically investigates the complex depths of one particular preservice curriculum creation and implementation experience. Although we do describe some aspects of the new field experience program, the focus and purpose of this inquiry and paper is not to detail the completed or final curriculum, but rather to document and inquire into the lived experience of the processes. The duoethnographic approach enabled us to investigate and articulate some of the often invisible, complex, and even personally costly aspects of such curriculum development and implementation.

A Duoethnographic Inquiry

Inspired by duoethnographic inquiry developed by Richard Sawyer and Joe Norris (Norris & Sawyer, 2004; Norris, 2008; Norris, Sawyer & Lund, 2012; Sawyer & Norris, 2013), we have collaboratively engaged in "critical dialogue" (Lund & Veinotte, 2010, p. 5) for sharing and reinterpreting the complex layers and challenges of the work. According to Norris, Sawyer and Lund (2012), "Rather than uncovering the meanings that people give to their lived experiences, duoethnography embraces the belief that meanings can be and often are transformed through the research act" (p. 9). Thus, in this paper, readers bear witness to our collective narrative vulnerability as we publicly explore, expose, and reinterpret the work we often did in private. Sharing these stories and experiences uncovers and reinscribes the complexity and emotionality as well as the

time-consuming, life-altering, and deeply challenging personal nature of such pedagogical curriculum work. This paper reminds of and demonstrates the ways that the “behind the scenes” work imagined and enacted by individuals and groups collaborating is critical to understanding a program’s or curriculum’s development and success, and more importantly to understanding more fully the ways such curriculum work always *lives* in the relational, messy world beyond the written page.

Duoethnography originates in dialogue (Sawyer & Norris, 2013). While dialogue would most often today be understood as an oral conversation, the word *dialogue* was first used in Old French in the early 13th century to refer to a “literary work consisting of a conversation between two or more persons” (“Dialogue,” OED, n.d.). The Greek prefix “dia,” often misinterpreted as meaning *two*, actually means *through* or *across*. Thus, duoethnography is a way of engaging in an “ethics of self-accounting” (Miller, as cited in Sawyer & Norris, 2013, p. 291) together as a means for exploring an experience or phenomenon through conversation in such a way that new interpretations, meanings, and understandings become both necessary and possible. Our text follows the model of representation in duoethnography; that is, a text written as a dialogue between two people, without merging or subsuming two voices or perspectives (co-authors) into one coherent text, and without relying or drawing extensively on exterior voices or texts for substantiation. During the process, we questioned and provoked one another, and we had many face-to-face meetings where we took notes on conversations and our memories of the development and implementation of the field experience curriculum. We wrote many pieces after these meetings, which we exchanged with one another for further dialogue. Some of these pieces became the edited dialogue presented in this paper. Joe Norris (2008) describes the process and relationship between authors and between authors and readers in duoethnographic inquiry:

Each author of a duoethnographic piece is both the researcher and researched. The team employs storytelling to simultaneously generate, interpret, and articulate data. Stories beget stories—like interview questions—the stories enable the research-writing partners to recall other past events that they might not have remembered on their own. Their stories weave back and forth in juxtaposition to one another, creating a third space between the two into which readers may insert their own stories. (p. 234)

This rich methodology has enabled us to explore the curriculum implementation process and our own experiences of that in a manner that goes far beyond a curriculum product, getting to the heart of the complexity of the experience. While on the surface the product, and even the process, may have appeared mostly straightforward (and we wanted it to), what occurred behind the scenes was infinitely and unimaginably messy. It was full of surprises and joy, heartbreak and heartache, exhaustion and self-doubt, and sometimes conflict. Through narrating, sharing, responding to and re-editing the stories of our collaborative and individual experiences, we have been challenged to (re)understand our work together. Because the process of implementation itself was a great deal of complex work done in too little time, engaging in this writing project together has enabled us to re-encounter the work we have done more reflectively and reflexively.

While we attempted to engage in the profound challenge of narrating this complex story, we encountered the difficulty of truth telling. We wrote and shared many experiences, anecdotes, and stories that for ethical and professional reasons cannot be shared publicly, but we found the act of sharing them with one another, accompanied by much laughter and some tears, to be cathartic, and a way to build community and to process and leave some of the difficulties behind us. At the same time, we struggled with the idea of audience. There were (and are) many incidents and challenges that we feel would be important for someone to hear and care about, but we are not sure who that person is, and accordingly the silence of these stories and incidents has been borne by our bodies, in our personal lives, and by our families and friends.

On Disclosing “Terrible Experiences”

We offer this piece and methodology as both encouragement and example towards a means of engaging in what Jacques Derrida (1999) calls *infinite close readings* of our own situations, particularly those in which we find ourselves in leadership roles and responsible for making often difficult and/or ethical decisions that affect the work and lives of many other people. Derrida refers to his concept of *undecidability* to raise questions about how we know what to do when we find ourselves in situations where we are responsible to decide. How do we know what is the best or right decision, or the best or right way to proceed? Such undecidability was something we faced many times each day in our roles as Field Experience Curriculum Director and Field Experience Coordinator. We faced undecidability in working with various committees, in writing the curriculum documents, and in determining the final drafts, as well as when working with students and teachers, and when encountering colleagues who either supported or did not support the work.

Derrida describes undecidability not as inaction or paralysis in the face of a decision, but as the responsibility and necessity *to choose*. He insists that this is the beginning ground of all ethics and politics, and we propose this as the beginning ground of all pedagogical work, too. It is always a risk, yet we must decide what to do. Preservice teacher field experiences involve both ethics and politics and, we would add relationships to this list. Derrida (1999) writes:

I would argue that there would be no decision, in the strong sense of the word, in ethics, in politics, no decision, and thus no responsibility, without the experience of some undecidability. If you don't experience some undecidability, then the decision would simply be the application of the programme, the consequence of a premise or of a matrix. So a decision has to go through some impossibility in order for it to be a decision. If we knew what to do, if I knew in terms of knowledge what I have to do before the decision, then the decision would not be a decision. It would simply be the application of a rule, the consequence of a premise, and there would be no problem, there would be no decision. (p.66)

Derrida continues to say that decisions that depend on “responsibility” (p. 66) can be a “terrible experience” and that without going through this terrible experience “there would simply be a serene application of a programme of knowledge” (pp. 66-67). Derrida's

words offer some comfort and insight to those of us engaged in curriculum development or leadership in teacher education. Often, institutions (and universities and education in general), in order to function smoothly and to market their best “face” to the world, would like to pretend that these terrible experiences do not exist, or are not important or valuable. Certainly there is little time to experience them in the contemporary rush to measure up, to be top ranked, or to get things done efficiently and effectively. The “serene application of a programme of knowledge” seems more like what these institutions often ask of us. Indeed, it may be important that there is an appearance of a serene application and that those who lead know and have confidence in what they are doing. The dialogue in this paper, however, explores the shadow side of presenting the face of a serene application. Derrida helpfully reminds us that the institution is us (the institution is me, the institution is you), and that it is the terrible experiences and difficult decisions that we suffer far beyond what the institution would count or acknowledge as work that matter. Duoethnographic inquiry engages this difficult space of undecidability and terrible (and joyful) experiences.

In the Beginning: Thinking Through Together

Jackie:

When I was first asked by our Dean to take up the position of Field Experience Curriculum Director, I was told my role was to be the philosophical and scholarly energy behind the writing and implementation of a new curriculum. My imagination latched on to a vision of myself as curriculum theorist. I pictured myself sitting in a “professorish-looking” office, surrounded by books, drinking tea, staring out the window, and dreaming up a curriculum that would magically flow out into the world where it would be joyfully experienced by preservice teachers, partner teachers, and field instructors.

Four years later, this fantasy seems completely ridiculous. This work was neither a solitary nor a simple matter. Looking back, I understand that it was as necessarily and properly complicated and messy as any creative human and relational endeavour. The image of the philosopher lounging in my office was replaced by the reality of interminable rushing, meetings, consultations, late-night conversations, and uncountable, never-ending emails. It was punctuated by unfathomable, extraordinary, and unexpected emergencies, and by surprisingly joyful and creative experiences as well as new friendships and insights. I learned that implementing change and carrying the responsibility for leading it is exhausting, difficult work not only for the mind, but also for the body and spirit. The image of thinking alone was replaced by the image and practice of thinking together.

Laurie:

I was excited to collaborate in implementing a new approach to field experiences. Along with a colleague, I was responsible for field placements for our preservice teachers in each of the four semesters. This placement process involved a continuous correspondence with school administrations. It also involved the purposeful matching of preservice teachers with partner teachers, professional development for the partner teachers, and orientations for our field instructors. During the field experiences, we were available to support individual students, field instructors, partner teachers, or school

administration in any way that was required. It was a demanding cycle, but the possibilities inherent in developing, introducing, and implementing a new field experience curriculum that provided our preservice teachers with a rich context to develop a deep understanding of best practices and that encouraged them to become committed professionals were appealing to me. I also learned that the work behind creating these possibilities could be demanding and solitary.

Jackie:

I'm interested that you use the word solitary. Although I refer to "thinking together" above, it's true for me also that much of this work was experienced as very lonely. For example, those many late nights writing and editing documents, and wondering if this was going in the right direction or if the learning experience would be as rich and challenging as we hoped, or if it would be received well by schools. The responsibility weighed heavily on me. However, despite these feelings of being alone, much of the work was defined and created through dialogue between us and between diverse partners in this work and that was exciting.

There was something completely remarkable about what we were asked to do: Create *entirely new* field experiences for preservice teachers. It was an exceptionally rare opportunity and privilege. I remember the thrill of the first Field Experience Committee who worked on the curriculum for semesters one and two during the fall of 2011. Much of the new B.Ed. course work was designed around collaboration, team learning, and topic integration. Everyone on the committee was excited by what it meant to bring such learning concepts into field experiences. We decided right away that we purposefully wanted the curriculum to break open the model of one preservice teacher with one partner teacher in one classroom supervised by one field instructor.

Laurie:

The design was a definite break from the model used in the past. In the first field experience, we were turning the model on its head. Preservice teachers were organized in cohorts to visit two school sites over two weeks. The intent was to experience life in an elementary school and in a middle or senior high school for a week each. The goal was to broaden the perspective of preservice teachers and to invite them to disrupt and reconsider their own experiences of school and their preconceived notions of what it might mean to be a teacher. Through online conversations with their peers and in seminar discussions, field instructors guided preservice teachers in engaging with scholarly readings and assignments to enhance their understanding of teaching. These changes were exciting and innovative and we thought everyone could not help but embrace them.

Jackie:

Institutional constraints were imposed on us: This introductory field experience was to be two weeks in the middle of the first semester. But still, we dreamed up crazy stuff in the beginning. It could go this way or that way. So many possibilities! We had to make decisions. Someone on the committee suggested that this experience could be an ethnographic field study in which preservice teachers inquired purposefully and collaboratively into the culture of schools. We decided to integrate the field experience

into the Pragmatics of Learning and Teaching course as much as possible. Through the context of that course and their ethnographic study in schools for the two weeks in the middle of the term, students could be introduced to the collaborative scholarship of learning and teaching.

Laurie:

Yes, this was an exhilarating time! The meetings with our colleagues involved in developing and teaching the Pragmatics course were invigorating and thoughtful. So many wonderful ideas. We wanted to cement a clear and firm connection between the first field experience and our new Pragmatics course through course objectives and assignments that seamlessly supported the field philosophy. I was one of the coordinators for this new course and so had part of the responsibility for guiding the group discussion and encouraging consensus among my seven colleagues. As a new instructor, I was conscious of wanting to meet the challenge of this role. We talked about course objectives and assessment strategies, and the likely outcome of each decision. We thought about the themes we would like to take up and the readings that could support a thoughtful and meaningful investigation into teaching. We discussed the manner in which the preservice teachers would come to know themselves as learners and as emerging teachers, and we discussed how they might demonstrate this new sense of their professional identity and how their learning could be documented. These conversations were sometimes difficult as colleagues grappled with assumptions about our underlying philosophy for field experiences. This period of thinking through with colleagues gave us the opportunity to further define what we hoped would be essential elements of a field experience.

Jackie:

We then engaged in the work of thinking through together with teachers and school communities how this curriculum might live in their particular contexts. How could we place these large cohorts of students into the schools, not into individual classrooms, but into highly diverse school cultures where they would be acting as researchers rather than as what would traditionally be understood as ‘student teachers’?

Laurie:

We knew that this shift from a more conventional field experience format was an imposition for the schools. Two groups of preservice teachers moving through a school, visiting classrooms, and inquiring into the particulars of the school’s organization for two weeks was potentially disruptive and we did not expect that it would be readily embraced by every school site. Many educators wondered at first why preservice teachers were only engaged in observation and reflection.

This first placement was very complex and we spent a lot of time working through the details of organizing it for our students. But I think it was a worthwhile exercise. When our preservice teachers returned to campus to resume their classes, they were inspired and energized by the time they had spent in two completely different learning environments. As instructors, we were thrilled with the thoughtful observations and insightful reflections they had about their experiences.

Jackie:

This initial field experience went better than we hoped, and was enacted in diverse and creative ways by many schools and field instructors. Overall, schools responded positively and embraced the concept of preservice teachers visiting their spaces as researchers. Schools were exceptionally eager to show off their programs and projects, and to provide unique experiences for the preservice teachers. One challenge that we had not anticipated in the initial implementation was that some students would be upset by this experience. They had an image in their mind of what it meant to be a student teacher. Some students challenged us, saying that they couldn't see the point, for example, of a secondary physics major going into a kindergarten class. However, what happened after the experience was a surprise! We had nearly 70 (of about 350) students request to change their program or major. Some were radical changes in subject discipline, or from secondary to primary, or vice versa. Many students expressed excitement about the diverse educational and teaching opportunities they witnessed, often quite different from what they imagined or what they themselves had experienced as learners.

Working With Field Instructors and Partner Teachers: Resistance and Change**Laurie:**

Our work with field instructors was a key component of the new field experience program. We began by introducing and engaging both faculty and sessional instructors to the new curriculum. Often individuals expressed nostalgia for the old program and occasionally individuals resisted new ways of taking up fieldwork. Our relationships with these groups were contested. Our program goals were scrutinized, and our practice questioned. This was necessary, but exhausting work. We saw these individuals regularly on campus and we wanted our working relationship with them to remain collegial.

Jackie:

The instances of resistance were something that I didn't expect in the beginning. I imagined everyone would be as excited as I was. I was naïve in that sense. I like that you use the word *necessary*. That helps me! This prompted me to look up the word and the Latin root means "unavoidable." The dictionary tells me "the root sense is of that from which there is no evasion, that which is inevitable" ("Necessary" OED, n.d.). Looking back, it seems right that we encountered severe resistance. This challenged us to be thoughtful and watchful, to take good care of this new program, as well as to create space and time for dialogue with others, remembering that productive dialogue isn't always peaceful or about consensus.

Our first partner-teacher orientation comes to mind. This was for the second semester experience, which focused on preservice teachers engaging in initial questions of curriculum planning and student learning. Their assignment was to plan a series of learning experiences for a small group of students while inquiring into how they, as teachers, would come to know who those learners were and how they might best enter the topic or concept in relation to that knowledge. As we were sharing the curriculum, one of the participating teachers swore at us and left the session early saying she wasn't going to

follow this curriculum and she knew what she was doing with student teachers and had done it for a long time. This moment was pedagogical for me and she became my teacher. I realized that my own enthusiasm for the project might have overshadowed imagining how it might be received. I am embarrassed to say that I forgot that some teachers weren't expecting, or prepared for, such a radical change in the ways we were asking them to mentor preservice teachers. They had been looking forward to doing it in a familiar way. Also, this curriculum was provoking some of them to question their own practices and, if they taught in a very traditional, teacher-centred way, it would be challenging to implement in their classroom (preservice teachers working with small groups, for example).

Laurie:

I agree that building and sustaining our relationships with partner teachers at this time was challenging. Creating a framework of relationships meant working with partner teachers and schools in a new way. We had to initiate a "transformation of participation" (Rogoff, 1994, p. 226) among school personnel who were familiar with working with us in a certain way. We devoted a great deal of time to creating positive partnerships with them. The method we had for doing this was organized on paper; we planned for numerous professional development workshops in all school jurisdictions so that we could meet with and talk with the individuals who would be working directly with our students. But in reality, the process was challenging.

We experienced anxiety in not knowing what could be done and when. On campus, we did not have full access to support staff knowledge or their time. As a result, we constantly conferred with each other, wondering if one of us had an answer to our questions, or knew about the process of finding out the answer to a question. Our engagement with our work felt fragmented, and at times, we felt frustrated. I think, though, that this discomfort is part of any new endeavour. It is to be expected.

Jackie:

Laurie, your thought that such resistance and challenges were necessary (*no evasion!*) is a sharp reminder that in any such endeavor of implementing (cultural) change, the process will always be shaped/marked by unavoidable and unexpected challenges, conflict, and resistance, and that the success of the project should not and cannot be measured either by the lack of resistance or by overcoming it because there is no such idyllic or utopian place of a perfect, conflict-free, project or process.

Thoughts on Field Experiences as Scholarship

Laurie:

The most worthwhile moments for me as a teacher are those in the company of others. I think it must be this way for most teachers. It is not the time we spend alone planning at our desk or the time spent in marking that stand out for us, but the exquisite moment when our conversation with someone else sparks a new idea, question, or connection. That moment stands out. It is not about who we are alone, but who we are in relationship to someone else. "Our goodness and our growth are inextricably bound to that of others we encounter. As teachers, we are as dependent on our students as they are

on us” (Noddings, 1995, p. 196). This exquisite connection is at the heart of knowing for each of us and for teachers, at the core of best practice. In the act of connecting with each other, we can come to know the students and their strengths, and the students can come to know the world, each other, and themselves better.

Jackie:

I think this fits into an essential idea that we tried to work out: Field experiences, as teaching, could be conceptualized and experienced as a deep and relevant form of scholarship. How could we create an experience and culture where all aspects of schools, curriculum, learning, and teaching are open to questioning, critique, and historical study, and at the same time engage preservice teachers in the traditional kinds of activities they do in practicums, such as lesson planning? The purpose of this was to create a space also for inquiry into the future—into what schools might be, what teaching and learning might become, rather than having a space of cultural reproduction of what schools, or cultural images of schools, are (or were).

Laurie:

Maxine Greene (1993) suggested that teacher education was philosophy in the making... I’ve wondered how this statement applies to the process we were engaged in, but I think you have solved that mystery for me. We wanted preservice teachers to have opportunities to inquire into the entire nature of schools, curriculum, learning, and teaching, not just as they saw them, but into how they might wish them to be. This is education where understanding is in the making.

We discussed our assumptions about field experiences and we compared what field experiences looked like in other B.Ed. programs. We tried to imagine what the benefits and advantages would be for our preservice teachers in the creation of new course outcomes and thoughtful assignments that we hoped to connect back to the course work they had on campus. Our boundaries for philosophizing were constrained within the philosophy that already held us in our roles. So, this is something that we tested and tried to resolve the best that we could.

I think that in our field committee work we were trying to come to an agreement about how we could best give our preservice teachers the opportunity to come to know their students. We wanted our field instructors to know and work well with the preservice teachers. We tried to consider curriculum as one vehicle that would support these ideals and carefully planned field experiences embedded in the field curriculum as another. So maybe this was one of our core philosophical stances, that the opportunity and the possibility for preservice teachers to know their students (as learners) and themselves (as emerging teachers) was what we most wished for, while also knowing that this is an uncomfortable and uneven developmental shift (Britzman, 2007) that is not easily reconciled. We wanted our teacher education and the field experiences we were framing within our B.Ed. program to matter.

As you noted, Jackie, we hoped preservice teachers would make sense of and interpret the world that they were part of and imagine what might be possible. We wanted to embed this ideal of scholarship in the field experiences. And, this shift in thinking was

possibly at the root of the resistance we encountered. The experiences are important, but without an interpretative stance (the space that you mention), the deeper meaning of the experience is missed.

Jackie:

Even as we tried to elevate the field experiences as a legitimate form of academic scholarship, it was often discounted (or uncounted). It raised the question again for me as an academic: What counts as valued and worthwhile work in a university? Or in faculties of education? Many senior professors gave their advice, very sincerely, that I should not be doing this fieldwork, and described in vivid detail the ways that it would ruin my career.

Laurie:

Field experience work seemed to be institutionally invisible. There was no money available for brochures, handouts, and so forth, to support our work. We bought refreshments ourselves for the workshops we conducted. We often struggled to get enough partner teachers for our students. Colleagues wondered aloud why we could not be more on top of the placement process. It was an effort to stay ahead of these tasks and to establish the kind of professional stance we wanted to bring to our work. The tension between the contradictory conceptualizations of field experience created problems. We viewed it as thoughtful, careful work that was dependent on understanding the importance of school setting, teacher expertise, and student academic characteristics, while others often saw it as a matching exercise. We believed that the development of preservice teacher knowledge is associated with the ability to establish relationships, to engage in collaborative work, and to participate in a school environment that is already in place, but is open to change.

Negotiating Diverse Relationships

Jackie:

Somehow, I didn't imagine how emotionally draining, or even devastating, this work would be. The students come with courageous hopes for their future as teachers. But for some, the road is difficult. Many unanticipated emergencies had to be handled immediately. Students sometimes arrived or emailed, angry and upset with the requirements of the curriculum. Some discovered that this career was not for them. Some became seriously ill. Some suffered the sudden death of someone dear to them. I remember one particular day when we met with a young woman who would not be continuing in the program. The meeting was so difficult. She wept. We cried together afterwards and our hearts were sore for days. To have the responsibility and power to make decisions that so powerfully affected the lives of others wounded my spirit and brought me no joy.

Yet, on the other side, there was much joy. In the hallways and elevators after field experiences, I'd ask them how it was and they'd say "Great!" Their faces were glowing and they would excitedly relate stories of their learning and experiences. They were so proud of themselves and I was proud of them. It feels good to have contributed to sending them into the world as teachers.

Laurie:

I agree. We invested so much time in our relationships with the students. I think our work with partner teachers was also joyful. This work with teachers was most rewarding when done face-to-face in meetings when the new field curriculum was introduced to them. This direct link between their work and our work was visibly felt, like a shock of recognition, like friends of friends who meet for the first time. I think these meetings gave each of us energy to recommit to our work.

Jackie:

For me one of the most enjoyable parts of this work was connecting with teachers in the schools. We had developed a curriculum with outlined expectations and outcomes for preservice teachers, as well as course assignments that they were completing in and with their cohort and instructor. This was an entirely new conceptualization of the purpose and method of field experiences and needed to be communicated to the schools and partner teachers. In creating the curriculum, and in thinking about the complex character of schools and classrooms, we had tried to leave space for innovation in how the curriculum would be interpreted and lived. With each draft, we would try to imagine it in a kindergarten classroom or a high school chemistry classroom. With each iteration, our professional development sessions became more and more collaborative—more about engaging the field curriculum as a living document that required careful and ongoing interpretation in vastly diverse classroom contexts.

I remember feeling high with adrenalin after some of those sessions where as many as 60 teachers attended, hundreds of teachers over several days each semester. The teachers were excited to share their expertise, to work with the curriculum document to create the best possible learning experience for their preservice teacher(s). They arrived at the session after a long day of teaching, and we after a long day at the university, and yet somehow these conversations about the learning and mentorship of new teachers felt completely invigorating, fresh, and creative. I realized that innovation happens in many places and at many levels of an implementation, and that a great deal of freedom must exist for interpretive processes and experimentation to occur. When we invited teachers to participate creatively in these conversations with us, the curriculum documents began to come to life, and became much more than we had imagined. More exciting. More open. More possible.

Laurie:

Do you think this approach was effective? Looking back on the conceptualization that we had for the field curriculum, highlights to me how the initial goal of presenting the curriculum as an interpretable document has shifted. I found that some partner teachers wanted to have the parameters of the field placement explained to them and clearly defined. They were uncomfortable in making their own interpretations. And, when they did interpret the field course goals and course tasks and assignments, it was often with an impulse to give preservice teachers an experience similar to one that they had had as a student teacher. There was a familiarity about that stance that seemed appealing for them, I think.

Jackie:

I think back to that teacher who stomped out of our first workshop swearing at us. Your question is very challenging for me. I still want to believe that an interpretive, generative, and creative approach to field curriculum implementation *could* work. And, I think it did work in some cases. I guess it constantly must come back to remembering that a perfect program or implementation is impossible, that challenges are necessary and will always be there, and that finding ways to work within such tensions and challenges is the real work. While some teachers desire strict parameters and want to know exactly what to do, and some others will ignore the curriculum completely no matter what, there are also those who embrace trying a new way. This is an exceptionally complex institutional space. It helps me to think of it ecologically. The more diversity there exists in an ecosystem, the more the ecosystem can be creative, responsive, and resilient. This reminds me that what we experienced is good! We don't want it to be a monoculture, although this is historically the institutional impulse of education. As humans, we have the habit of seeking the smooth and easy situation; if only we could get it right finally! Ha. Our experiences are a reminder that we will never solve all this difficulty or escape the complexity.

The cultural shift required to implement this collaborative model of preservice field experiences involved reconceptualizing the roles of all partners. This seems to me to be very difficult work that would take many more years than the time we had in these roles. Semester 3, in particular, which was oriented around students working in collaborative teams or partnerships with one another, provoked a deeply thoughtful and engaged response from many teachers. They connected this curriculum strongly with their own goals and the collaborative work with which they were already engaged. It was like what you said above, "A shock of recognition." They presented ways for bringing preservice teachers into existing collaborations. They proposed exciting ideas... Can we do this? Can we do that? And, we were able to say "Yes" and "Yes" and "Yes." To feel this energy and excitement brought feelings of happiness and success. Feelings that all this hard work was worthwhile and was making a difference, connecting us to these classrooms, and to present and future teachers.

Laurie:

I thought that the changes in Semester 3 were the most exciting ones. The idea of preservice teachers collaborating to develop their practice in the same classroom was bold and innovative. However, that practice has been a victim of another change in how we do field, and it is one component no longer being continued. As preservice teachers stay with the same partner teacher now for Semester 3 and Semester 4, they must be placed within a classroom as an individual. It was a lovely idea that may come back some day.

Jackie:

I am really sad about this. That's exactly the institutionalized model we were trying to break open: Preservice teachers collaborating and inquiring in learning teams was one of the orienting ideas in the new B.Ed. program goals right from the beginning. What happened here demonstrates the enduring power of the individualistic mentality in

education as an institution. Despite all we know about the power of collaboration, despite how excited teachers in the field were and how much they actually collaborate from day to day, this image of the individual teacher in the separate classroom working with students as individuals continued to dominate. It's such a strong historical force. In the case of our field experiences, it not only dominated but also "won." Perhaps there will be a way to try it again in the future.

Some Closing Thoughts

Laurie:

I like the ecological metaphor that you used to describe schools and learning environments. The idea that when greater diversity exists in a space, a greater possibility for creative, varied, and meaningful learning experiences to occur for our preservice teachers will also exist is an appealing one, and a hopeful one. The work of teacher preparation is contentious; many dimensions create the profile of a skilled professional teacher. The challenge for us was to identify and integrate the attributes that could be realized within our new program. We wanted our students to have an opportunity to develop a professional identity within a supportive context in which they would define what they believed about teaching and learning, and what they understood about the students, and in which to develop the deep understanding of themselves as an emerging teacher. This context rests on a supportive network of relationships between the university and the field, between partner teachers and preservice teachers, and between preservice teachers and the learners in their classrooms. I think that our work was to build this context as best as we could and to establish a framework of relationships so that all of these connections could flourish.

Our time spent in conversation and collaborative work has helped to ground my thinking and guide me in my continued involvement in fieldwork. During the curriculum creation and implementation, we talked almost every day in person, by phone, or by email. We teased apart the essential elements of the field experience, tried to define our assumptions before they were challenged by someone else, and plotted a change of direction when not everything went as planned. We wondered together about the value of our work and about how it shaped our roles in the faculty. We pondered our professional identity in the midst of so much change. In our conversations, we could admit that we did not always feel heard or valued. These conversations helped me to recommit and to continue to engage in our common work. All of us will deal with changes in our professional lives and feel the pressure to accept and implement new practices and policies. This change can bring personal, intellectual, and professional growth, which is usually a struggle (Sarason, 2003). And, this idea of struggle takes us back to Derrida. The difficult decisions that we had to make, decisions linked to our responsibilities within the faculty, were a terrible experience, but a necessary struggle in order for field experiences to be re-imagined and to matter.

Jackie:

Indeed. I remember how many times we were talking late on a Saturday night, on the phone, in our pajamas. Or that I baked a lemon loaf or fresh bread late at night to bring to a meeting to offer some hospitality at a workshop since we had no funding

available for nourishing guests. These were the invisible, un(ac)countable parts of this work. Engaging now in this collective writing—revisiting and recalling—teaches me the ways that the “behind the scenes” work, imagined and enacted by individuals and groups collaborating, might be critical to understanding a program’s or curriculum’s development and success, and more importantly, to understand more fully the ways such work in teacher education always *lives* in the relational, messy, and fleshy world beyond the tidy, written page. Sharing these stories and experiences now reminds me of the complex, emotional, time-consuming, life-altering, and deeply personal yet public nature of curriculum work.

It is difficult work. It is good work.

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Finding Courage in the Unknown: Transformative Inquiry as Indigenist Inquiry

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Abstract

Educators often wonder how to respond purposefully to vexing issues such as ecological sustainability, social justice and holistic health and wellness. The search for useful ways of proceeding can be addressed through engagement in the process of Transformative Inquiry (TI), a mode of inquiry for educators that resonates with indigenous views and ways of being. At its heart, the approach seeks to support preservice teachers in their personal journeys towards decolonizing and indigenizing. Ultimately, these efforts ripple out to affect their future students and the institutions in which they learn, teach, and, hopefully, inquire. Weaving poetry, written from my own experience on becoming indigenist, with the work of scholars such as Manulani Meyer, Lorna Williams, Marie Battiste, Shawn Wilson, and Gregory Cajete, I highlight salient aspects of TI that can be particularly useful in changing the trajectory of both education and educational research: welcoming spirit, deep and generous listening, connecting to place, and finding courage in the unknown.

Keywords: Transformative Inquiry; indigenizing education; decolonizing research; teacher education; educational research

Finding Courage in the Unknown: Transformative Inquiry as Indigenist Inquiry

We will wake up or stay asleep with regard to how best to research/understand, and thus educate our children in this time of homogenization, fear and amoral intentions... It's time. It's time because the world needs our clarity, and we need our own. (Manulani Meyer, 2003, p. 249)

We live in an era where age-old patterns and rhythms of life on Earth are changing significantly; many of us feel a deep sense of urgency in our hearts, minds, souls, and bodies as this increasingly accelerated process unfolds. Educators often wonder how to respond purposefully to vexing issues such as ecological sustainability, social justice, and holistic health and wellness. Our trajectory is likely not maintainable; in many and varied ways, we are deeply wounding the planet, each other, and our very souls. How do educators and educational researchers best proceed in this turbulent complex terrain to help all learners fulfill their potential? How do we shift unbeneficial patterns of consumption, exclusion, and insatiability? Educators and educational researchers hold a great deal of power and possibility; we are well positioned to influence the next generation of learners and in particular, how they interact with the burning questions of the world. But what kind of educator does the world need today? Which modes of inquiry are best suited to bring clarity to educational challenges?

Indigenous modes of learning, teaching, and inquiry bring forward ancient knowledges that have long been integral to sustainable practices. *Transformative Inquiry* (TI) is a mode of inquiry that resonates with and draws from indigenous¹ ways of learning and teaching (Tanaka 2014; Stanger, Tanaka, Tse, & Starr, 2013). At its heart, the TI approach seeks to support preservice (student) teachers in their personal journeys towards decolonizing and indigenizing as they learn to be professional educators. Ultimately, these efforts affect their future students and the institutions in which they teach.

In this article, I bring forward key aspects of TI that specifically add to the conversation around indigenizing learning, teaching, and researching: welcoming spirit, deep and generous listening, connecting to place, and finding courage in unknowing. To further illuminate what the process of indigenization might look like for someone entrenched in Western perspectives, I weave in poetry that describes my own experience of becoming more indigenist. The tensions represented in this poetry will be drawn on to further clarify what is unsettled in the process of indigenizing and what are some of the difficulties of listening outside of habitual ways of knowing.

Locating Myself

By many definitions I am not Indigenous, yet I am becoming indigenist. I feel a direct call to engage in indigenous modes of inquiry. Because of conflicts inherent to this path, the first time I read Shawn Wilson (2007) on indigenist research paradigms, I let out a sigh of relief:

It is the philosophy behind our search for knowledge that makes this new knowledge a part of us, part of who and what we are. And it is then the

choice to follow this paradigm, philosophy, or world view that makes research Indigenist, not the ethnic or racial identity of the researcher. (p. 194)

My heart flew yet again when Manulani Meyer (2008) shared her “practice of Aloha, the intelligence of compassion, empathy and care” (p. 221).

Knowledge that does not heal, bring together, challenge, surprise, encourage, or expand our awareness is not part of the consciousness this world needs now. This is the function we as indigenous people posit. And the great clarity that I have been waiting to express through the beautiful mind of our beloved kupuna healer, Halemakua: *We are all indigenous*. (pp. 221-222)

Both of these writings resonated with beliefs I held deep in my heart and began to shift me towards being more consciously indigenist. Now, as a researcher and teacher educator working with issues of culture and ways of understanding, I make deliberate choices to follow an indigenist paradigm, to practice the intelligence of compassion, empathy, and care. As I delve further into the relational connecting awareness that indigenous scholars advise, relationships with my students are strengthened and learning becomes more relevant and alive.

What follows is a small poetic invocation describing some of my own personal tensions that are an undercurrent to the work of decolonizing myself. I see this as a process of creating an awareness of who I am that helps me better walk my talk with my students (see also Tanaka, Nicholson & Farish, 2012; Tanaka & Tse, forthcoming). For me, writing poetry takes me out of my head and into my heart; reductionist thinking is left behind as emotional knowing takes over. It is often a relief to enter into these spaces away from typical academic intellectualism. I hope you, as the reader, might feel the same. Before and after reading each poem, I invite you to take a moment to ~breath~ and simply be.

~~~~~

### **Leaving Earth Awareness**

In my blood

i hold

these stories

Scotch

Irish

German

Norwegian

English

French Creole

Cajun

mud-spattered rivers

flowing

back

to almost forgotten

indigeneity

far ago                      long away.

first steps

watery boat

crossings

leaving Earth

                                         awareness

seeking

                                         bigger

                                         better

                                         warmer

                                         faster

                                         higher

                                         stronger

more more more

dominant machines.

settler stories

i hold

in my blood.

and  
that's not all of me

~~~~~

This poem helps me to remember that locating myself means going back into my familial history. I am who I am because of the actions of my ancestors. In my case, as with most of us, this is a complex set of interwoven stories that include elements of privilege, loss, adventure, love, power, and more. Upon closer examination, I begin to appreciate how these often-conflicting emotions and elements have played out through the generations.

The Emergence of Transformative Inquiry

In 2006, I was welcomed in as a researcher to study a teacher education experience at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. The course, *Earth Fibres, Weaving Stories: Learning and Teaching in an Indigenous World*, was a successful decolonizing project that immersed preservice teachers into indigenous ways of learning and teaching through working with various earth fibres (Tanaka, forthcoming). Designed and implemented by Lorna Williams, the course was as an act of courageous and gentle resistance to the ingrained patterns of Eurocentric education. Wisdom keepers from several communities created space, time, and intention for ancient and evolving indigenous pedagogies to emerge and thrive (Williams & Tanaka, 2007). TI has emerged in resonance with the teachings in this course.

The ways of being, doing and knowing in the Earth Fibres course were very different than what is typically privileged in Western education systems schools and schooling. Educators have too often been trained to favor reductionism and separating logic. Consequently, we can miss the relational connecting awareness that complicated problems require. One example of this would be the tendency to separate learners from teachers from researchers. In TI, the lines between these roles are consciously blurred; participants become active learner~teacher~researchers. This sensibility underlies my writing here. As I engage in this publication process I am *learning* from the collaborative review process, *teaching* by sharing my experience, and *researching* my own beliefs and the connections they have with others through both the prose and poetic writing processes. By weaving together relational indigenous knowledges and analytical dominant knowledges, we can better identify and address our collective needs (Battiste & Henderson, 2009).

Because of the Earth Fibres course, my personal ways of being in the world, including my research and my work with preservice teachers, were forever changed. My tendency towards reductionist logic began to migrate towards relational accountability (Wilson, 2008). I moved increasingly towards becoming an indigenist (Wilson, 2007), finding deep resonance and direction in indigenous worldviews. I continue to walk with the teachings, further developing TI in my work as an educator of preservice teachers preparing to be both elementary and secondary teachers. TI has its roots in the Earth Fibres course experience; the knowledges brought forward by the wisdom keepers there, ripple out through me in this context today.

Drawing from the teachings of the earth fibre elders, the TI approach was developed alongside a community of teacher educators and preservice teachers who wanted to address the demands of teaching in the complexity of today's classrooms. TI is embedded as a required course in the final months of our elementary teacher education program and is also part of an elective Indigenous Institute within the secondary program. In both contexts, students begin the course by connecting with their "path with heart" (Chambers, 2004) as they each unearth salient issues about which they care about both personally and professionally. Typically they choose topics relevant to the context of their own teaching practice and, therefore, topics that also matter to other educators. These include a vast array of issues such as teacher identity, honesty in the classroom, assessment and integrity, cultural expectations, learning with the arts, creating safe space, listening to student voice, and so forth. These topics are explored through a personal, relational and emergent combination of self-study, journaling, artistic expression, peer interaction, community engagement, and one-on-one mentoring with instructors.

Rather than look for prescriptive solutions to these often burning, pervasive issues, students are encouraged to seek understanding through exploration of open-ended and unbounded questions (Henderson, 1992). This typically takes them on a meandering path, rather than one that is linear and concise. Exploring cul-de-sacs and unanticipated turns, students often discover what really matters for them as educators. For example, Liz, a student, began her inquiry with the topic of no-touch policies in schools and imagined herself engaging in a typical literature review. Her instructor suggested expanding her questions first, and this shifted her trajectory. Liz began to consider her deep concerns "for the poor who have little access to education; for the earth; for boys and girls and whether we educate them correctly; for genuine happiness and purpose; for imagination and wonder" (Tanaka et al., 2014, p. 217). This seemingly scattered exploration was uncomfortable for someone who was, in her words, "driven by the rewards of grades" (p. 216). She stayed with the TI process, however, and through an expressive painting, eventually found herself embracing an unexpectedly rich new topic.

What was once the scenery of the outside world, the 'them', the 'other', 'the system' rolling by as I moved along, suddenly became my own interior scenery; *my* past, *my* childhood, the world inside of *me*. It was no longer possible to remove myself from my inquiry... A transformation was occurring: I went from longing for a more traditional assignment to lessen the niggling questions and mental blocks, to embracing the questions as they materialized, and finally to splashing around in them like a playful child on a sunlit summer afternoon...I realized that the surfacing of the [no-touch] question in my mind was a beacon leading me to acknowledge that the reason I simultaneously cared and was distressed by the policy was because I had been a lonely, neglected child myself—simple as that. (Tanaka et al., 2014, p. 218)

Through her meandering, Liz's topic transformed from no-touch policy to deeper questions about her own experience and how these play out in her teaching.

Another student, Vanessa, was asked to begin the TI process by identifying what keeps her up at night:

A few ideas churned within me, bursting like sparks from a fire. I constructed a bullet-point list of academic topics: brain-gym, brain-based learning, and minorities in the classroom. I hesitated. *What do I really care about?* A word rattled around in my heart, like a fly struggling to be released from a web. With a thudding pulse I printed the anxiety-laden word at the bottom of my list: *biracial*. I was surprised by the naked emotion the word evoked in me. I went home and for the first time in a long time, I wrote a poem, which began:

Does a soul have a colour?

Unbound by the pulse of individuality,

The bones of family,

The muscles of culture. (Tanaka et al., 2014, p. 209)

At her first mentoring session, Vanessa was almost apologetic about her topic, “What does it mean to be a racialized teacher teaching in predominately white spaces” (Tanaka et al., 2014, p. 209). She worried it would be too personal to bring up in the course. Her instructor reassured her that if she stayed with a topic she really cared about, she would have the option of sharing only what she wanted when the time came. Vanessa trusted poetry as being a valid mode of inquiry and eventually wrote a poem entitled “Diaspora Fruit.”

[In this poem I wrestled] with how to collapse dichotomies into a whole. I had always felt like I needed to be either Chinese or White. But what does that really mean? ...Later...I struggled to describe my realization that the fruit, like myself, was more than a fusion of disparate parts, but a new entity. I came to realize that identity is not so black and white. (Tanaka et al., 2014, p. 211)

Through persistence, poetry and passion, the TI process supported Vanessa in looking deeply at the crux of her issue so that she could follow her path with heart as a learner~teacher~researcher.

In TI, three overarching questions suggested by Gregory Cajete (2009) are used as guiding stars, important indicators for all learner~teacher~researchers: How are we going to deal with the environmental crisis as it is today? How are we going to learn to live with each other? And, how do we take care of our own souls? During a 4-year study funded by the Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada, I tried to capture a sense of how people change on deep dispositional levels through the TI process (please download our free interactive iBook text at <http://www.transformativeinquiry.ca/downloads/>).

Reframing Research to Include Our Deep Need

We live in an era of fractured cosmologies where consumption and power often distort and sap viable solutions, often leaving unmet, our basic human needs such as ecological sustainability, social justice and holistic health and wellness. Manulani Meyer (2003) suggests we start by remembering “research is not simply about asking ‘burning questions’ we want resolved, but rather, we are answering a call to be of use” (p. 249) in

our communities. As an educational researcher, I attend carefully to how I might be of use. In particular, I try to learn how to do the personal work of decolonizing and indigenizing so that it can ripple out into the larger world. To re-pattern ways of being, knowing and doing on fundamental levels (both personally and institutionally). To attend carefully to connections to place, how I am in relation to others, and who I am in my innermost soul. To know what I care about, why I care, and how to articulate my concerns to others—this is especially true when what I care about is marginalized and/or vulnerable. To learn how to work together more generously, and how to distinguish between what I think I need, what I actually need, and how my consumption affects the community and all sentient being on Earth. And, perhaps most importantly, I try to be aware of what gets in the way of these intentions; here is where the deepest work of transformation resides.

Marie Battiste and Sa'ke'j Henderson (2009) point out that indigenous theoretical and methodological paradigms can create shared capacity when used in combination with western ways of knowing. By naturalizing indigenous knowledges into education, a “trans-systemic synthesis” of pedagogies is created (p. 16). This “difficult and arduous journey,” (p. 16) this weaving together of seemingly disparate modes, is that with which we must embark if we are to meet our needs and be of use. Battiste and Henderson (2009) further describe how Indigenous knowledge “allows peoples to confront despair, resignations, intolerance, racism, injustice, and power with momentum, conflict, spirit and heart” (p. 9). TI is one mode of inquiry that supports time and space for the weaving of western and indigenous ways.

Inherent to this project of weaving is the danger of cultural appropriation. I am not Indigenous; yet I find myself in a place where indigenous knowledges often seem the most beneficial. It is difficult to know how to proceed when I'm not sure if I belong enough to use the knowledge I have come to know. Of course, insider/outsider categories are not easy to determine and are not always useful (Kovach, Carriere, Barrett, Montgomery, & Gillies, 2013). Again, Shawn Wilson (2008) helps me to proceed.

If knowledge is formed in a relationship, it can't be owned. I guess you could ask, would you own the knowledge or would it own you? It becomes cultural appropriation when someone comes and uses that knowledge out of its context, out of the special relationships that went into forming it. You have to build a relationship with an idea or with knowledge, just like you have to with anything or anyone else. (p. 114)

For me, my work towards indigeneity is in part, about recognizing what owns me and having the courage to follow this knowledge. I do this while respectfully nurturing relationships with community elders, indigenous scholars, the land that sustains me, and all sentient beings I encounter—be they spiders in the kitchen or deer in the yard. Of course, I make mistakes in this; it is a process of becoming. TI at its heart is indigenizing work.

~~~~~

**the knowledge owns me**

tears spring  
to my eyes  
oh! not here!  
this is a place  
of Intellect.  
Posturing.  
A certain kind of Knowing.

still,  
you  
open me.  
my heart  
cannot turn away.

later,  
mouse paused  
over unopened files  
a voice cries:  
too hard!  
write something else!  
this is  
too heavy,  
too           unsettling.

still,  
I open  
the file.  
because  
                  this work

is really all i know  
 because  
 there's no  
 turning back  
 because  
 the knowledge  
 owns me  
 because  
 my heart cannot  
 turn away

tears direct  
 my inner mouse  
 opening  
 into  
 knowledges  
 beyond  
 who I thought i was  
  
 and that's  
 not all of me

~~~~~

This poem describes some of my experience after I heard Manulani Meyer speak a number of years ago at an academic conference. Her inclusion of spirit within the academy touched my deep need and I was overcome with emotion. The same thing happened when I heard Gregory Cajete speak about his three simple questions for educators. Both times, I felt worried and embarrassed to be moved to tears at a conference, but most of all I felt relieved. Here were academics speaking sense to me—at the time I so needed voices of reason, places for which to aim. Their courage to speak their truth gives my little mouse heart courage to do the same.

Welcoming Spirit, Listening, Place, and Courage

During the Earth Fibres course experience and a prior carving course I had taken, I began

to learn some of the key indigenous principles Lorna Williams brings forward from her own Lil'wat traditions. These include: *Celhcelh*, developing a sense of responsibility for personal learning within the context of a learning community; *Emhaka7*, encouraging everyone's best work at whatever task is before us; *Kat'il'a*, finding stillness amidst our busy need to know; *Kamúcwkalha*, the acknowledgement of group attunement and the emergence of common group purpose; and *Cwelelep*, the discomfort and value of being in a place of dissonance and uncertainty (Sanford, Williams, Hopper, & McGregor, 2012; Tanaka et al., 2007; Williams & Tanaka, 2007). These principles were embedded into the Earth Fibres course by the very fact that they were deeply integral to her being, doing, and knowing; Lorna acted from her ancestral beliefs. As the courses proceeded, she spoke about these principles outwardly and I have fond memories of sitting near the pole we were carving as she shared her teachings.

I took Lorna's cultural teachings to heart and have brought them forward into the development of the TI process. Here I highlight four aspects of TI that are particularly resonate with Lorna's principles and are also supportive of weaving together indigenous and Western ways of being: welcoming spirit, deep and generous listening, connecting to place, and finding courage in unknowing. These aspects are not listed in a particular order because they are interrelated, non-prescriptive, and non-hierarchical in nature. TI works at developing new patterns of doing, being, and knowing at deep dispositional levels; its purpose is to change our entrenched beliefs, values and attitudes. This is an iterative and continuous process. Reading on, keep in mind that TI is applicable beyond the realm of teacher education; begin to imagine how facets of TI could unfold in other locations.

Welcoming Spirit

Manulani Meyer (2003, 2008) describes knowledge as an ever-expanding experience requiring attention on three levels of perception: gross (objective, body, physical), subtle (subjective, mind, rational) and causal (transcendental, spirit, contemplation). Awareness of and engagement in these three levels results in a "triangulation of meaning," propelling us forward in our evolutionary journey. People engaged in Western modes of inquiry tend to utilize and perceive through either the gross (e.g., collecting data, numbers, and observations) or the subtle (e.g., thinking about or analyzing these data, numbers, and observations). Limiting attention to the causal, results in an incomplete triangulation of meaning, a partial understanding of experience.

Essentially, the usefulness of gross and subtle modes of perception can be fueled by attention to the causal; triangulation of meaning occurs through holistic awareness and engagement. As described by Meyer (2003), our causal nature has to do with "spirit, the deep animating principle found in matter" (p. 253). It is a place where "dualities merge and knowledge becomes less a *thing* than an event, a stirring, a final reaching in" (p. 253). Our causal roots animate how we inquire, creating contexts where "causal knowledge breathes and deepens our connection to all things. All people. All ideas" (p. 254). Yet, despite unfolding efforts to indigenize education and research, those of us trained through Western education systems often do not seem to understand the important role of causal knowledges and/or to have the courage to engage them. The consuming quest of tenure, pressure to adhere to departmental/university standards, and fear of deviating from academic norms all contribute to this inertia. But excluded causal

knowledges from our learning~teaching~researching omits an important way of knowing that can ultimately address our deepest needs more holistically and therefore more effectively.

Consider what editors of the Canadian Journal of Native Education (Restoule, Archibald, Lester-Smith, Parent, & Smillie, 2010) write: “When we approach our research in a good way, with good hearts and good minds, spirit manifests to make things happen...Connection to spirit is lived daily and is inseparable from research work” (p. 3). We are holistic beings, yet we often try to solve problems through a division of heart and mind. If spirit is “a mysterious energy that pervades the universe and gives life its essence, that animating force which joins all living things together” (Restoule et al. 2010, p. 1), we do well to bring this enlivening force consciously into various aspects of learning, teaching, and research.

In addition, a focus on each person’s individual core needs and aspirations (Battiste & Henderson, 2009) supports an emergence and strengthening of their learning spirit (Battiste, 2009). This resonates with the notion of vocation or calling, experienced as “the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet” (Buechner, 1993, pp. 118-119). Battiste and Henderson (2009) posit,

When [Indigenous knowledge] is naturalized in educational programs, the learning spirit is nurtured and animated. Individually and collectively, Aboriginal people are able to decolonize themselves, their communities, and institutions, leading to transformation and change; and everybody benefits. Indeed naturalizing [Indigenous Knowledge] creates potential for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners in trans-systemic ways that [Eurocentric knowledge] alone cannot do. (p. 13)

Nurturing the learning spirit leads to learner~teacher~researcher autonomy and the Lil’wat concepts of *Celhcelh*, developing a sense of responsibility for personal learning, and *A7xekcal*, valuing our own expertise and considering how it spreads beyond our individual selves to help the community at large. The causal, transcendental and spiritual can work with the gross and subtle to create a certain atmosphere of care.

The *way* we come to know matters greatly and perhaps more so than *what it is* we eventually come to know. Emphasizing the process, the journey, the path, the way... speaks to the necessity of nurturing a spirit of humility when we undertake our research. (Restoule et al., 2010, p. 4)

It is important to practice new ways of attending consciously and with regularity. For me, poetry is a vehicle for this awareness. As I attend to my spiritual nature, I become more sensitive to my own complexity and that of the people with whom I engage in research. The tensions and potentials of our heritage, our collective stories, are brought to fuller awareness. This atmosphere of care engages *Emhaka*⁷, encouraging each of us to do the best we can at the task at hand.

~~~~~

breathing

in  
 ...  
 breathing  
 out  
 ...  
 emptiness is  
 form  
 ...  
 form  
 is emptiness  
 ...  
 ~~~~

Deep and Generous Listening

Stories are at the heart of all learning and teaching (Cajete, 1994) as well as indigenous research (Archibald, 2008; Iseke, 2013). One important TI saying is: *speaking to be revealed, listening to be changed* (Altman, 2012). As we learn, teach, and research, we practice sharing stories with honesty. We listen in generous ways (Thayer-Bacon, 2003), beyond what we believe to be possible or true. This can lead to subtle shifts in patterned ways of being, doing and knowing. As Kovach describes, “Indigenous approaches to research for many may not simply be about research—they are more holistic, experiential, and spiritual than that. They are something more. That “something more” is found in our stories” (Kovach et al., 2013, pp. 505-506). That we listen, and how we listen, is paramount.

In TI we practice how to listen beyond what it is we think we know about another person, beyond what it is we want to say when they are done talking. Eurocentric habits of efficiency (Stein, 2002), being organized and goal oriented at the expense of relaxed awareness, listening and consideration, are strong in education and educational research. We can come to recognize that “we are not ‘dumbing down’ methodology when we wish to sit and listen—for years” (Meyer, 2003, p. 253). This type of quiet attention resonates with Lorna Williams’ principle of *Kat’il’a*, the act of becoming still and slowing down, despite an ingrained and urgent need to know and a desire for busyness.

In the context of the TI course, listening well leads us to become a community of learner~teacher~researchers that are relationally accountable. We base our interactions in respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. All participants are recognized as knowledge holders and everyone is expected to seek conversations about the topics we care about beyond the notion of academic expertise. We make conscious efforts to extend this into community by talking with children, teachers, parents, elders, and other knowledge

holders. Battiste and Henderson (2009) suggest that such an orientation builds “a successful learning continuum and healthy, resilient communities” (p. 11). The Lil’wat principle that takes hold here is *Kamúcwkalha*, the energy current indicating the emergence of a communal sense of purpose.

~~~~~

**it’s time**

it's not what

You

Know.

it’s how

We

come to know.

together.

transforming

ways

of being

doing

wondering

We need

dialogue

to overcome fears

together

we flow

listening

well

listening

still.

and that’s not

all of me

~~~~~

Connecting to Place

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) reminds us that indigenous research is a “humble and humbling activity” (p. 5). The English word “humble” comes from the Latin *humus*, of the earth (Oxford English Dictionary). What does being in nature tell us about our research approach? Our questions? How does the focus of our research affect the wellness of the planet? What would change if everyone involved in research brought his or her questions right out onto the land? Cynthia Chambers (2008) thinks carefully about the importance of developing a curriculum of place in decolonizing work. She describes how on the land, there is a different sense of time, an embodiment of skill, an education of attention, and a wayfinding that become possible. She writes, “It is where we are that matters. By learning to do what is appropriate in this place, and doing it together, perhaps we can find the common ground necessary to survive” (Chambers, 2008, p. 125). The TI course meets outside when possible and I encourage students go outside frequently to see how their topics of inquiry might connect to place. I suggest they listen to what Earth has to say to them.

Place is also about a deep location of self. A common refrain in teacher education is that we teach who we are (Palmer, 1998). I think we research who we are as well; our deepest beliefs come out in our questions and how we follow them. If this is true, it is useful to know our selves—our every action is influenced by our unconscious being, doing and knowing. Processes of deepening awareness can lead to a decolonizing of self, a “critical consciousness awakening” that must be made visible (Henhawk, 2013, p. 511). It is continual and difficult; as Henhawk (2013) shares, “I’ve constantly had to reflect upon whether my very presence in the academy maintains my complicity with it” (p. 511). Further, he asks, “How does one resist and turn their back on things they’ve believed their whole lives?” (p. 513). Disrupting long held beliefs can lead “to epistemological dizziness and nausea” (McIntosh, 1998). No wonder we would rather ignore the call. When we do take the leap, we have to be careful that this is not merely a “settler move towards innocence” (Tuck & Yang, 2012), but a genuine honest look at the epistemological ground on which we stand.

Restoule et al. (2010) point out that this locating of self should be holistic and grounded in spirituality.

One way in which Indigenous research is distinct from other research approaches is that, in locating *self*, we identify ourselves not only by our social markers (such as gender, race, class, etc.) but we also locate ourselves in relation to *spirit* (p. 2).

This is a far cry from the Eurocentric notion that knowledge can somehow be separated from the realms of spirit. And spirit is deeply tied to place.

~~~~~

### Re-settling

Venturing up  
mountain path  
quiet  
rare  
stillness  
fog engulfed  
day.  
alone with  
my thoughts  
feeling further grounded  
with each step  
energized  
in ways  
that don't happen  
any other place

Twelve years  
here  
i am just beginning  
to know this land.  
Climbing ~~Mt. Doug~~  
reclaimed Pkols  
crisp horizon  
narrow line  
of blue,  
clearing sky  
up island.  
Here,  
heavy clouds

gentle wind.  
winter torrents  
faded memory.  
I feel my roots  
extending  
once again.

From you  
i learn  
to stand  
in my truth  
quiet rain  
falling  
all around

I am beginning  
to not find it  
strange  
that seagulls  
soar  
overhead.

and that's  
not all  
of me

~~~~~

Finding Courage in Unknowing

Inherent in a deep locating of self is the possibility of realizing and accepting the limits of our patterned ways of being, doing, and knowing. Decolonizing is an unsettling process,

it “is not an ‘and’. It is an elsewhere” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 36). As Kumashiro (2008) writes, educators

need certain knowledge, but also need to know the limits of their knowledge. They need certain skills, but also need the skill of troubling whatever they do. They need certain dispositions, but also need to be disposed to uncomfortable changes in these very dispositions. (p. 239)

This brings us to the Lil’wat concept of *Cwelelep*, the sense of knowing that we don’t know, while engaging a sense of openness to the possibilities of new learning.

It would be easier if there were prescriptive steps as to how to decolonize or take an indigenous approach, but this is impossible given our complexity as individuals and in relationship. Efforts of indigenizing learning~teaching~researching require partnerships with learners, teachers, researchers, community members, and Earth. In a landscape that can feel unsympathetic and sometimes hostile towards change, my timid mouse self has to find courage to find ways of carrying forward the teachings that I know in my heart to be true.

I agree with Manulani Meyer (2008) who says, “Power, hegemony, colonization, racism, and oppression are the labels on [our] acts of denial. I now see these as *unawareness*” (p. 218). Too often, as learner~teachers~researchers, we particularly and specifically ignore these things. There is much work to be done here. We must continue to locate ourselves and try to remain conscious whenever possible. As Lata Mani (2009) writes,

negativity frequently secures itself by means of fear. Fear brings lack of clarity [which] leads to despair and disempowerment... Accepting what we cannot do and opening further to what we can do maximizes our readiness to be present for what we must do. (p. 139)

How do we open further to what we can do as researchers? For me it is a process of looking fear in the face, to be comfortable (enough) in my unknowing, to move with courage and attend with an atmosphere of care. To actively evoke relationally accountable communities where each person has support to know themselves more fully, and to witness the layers of patterned ways of being, doing, and knowing. I watch for separating logic, try to see the relationships, and visit Earth for guidance on my way forward. I try to find and follow my own learning spirit and nurture the spirit of those around me. I am learning to tell my story with truth and clarity and above all, listen to be changed.

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## **Fear**

Who  
am I  
to walk  
this path?  
There is  
nothing  
to fear  
except fear.  
itself haunting  
mocking each step  
dusky death  
walking alongside.

for what else  
is there  
time?

Dark  
cave  
unknown  
lonely path  
vulnerable woman  
hear the owl call  
surrounded  
by voices

unheard  
 by  
 others.  
 Each  
 purposeful  
 step  
 buries  
 fear  
 .  
 fuck  
 fear  
 .  
 and that's  
 not all  
 of me  
 ~~~~

Closing Thoughts

I lift up my hands in thanks to the land from which all knowledge extends, the elders who have passed this knowledge forward for generations, and my awakening soul that propels me to continue this work around ecological sustainability, social justice, and holistic health and wellness. Personal and institutional tendencies, privileges, politics, and apathy hinder these efforts, and yet change is what we collectively yearn for, and is in fact, inevitable. Increasingly, this work is all I know to do. I invite all educators and academics to consider actively “initiating a new story” (Lewis, Montgomery, Campbell, Ritenburg, & Diversi, 2013). Towards this aim, we can draw purposefully from indigenous knowledges, part of the “collective genius of humanity” (Battiste & Henderson, 2009, p. 13).

Over the years, I have now walked alongside hundreds of students engaged in the TI process. I have noticed how careful inner work is essential to creating personal change and that personal change affects other people and, thus, the institutions we create. Often this means becoming aware of what gets in the way of our intentions and being honest about our faults and feelings. As we attend to who we are, we are transformed and our actions are altered as well.

In your particular context, how do you imagine the possibilities of decolonizing and indigenizing—what might this look like, feel like, and taste like to you? Given the

needs that surround you, how might you be of use? Join and initiate efforts to disrupt with intention, academic norms. Consider how honesty helps you to re-pattern your ways of being, knowing, and doing. Attend carefully to how you are connected to place, how you are in relation to others, and how you nourish your soul. Know what you care about, why you care, and articulate this to others. Rather than listening in order to respond, listen with openness and generosity; listen to be changed. Hold imperfections gently, without condescending judgment. It is here that subtle shifts occur. In this rich, humble space of unknowing, the courage to change can be found and we become more able to usefully address the depths of our genuine needs.

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Endnote

¹ I use lowercase "indigenous" to describe people and ways of being that are of the earth. I use capitalized "Indigenous" to indicate the political or racialized use of the term. When quoting others I am consistent with the original usage.

Indigenous Knowledge Realized: Understanding the Role of Service Learning at the Intersection of Being a Mentor and a College-Going American Indian

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Abstract

The article explores the experiences of 13 undergraduate American Indian college students who served as mentors through a service-learning course while attending a 4-year, predominantly White institution (PWI). This chapter elucidates how serving as a mentor allowed participants to draw on three culturally relevant persistence factors in higher education: relationship, community, and power. Previous research demonstrates that service learning actively involves college students and encourages them to build a connection and a sense of commitment to the community (Lee & Espino, 2011; Rhoads, 1998). Through a Tribal Critical Race Theory lens, the purpose and function of service learning is deconstructed and redefined to fit the needs of North American Indigenous college students. This article reveals that Indigenous undergraduate students tapped into their own supply of Indigenous knowledge in relating their mentoring experience to building meaningful relationships, to being a positive influence in tribal communities, and to recognizing that service is a cyclical power that positively impacts their collective role in society. The article details how relationship, community, and power from Indigenous perspectives are sources of persistence for American Indian students and how social justice-based, service-learning courses provide safe spaces for students to realize their Indigenous knowledge while attending PWIs.

Keywords: American Indian college student; service learning; Indigenous knowledge

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Indigenous Knowledge Realized: Understanding the Role of Service Learning at the Intersection of Being a Mentor and a College-Going American Indian

American Indian College Students' Service as Mentors

As a freshman, everything was new to me especially transitioning to campus and college life. I remember being nervous and shy meeting my mentor for the first time. We quickly found out that we both were what some call “Heinz 57” Natives—representing multiple tribal affiliations! And that kind of broke the ice for us. But it wasn’t anything she said in particular that made me feel comfortable—it was how she presented herself. She made me feel important. I felt as though she truly cared about my well-being and was committed to helping me be successful in my academic endeavors...which was surprising to me because we had just met. Her role in my life has grown to encompass mentor, friend, colleague, and most importantly, sister. We’ve become part of each other’s family. Our lives are intertwined and I am truly blessed to have her as a source of leadership, guidance, and inspiration. (Natalie, personal communications, June 20, 2015)

“I would like to introduce Dr. Nelson” stated my dissertation chair as I entered a hallway filled with faces that were beaming with happiness. One excited face was of a student I met during her senior year of high school. Now a senior in college, she relayed to me, “I remember the story you told us of how you were so overwhelmed when you missed the campus tour at Arizona State University that you left and never went back. It’s inspiring to see how you went from that scared student to accomplishing your doctorate.” Until that moment, I never fully understood the impact of sharing my experiences in higher education. I had just successfully defended my dissertation, but the words provided by the student I mentored, and the feelings that followed those words, will forever remind me of the power of mentorship. (Christine, personal communications, June 20, 2015)

Whether it is serving as a mentor or being a recipient of mentoring, the provided vignettes demonstrate how we have been affected by this form of service in higher education. In a time when national statistics profile the American Indian college student group as not accessing and retaining higher education at the same rates as their peers (see DeVoe, Darling-Churchill, & Synder, 2008; Ginder & Kelly-Reid, 2013; Jackson & Turner, 2004), we offer this paper as a counternarrative to the deficit views of American Indian college students. Throughout this inquiry, we use the term American Indian, Native, tribal and Indigenous interchangeably. This by no means disregards the diversity that exists amongst the numerous tribes of North America. This article begins by presenting the research problem and a short overview of service-learning literature. We continue by introducing the method of inquiry and the role of Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) in this study. Through a reflexive, service-learning model, we synthesize three concepts relevant to the mentoring experience for American Indian students: (a) a sense of relationship, (b) a sense of community, and (c) a sense of power. We conclude by positioning the implications of Native students asserting their Indigenous knowledge in higher education.

Through an Indigenous, strength-based approach, the inquiry questions guiding this project attempt to uncover the experiences of Indigenous college student mentors and their role in a service-learning course. The questions are as follows:

1. How do American Indian college students describe their service-learning experience as mentors?
2. How does mentoring, as an act of social justice and through the lens of Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit), reveal elements of Indigenous knowledge in the higher education setting?

TribalCrit was the theoretical framework utilized in this project because it was culturally relevant to the specific population under study. Therefore, this exploratory journey particularly seeks to understand ways that serving as a mentor influences three particular realms: relationship, community, and power.

Service Learning to Reveal Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Previous research has demonstrated that service learning actively involves college students and encourages them to build a connection and a sense of commitment to the community (Lee & Espino, 2011; Rhoads, 1998). Additionally, service-learning literature supports the notion of how engaging in service promotes social change and student engagement (Lee & Espino, 2011; Lui, 1999). Despite knowing the implications of service learning, there exists no testimony exploring the experiences of American Indian students who engage in service learning. When conducting a review of the literature we ran multiple queries through the EBSCO, Google Scholar, and ERIC databases using the following keywords in varied combinations: “American Indian student,” “Native American student,” “Indigenous student,” “service-learning,” and “mentor.” Through EBSCO, seven articles appeared with the keyword combination of “American Indian student” and “Service-Learning.” Six of the articles focused on experiences where an outsider was entering Native communities to enhance learning (Chollett, 2014; Dunkel, Shams, & George, 2011; Harmon-Vukic & Schanz, 2012; Roche, 2014; Steinman, 2011; Strickland, Logsdon, Hoffman, & Garrett Hill, 2014). Lee’s (2009) work was the only article to discuss Native student perspectives. However, these perspectives focused more on how students perceived their experiences in a Native American Studies department, not specifically their service-learning experiences.

Our inquiry on this service-learning project contributes directly to a gap in American Indian service learning by qualitatively examining the transformative effect service learning has for Native college students. The lack of Native student experience within service learning is alarming for two reasons. First is how previous service-learning research has been shown to have a transformative impact on civic engagement and awareness (Lee & Espino, 2011; Lui, 1999; Rhoads, 1998). Second is how a sense of responsibility and community is overwhelmingly germane when it comes to the American Indian student experience (Brayboy, 2004; Shotton, Oosahwe, & Cintron, 2007). Coupling these two reasons together points to how this study asserts service learning as a viable method to understand how American Indian college students activate their Indigenous knowledge while engaging in the college setting and service learning.

Framing Our Inquiry

Tribal Critical Race Theory

As American Indians represent distinct backgrounds, cultures, and traditions apart from the dominant society, there is need to properly represent this uniqueness in a theoretical perspective. Tribal Critical Race Theory, or TribalCrit, is utilized as the method of inquiry to understand the experiences of American Indian college students serving as mentors. It is imperative to recognize that TribalCrit is a branch of Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT is a direct response to revealing and altering the inequitable role of race, and other subordinate identifiers such as class and gender, found in society and its institutions. Though CRT is a framework that allows the voices of persons of color to be highlighted and brought to the forefront in research, Brayboy (2005) tackles the insufficiency of CRT to particularly focus on American Indian's special relationship with the U.S. government as both a political and racial group. TribalCrit is based "in the multiple, nuanced, and historically and geographically located epistemologies and ontologies found in Indigenous communities" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 427). Thus, Brayboy (2005) developed TribalCrit to specifically represent the voice of American Indians across fields, but with special emphasis in education. He outlines nine tenets to TribalCrit but only four tenets are focused on for this service-learning study (for a complete description of all tenets see Brayboy, 2005).

Tenet 1: Colonization is endemic to society. When students enroll in mainstream colleges and universities, they are entering institutions that were historically meant to empty their tribal identities (Carney, 1999). This study uses this tenet to understand if and how students, who engage in service learning, describe their experience as a counter narrative to the acculturation function of higher education.

Tenet 2: U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain. This tenet acknowledges that the purpose and function of higher education serves a non-Indigenous perspective of individual and independent gain. By acknowledging this opposition, this study seeks to understand if and how service learning exposes alternative perspective of higher education such as collectivity and interdependence.

Tenet 3: Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities. In addition to American Indian students being classified as a racial category, they are also operating in a political arena that is unique from all other racial groups. When American Indian students enter higher education, it is important to consider if and how tribal status intersects with service-learning experiences.

Tenet 4: The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens. This tenet introduces and validates a new lens for deconstructing how American Indian perspectives operate in a mainstream higher education setting. This tenet pulls together the other three tenets so American Indian students are no longer viewed through a deficit lens.

Along with culture and power, knowledge is an important factor of education that offers distinct ways of viewing American Indian issues through an Indigenous lens. TribalCrit discards the idea of assimilation in terms of educational institutions and embraces narrative, a cornerstone to Indigenous people, as a tool generating data relevant to scholarly research and theory. Furthermore, it encourages researchers, practitioners, and students to bridge “Indigenous notions of culture, knowledge, and power with western/European conceptions in order to actively engage in survivance, self-determination, and tribal autonomy” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 437). TribalCrit aims to uncover the discrepancies between Western values and American Indian values, beliefs, and traditions in societal structures and institutions, particularly educational institutions, with the goal of improving the experiences of American Indian students.

Our Inquiry

This service-learning inquiry originated from a large-scale study that we both served as graduate research assistants. The original study examined undergraduate students’ view of civic duty and responsibility at the culmination of their participation in the service-learning program. The service-learning course included a specific section for the Native undergraduate students where in different points in time, we served as instructors of that section. Though the methods of data collection in the larger study followed a Western paradigm of data collection, the authors, who are both Indigenous used their positions as data collectors, analyzers, and writers in terms of warrior scholarship (Alfred, 2004). Warrior scholarship works in tandem with TribalCrit by privileging research through an Indigenous lens, where the goal of the inquiry actively serves and promotes the livelihood of Indigenous communities. To accomplish this act, we sought to infuse our working knowledge of Indigenous-based inquiry to understand the essence of service-learning experiences and to be advocates for the students who participated in service learning. Throughout the remainder of this article, we purposely describe the participants as our brothers and sisters because as warrior scholars we have an obligation to the students and the communities they come from. In order to uncover and maintain the essence(s) within this inquiry, it is important to understand that “the meanings that American Indian students ascribe to their experiences are strongly shaped by their cultural constructs” (Shotton et al., 2007, p. 86). We do not claim to be using a decolonized approach to inquiry, but our approach provides the space to practice and hone our warrior approach to Indigenous inquiry.

Our Brothers and Sisters

Within the larger service-learning study, we identified 13 American Indian college students, between the ages of 18 and 22, who engaged in a conversation with us about their experiences as mentors and their views of civil service. Engaging our warrior scholar techniques, our interaction with the students was always tempered by our obligation to the students as our brothers and sisters. We committed ourselves to protecting our sisters and brothers while understanding the knowledges they used in their service-learning experiences. At the time of the inquiry, three students were seniors, six were juniors, three were sophomores, and one was a freshman. All our brothers and sisters had been in the program for at least one semester and completed 24 hours of service. All students identified as enrolled members from tribal communities within

Arizona and New Mexico. Ten students grew up rurally on or near the reservation, while three grew up in urban settings, such as in or near large cities. Eleven students were female, and two were male. None of our student mentors had any formal mentoring experience prior to enrolling in the service-learning class.

Mentoring Program: Our Place of Interaction

Our younger brothers and sisters participated in a 3-credit hour service-learning course where they were instructed on how to build a positive mentoring relationship with middle and high school Indigenous students. They had the opportunity to continue in the program by participating in a 1-credit hour course to further develop skills and understanding as American Indian mentors. The program was rooted in promoting a near-peer mentoring environment where Indigenous youth would learn from Indigenous mentors about college. Each Indigenous mentor was paired up with one to three American Indian mentees at local middle and high schools where there was a substantial American Indian student population.

Hearing and Processing

Individual conversations lasted from 45 to 60 minutes. The conversations began with a predetermined protocol, but they unfolded through storytelling methods as our younger brothers and sisters engaged in recounting why they enrolled in the service-learning course and what personal changes were experienced during and after the process. Their testimonies were enriched while validating the TribalCrit tenet of seeing storytelling as valid sources of knowledge (Brayboy, 2005). The relational approach described by Wilson (2008) as a central component to research with Indigenous populations aided our understanding of the student's lived experiences and also allowed for our brothers and sisters to use their storytelling skills to share experiences and subsequently, gave power to their experiences.

After hearing the testimonies of our brothers and sisters, we reviewed each of the transcribed conversations alone. Then, we came together and shared emergent ideas. Many long discussions and processing led to a deeper understanding of emerging themes that were cross-compared for content. Slowly, student-based knowledges arose that were grounded on the power of the students' voices and experiences. Developing the models allowed us to visualize and describe the interconnectedness of the findings.

Our Brothers' and Sisters' Knowledge

Through the lens of TribalCrit and our dedication to acknowledging our Indigenous ways of knowing, a greater awareness of American Indian college students' mentoring experiences emerged. The knowledge demonstrated that a common Indigenous culture served as the basis for establishing the mentoring relationships. In the process, the mentors strengthened not only their sense of self as intricately tied to a larger community, but also their commitment to serving their respective communities and larger society, thus strengthening their commitment to their education.

While TribalCrit justifies the need for American Indian research that is culturally based, Indigenous Knowledge explains the cultural values among our younger brothers and sisters. Service-learning, in the form of near-peer mentoring, serves as an ideal

pathway for American Indian college students to experience the familiarity of community building and involvement. Existing knowledge has identified a sense of selflessness occurring in college students who participate in service-learning (Lee & Espino, 2011; Rhoads, 1998, 2000) but for American Indian college students this phenomenon could be linked to more than an individual personality trait or concept.

Prior to European contact, American Indian communities used various social systems to survive. These systems are in practice today, but are marginalized in favor of sustaining the status quo of education as an individualistic and compartmentalized process (Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, & Solyom, 2012). The specifics of the Indigenous knowledge epistemology vary from tribal community but all include an emphasis on holistic thinking that views all objects as related. Deloria and Wildcat (2001) use three overarching concepts—Power + Place = Personality—to elucidate their take on Indigenous knowledge. In this context, power does not refer to the Western thought of individual power, rather “the living energy that inhabits and/or composes the universe (p. 23). Place is “the relationship of things to each other” (p. 23). Place is not the physical location where the interaction occurs, but the relationship that develops from the interaction. This relationship needs to remain balanced in order to maintain positive living.

The Indigenous concept of power and place strongly contrasts the mainstream scientific method of disaggregation, compartmentalization, and classification. Western ideologies place the human at the top of the pyramid of interaction, while Indigenous ways of knowing position the human at an equal point in the ecological system that is surrounded by all beings and all actions impacting the balance of life. In continuing with Deloria and Wildcat’s (2001) concept, personality results when power and place interact. Personality is the everyday occurrences that fills the world, and in regards to Indigenous knowledge, individual actions are never singular or linear, but cyclical (Cajete, 2005). To understand Indigenous knowledge in an educational context, one must recognize that the learning process is never ending.

As a way to synthesize the central components of Indigenous knowledge, we focus on three concepts relevant to the mentoring experience for American Indian students: (a) a sense of relationship, (b) a sense of community, and (c) a sense of power. We want to clearly acknowledge that inherent to Indigenous knowledge is the interrelatedness of all these areas; however, to effectively convey this knowledge to an academic setting, each of these areas are described separately. Figure 1: Indigenized Service-Learning Model (below) visually demonstrates the interconnectedness of the service-learning experience with Indigenous ways of knowing.

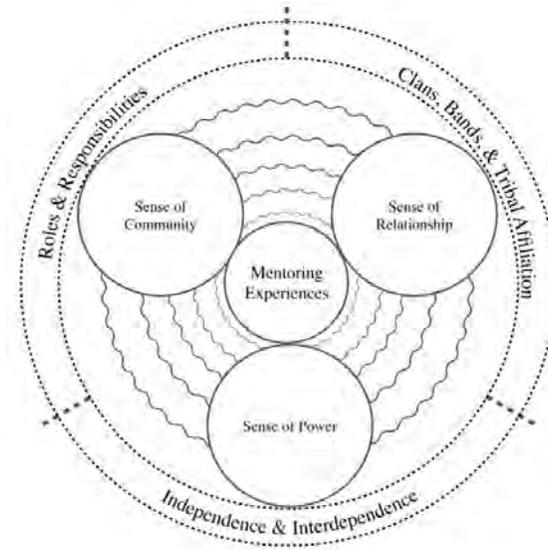


Figure 1: Indigenized Service-Learning Model

The outer circle represents the traditional knowledge embodying relationship, community, and power. Progressing inward, the model demonstrates how the experiences of mentoring radiate to ignite Indigenous knowledge. The process is reciprocal as service learning brings forward Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous knowledge informs the service-learning experience.

Sense of Relationship

Historical research and cultural memoirs show the various accounts of how this sense of relationship is more than just family lineage normally found in mainstream American culture (Hertzberg, 1971). Cajete (2005) states that, “relationship is the cornerstone of Tribal community” (p. 165). Two examples will be given to show how a sense of relationship among American Indians compares to other ethnic groups. First, prior to contact, Indigenous peoples sophisticatedly navigated their homelands and relationship to others through clan systems and bands (Deloria, 1994). There was an inherit flow of resources back and forth as land was not viewed as possessed by individual tribal nations. This is not to say there was never conflict between groups. Rather, there was constant reliance on each other, both within and beyond individual communities, for survival. This interdependence could be observed through trading, hunting, and even raiding. Specifically through trading and raiding, Indigenous communities increased relations as knowledge was shared and adopted.

Secondly, after European contact, American Indian communities were faced with circumstances such as federally run boarding schools focused on the complete tearing away from their cultural way of life to assimilation, embracing and adopting European values (Child, 1994; Reyhner & Eder, 2004). Currently, there exist memoirs of American Indians who experienced the stripping of their culture while attending those boarding schools, and in order to survive these students often created bonds between each other despite tribal affiliation. Thus, despite being removed from community influence, the young students rallied together to form alliances that were at times cross tribal. Today,

American Indians continue to identify themselves through their tribal nations, clans, and bands that existed before European contact and into this modern era. The American Indian mentors knew they were going to be paired with other American Indian high- and middle-school students, but it was unknown as to whether they would share the same tribal background. Thus, the mentors spoke of their approach to the mentor/mentee relationship as taken carefully and slowly with the intent of allowing the mentee(s) and themselves to grow comfortable in the relationship.

Relating to my mentee, I try to find the stories and experiences and then inspirations that he or she has found in their life and—if they don't have any, I mean, I don't know how many people can relate to my story, but I know that there are different stories out there—and you can...anyone can...can really turn any story into a positive thing, but I just try to relate to him or her on that level and I just...I try to keep it friendly all the time. (John, personal communication, March 12, 2009)

Though the mentors recognized that they shared a similar cultural background with their mentee(s) as American Indians, it was not assumed that it would serve as the root of their relationship, as most mentors indicated that their mentee(s) did not come from the same tribal background. Thus, the mentors used the friendship approach, tried to put themselves in their mentee(s) "shoes" and remember what it was like to be in high school. They recognized that they were nervous at first, so they allowed the relationship to grow gradually, with each mentor and mentee learning from one another.

Katie responded in this way when asked about what aided her in the beginning relationship with her mentee:

Knowing that we are from the same ethnic background, not the same tribe but the same ethnic background so in that I mean there are cultural ties like...like humor, the importance of food, eating like stuff like that, that we can relate at a very surface level. (personal communication, April 9, 2009)

Sharing a similar cultural background served to help the mentors recognize the importance of the mentoring relationship while also gaining a greater understanding of the impact they could have on their mentee(s) by relating through their own experiences. Jackie shared,

I guess like I said it was easier because we were both Native American. I guess we came from the same background. If she goes to college, she would be the first of her siblings to go. And that's somewhat similar to mine...me and my family. (personal communication, March 12, 2009)

One particular mentor, Michelle, mentioned how she felt comfortable from the beginning with her mentee(s), in part because they were both American Indian, but what is more important is how she connected her mentoring relationship to being an advocate for more American Indian students to go on to higher education.

I want to go on and further my education and just think of ways to help them, because they are Native American and we do have a...we are the lowest percentage going on to college and finishing high school, so that, it

just really changed my mind, you know, I was like wow, I really want to help my people go on to college, they just need that, they need someone you know to help them. (Michelle, personal communication, March 13, 2009)

This statement ties into the sense of community category, yet it also belongs in the sense of relationship as well because it describes the impact the relationship had on the mentors in their specific goals and plans after college. Through this statement, Michelle acknowledges how the mentoring experience not only amplified her desire to positively impact her community through her education, but also empowered her to know that she could be that impact for her people.

This knowledge leads into a deeper expression of relationship that the mentors touched upon in their responses. Recognition of how family members could benefit from service-learning experiences surfaced for the mentors through this experience because it was a way for them to understand the importance of the work as well as the knowledge they held about college. In the quote below, Susie shared her thoughts about how this service-learning course has enlightened her personal outlook and how she interacted with a younger sibling.

I mean I think most of all it's helped me think about my little brother because he's 12 years old and everything that we've learned I will definitely be applying to him and saying like I've been telling him like statistics or you know study tips or just a...I know when I was growing up like I really didn't know anything about difference races and ethnicities and how those issues are like buried and I think I kind of grew up in a naïve way you know, when it deals with that, and I want my little brother to like know the stuff that we learn like even yesterday, we learned about token(ism) and multiculturalism and those are some things that I actually didn't know about and so I think that [they're] important for my little brother to know about especially because like he's already thinking about college and he know where he wants to go and he's not going to survive if he doesn't know those kinds of terminology. (personal communication, April 10, 2009)

In addition to Susie, Myles explained how he returned to his hometown to share college-going messages to his cousins after serving as a mentor. This ability to relate the mentoring relationship with family members, specifically younger relatives, reveals the power of relationships among American Indian students and their enthusiasm to share that knowledge with their tribal community.

The power of relationships among American Indians can be understood as a ripple effect that begins with the immediate family, on to the extended family and then out to the tribal community. Daisy spoke of how this experience has influenced her career goals, causing her to reconsider following her passion for writing to serve and impact her family and community by becoming a school principal.

I was talking to her (instructor) about being a principal, and going to my high school first because my little brother will go there, and you know, my whole family is still there and will go to my high school if it is still up and running, but...I like my major, and I am really having fun with it, and I am

always being told to do something you love...but at the same time it is like 'why can't I share what I feel, why can't people from my community, from around the reservation, feel the same way?' So in that sense I would want to...go more into education. (Daisy, personal communication, March 4, 2009)

This statement shows the strength of the mentor's relationships to their family and community through their career choices and how it could take them back to the community. This sense of belonging to a community and returning after college to share the knowledge gained leads right into the next section.

Sense of Community

Closely linked to the sense of relationship is the sense of community found within Indigenous knowledge. Evidence of this notion is closely related to the roles and responsibilities naturally engrained in American Indian communities. Cajete (1994) states that, "community is the natural context of human life and activity" (p. 167). The relationship of humans to each other is just as important as the roles and responsibilities assigned to each individual because if an individual fails to follow protocol of his or her role, it creates an imbalance in life. To ensure a stable equilibrium, the education and development of the individual was specifically at the hands of the whole community. In *American Indian Stories*, originally published in 1922, Zitkala-Sa (2003) recalls how each person in her family had a specific skill and related character traits to teach her. She recognized that the skill of beadwork by her grandmother was more than just creating a craft, but teaching her diligence and patience. In *No Turning Back*, originally published in 1964, Polingaysi Qoyawayma (1992) illustrates how traditional Hopi ways, such as Morning Prayer, created security and appreciation for her whole community. Indigenous knowledge demonstrates how individuals are taught specific roles in society to ensure the livelihood of themselves and their community.

The modern version of the traditional teaching of the importance of community can be found in the view of giving back. This is shown through the communal lifestyle that is taught through values and practices, such as sharing of resources amongst community members and participating in community events and ceremonies. What emerged out the notion of giving back to the community was a sense of community, the view of positively impacting the community through education.

Not just my siblings but I think just this whole experience has got me thinking about what my community is going through and how you know if I could just... because a lot of people talk about going back home and giving something to their community and I think that is something that I could do. (Daisy, personal communication, March 4, 2009)

Interestingly, there were three distinct aspects of this sense of community mentioned by the mentors. The first was the recognition of the impact to the local tribal community located near the university, where some of the mentees resided.

I like working at [that high school] because most of the students [are] like the [local tribal reservation], they don't...I don't think there's that many that

go on to college, so it's good that we're helping them succeed and... try to go on and further their education. (Ashley, personal communication, March 4, 2009)

The second aspect was the recognition of a need for the mentors to return to their respective communities to be of service to the younger generation. Drawing upon their personal experiences within their respective communities, the mentors were aware of the lack of information and resources in the schools they attended in addition to recognizing the importance of community involvement in a student's motivation and success in school. Thus, the mentors felt that they could take what they learned from the course and from working with their mentee to enhance the college knowledge of their families and tribal communities.

I don't know, it's just, like everything we learned in class...I can apply that to home and this system and you need help from your community, you need help from your teachers, and you need help from programs out there. It just all combines together, so you know, it's just not like the individual himself...they need help from everyone you know; everyone takes part in it. Although, that's the other thing too, just trying to...further [your] education...I want to be one of those people to do something about this, about the problems especially Native Americans going into higher education or college...it just really made me aware that...if a student doesn't go on it's not their fault (Michelle, personal communication, March 13, 2009)

The final aspect is on a broader scale, in that the mentors acknowledged a new purpose and understanding of the value of their college education. The traditional teaching of sharing of resources can help to explain how the mentors recognized the knowledge they held by going on to college, and how this knowledge is lacking in the community. This becomes a source of motivation for the mentors to attain their degree and take their knowledge back to the community to share.

So, for me, of course I want to get a degree, of course I want to take in as much of this information as I can. And then somehow tie that to my community first because there are just so many, so many things that I see when I go home that really makes me sad, that no one can experience what I am experiencing out here. I would first like to do that because I lived there and I see it and it is just how can I make an even bigger change without making the smaller ones first? (Daisy, personal communication, March 4, 2009)

These three dimensions of community, local university, and home community built upon each other as the mentors acknowledged the meaningfulness of their work. This section focused on the knowledge the mentors gained through the mentoring experience and how it could be taken back to the community, and thus through the mentoring experience, learning occurred both ways with the mentor and mentee. Hence, this sense of community is related to the sense of power, the last major piece of knowledge to be discussed.

Sense of Power

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.) defines “power” as the “possession of control, authority, or influence over others.” This mainstream definition indicates that power lies within a human individual and is exerted to control others within its environment. In the context of Indigenous knowledge, power is “the living energy that inhabits...all of the connections or relations” (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 140). In this case, power is not something that any one individual possesses; rather, the energy exists in all. Power is generated by the natural interaction between all, including humans, nature, and animals. This dynamic reemphasizes the importance of maintaining a balance of giving and receiving, and establishes an understanding within Indigenous communities of independence and interdependence.

Indigenous knowledge articulates that humans are not the dominator of the life cycle, but this value does not negate the importance of the individual. Rather, Indigenous knowledge stresses the importance of a cyclical relationship between the individual and collective whole. For this reason, diversity among individuals is valued in American Indian communities because the various skills and points of view teach other members, especially the youth, of proper behavior and communal responsibilities (Cajete, 1994). The development of an individual ensures a balance within a community as the individual possesses knowledge, such as experiential knowledge, that contributes to creating a stable community.

Deloria (1994) reconfirms this belief when he stated that the “tribal man is hardly a personal ‘self’ in our modern sense...he does not so much live in a tribe; the tribe lives in him” (p. 201). Today’s sense of power in tribal communities is still evident as many tribes continue to practice traditional ceremonies that rely heavily on the transmission of knowledge from the elders to the youth. This concept of power contrasts with the mainstream American Dream of individual gain. This does not mean one is preferred over the other, but rather the Indigenous term of power creates empowerment of the individual to be aware of their surroundings and to involve him or herself in positive activities.

This experience has affected me in the sense that I know she looks up to me and that she will take into consideration what I [tell] her and I take into consideration what I think about the topic or language I use, the clothes I wear, the environment that I take her into and also I think that inside, like I try to help her to see the big picture of what is going on and every consequence, every decision has a consequence and hopefully she will see what I’m talking about...like life in general I can guide [her] only so much. I mean I am not here to change her life miraculously, direct her down the path of richness or something. I mean in terms of our relationship, she helps me realize what I need to work on, critique myself in terms of present information or information that I need to freshen up or stuff like that. (Katie, personal communication, April 9, 2009)

Deloria and Wildcat (2001) state that “power is quite literally flowing around and into us; if we are properly attentive, power can be used by us” (p. 140). The mentor

recognizes the power within the relationship and how it is utilized by both mentee and mentor to influence better choices for improved decision making for each other. In the relationship, the mentor realizes that the knowledge one holds by being a college student can positively impact others, and the power one has to share that knowledge.

It has just made me realize that there are people who do need help in overcoming barriers, that I do have the ability to help them, and it taught me a lot about myself in terms of how far I will go to help somebody get access to information that they don't have, and then my perspective on things has changed just from talking to all the students that I have mentored. They have shown me how to think differently in terms of barriers and what-not. (Stacey, personal communication, March 3, 2009)

Thus, the mentoring experience provided opportunities that helped the mentors to recognize that their actions can impact the community. Traditional teaching views the individual as being both independent and interdependent within the community (Cajete, 1994). The rationale behind this view is that learning always takes place in both directions; just as much as the community influences the individual, the individual also influences the community by his or her actions. Coming to this realization served as motivation and empowerment for the mentors to see their place in the academy as a catalyst for making change within the community.

Oh, and just thinking about my mentees...this small group can be such a much larger pool and I can affect so many other people in difference ways and that's just my inspiration has grown a lot more because of them. (John, personal communication, March 12, 2009)

Ultimately, majority of the mentors noted a greater understanding about themselves that they did not have prior to this mentoring experience. It is an understanding gained through recognizing that the relationship developed between the mentor and mentee was cultivated by the influence of the whole environment. This understanding can serve as an example of Deloria and Wildcat's (2001) concept of Power + Place = Personality. The mentors acknowledge their role goes beyond this experience alone, and they accept it.

I guess just in a way it's kind of made me see that no matter where you go you're kind of in a mentoring mode, you know, because in a mentoring [role], people are looking up to you and you're a symbol for something good and like no matter where you are in the public eye somebody's seeing you and your actions play a big role in how they see you, so just in that probably has made me think about like my actions outside of class and outside of mentoring. (Susie, personal communication, April 10, 2009)

In addition to students recognizing their individual sense of power, it is also noteworthy to acknowledge that the mentors exhibited different levels of power through their future plans. When Jessie was asked if she planned on continuing community involvement, she initially responded by saying, "I was kinda thinking about signing up for this class again, but I don't think so. [nervous laugh] I don't...I don't know." It was not until after the interview ended that she mentioned that she wanted to be more involved and understood the importance, but she "was just lazy" (personal communication, April 17, 2009). Jessie

recognized her personal power to enact change, but at that time in her life, she had not made the commitment to act upon it. Ana, shared a different level of reflection. She stated, “looking back upon my experience, you have the community college just like right near your campus but you didn't have the college students coming to your classes and telling you what [college is] about” (personal communication, April 9, 2009). Seeing this course as a driving force, Ana now has plans to return to her community to implement an afterschool program to promote a college-going atmosphere.

This section has focused on the mentors' recognition of the power present in the relationship, and the impact this relationship can have within the larger American Indian community. This sense of relationship between the mentors and mentees was characterized as open and without assumptions, thus allowing the learning to mutually happen through the relationship. The mentors acknowledged the impact their mentees had upon their actions and viewpoint within and beyond their interactions together. John related an experience with his mother to his work with his mentees as a personal catalyst for change after completing his degree:

Through my mentees, I think...I found more inspiration to keep going because while I'm helping these 3 students in their own path, I could be helping so much more...once I have a professional degree and then I can actually give speeches and I can give talks to whoever and they'll look up to me and then...I kind of think about a lot of situations...because my mom...she spoke at a [tribal nation] high school out on the reservation. It's actually where she grew up and where she graduated from. It was her high school and I was there a few years ago when she was the speaker for their graduation and...I was so proud of her and I was kind of thinking to myself, “that could be me someday.” (John, personal communication, March 12, 2009)

In hearing and processing our brothers and sisters' experiences, it became clear that the three core areas—sense of relationship, sense of community, and sense of power—were not discreet, mutually exclusive categories, but rather, were related to each other. Within the context of how the mentors interpreted the question being asked of their experience, their responses reflected an overlapping of two or even all three of the knowledge bases. Though these ideas were discussed separately, it is important to visually show how they are related. Figure 2: Reflexive Service-Learning is presented below to help explain this connection among the knowledge bases. Located in the middle of the model is the service-learning experience, as it can be understood to be different for each mentor. Through the mentoring experience a sense of relationship, community, and power were triggered and brought meaning not only to the mentoring experience, but also to how their actions expressed each concept differently. The three knowledges are represented by responsive circles, which indicate an interactive relationship. This model reflects how Deloria and Wildcat (2001) view learning “not through lectures but through experience: customs, habits, and practices” (p. 33).



Figure 2: Reflexive Service-Learning Model for American Indian College Students

The responsive circles can be understood to move within and all around each other as the mentoring experience affects how closely the circles align with one another. The concept of Indigenous knowledge organic by nature and this model is not intended to explain all facets of this knowledge base. It is, however, helpful by showing that all the participants had their own interpretation of the three areas: relationship, community, and power. It is also helpful in understanding that a student's interpretation changes as he or she experienced new situations, so a student's placement on the circular track may move closer to an Indigenous Knowledge perspective or vice versa.

Making Meaning of Our Brothers and Sisters' Stories

This inquiry revealed that our students tapped into their own supply of Indigenous knowledge to relate their mentoring experience to building relationships, being a positive influence on their respective tribal communities, and recognizing that learning is cyclical and how that applies to their role in society, as a whole. The mentors did not mention Indigenous knowledge specifically as an explanation in any of their responses to describe their experiences; rather their descriptions revealed components of Indigenous knowledge from their backgrounds that impacted their mentoring relationship. Such referencing to Indigenous values was not expected as the interview questions were tailored to a larger population of students, not only to the American Indian participants. Thus, to be able to clearly articulate the experiences of American Indians, an Indigenous framework proved to be appropriate to understanding their responses.

Having a sense of belonging to a community and knowing where you come from is a central value in many tribal traditions and teachings. Cajete (1994) identifies community as the environment that teaches Native people the meaning of relationships and responsibility. For the American Indian mentors in this study, the mentoring experience provided ways for them to conceptualize their sense of community to the local Native community near campus, to their specific role in their respective tribal

communities and the larger society. Furthermore, it was through this service-learning experience that the mentors' concern for community was brought to the forefront, fostered by their sense of power and relationship. These knowledges are of particular importance for future inquiries on American Indian student experience in higher education overall.

Contrary to popular belief that going away to college is where individuals set out on their own, becoming independent, the knowledge presented by the students suggests that they prefer an environment where meaningful relationships and community are present. Our students recognized their ability to have a positive impact on the younger generation, which in turn, empowered them to understand that the meaning of being successful in higher education goes beyond their own sense of accomplishment. Considering the dismal completion rates of American Indian students in higher education, the lived experiences of our students brought to light how the current status of higher education is limited on redirecting this trend. Coupled with the knowledge gained from this inquiry, further analysis is necessary to reframe how institutions understand and develop programming for American Indian college students.

The idea of incorporating Indigenous knowledge into higher education has been supported by current scholars (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009; Grande, 2004; McNally, 2004). However, there is a gap in the literature that shows how American Indian college students react to the inclusion and use of this knowledge. For example, in his review of incorporating Indigenous knowledge in education settings, Battiste's (2002) most important recommendation was how it could lead to inspire and motivate change at the post-secondary level. Recognition of the positive impact Indigenous knowledge had in our younger brothers and sisters' experiences supports the idea of incorporating Indigenous knowledge in the higher education setting. In addition, it provides a different framework for American Indian students to connect their experiences in college to their cultural backgrounds. There is need for further inquiry on the application of Indigenous knowledge in all realms of higher education, especially its impact upon Native student persistence and success.

When coupling the knowledge we gained from this inquiry with TribalCrit, researchers and practitioners are able to (a) re-evaluate the incongruent nature of mainstream knowledge and Indigenous knowledge and pinpoint inequities that contribute to lack of student success, (b) realize that Indigenous knowledge is a legitimate and powerful tool in the educational system, and (c) show the combination of service learning with mentoring over an extended period can empower American Indian students to recognize their ability to bring about social change within their respective communities. The reflexive service-learning model for American Indian college students incorporates three critical areas of Indigenous knowledge and informs policymakers and practitioners of the multiple dimensions of American Indian college students. The reflexive model demonstrates how experiences, such as service learning, can uncover important cultural underpinnings and how those foundational values can inform future practice. This model advocates for a reciprocal process when working with American Indian students and shows how American Indian students have the essence of culturally relevant power to enact change. It is the hope of this inquiry that our brothers' and sisters' narratives reignites the important and historical role service learning has in terms of social

movement and transformation element (Harkavy & Hartley, 2010; Speck & Hoppe, 2004).

Within our roles as instructors in the program and Indigenous scholars in the university, we recognize our presence could have potentially influenced the mentors' responses. They may have felt more comfortable discussing their experiences with another Native student from the university. They may have also felt that we would understand their responses from an Indigenous perspective. Nonetheless, we were inspired by their responses and the connections they made between their mentorship and service in the local community to their respective tribal communities. It was an honor to work with the mentors and share in their experiences within the program. We thank them for the opportunity to carry forward this work and for the inspiration to bring to light the Indigeneity among Native students in higher education.

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Inquiring Into the Assessment Education of Preservice Teachers: A Collaborative Self-Study of Teacher Educators

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Abstract

As professors teaching courses in classroom assessment in a Bachelor of Education program, we engage in collaborative self-study as a means to understand the complexity of our preservice teachers' learning. Here we describe two of the strategies we use in our teaching: purposefully introducing competing philosophies early in our courses, and guiding our preservice teachers' to inquire deeply into their assessment histories. We examine our preservice teachers' differing responses, which range from misunderstanding or resisting to thinking deeply about the course content. We conclude by identifying three protective factors that support us as we work with preservice teachers in the area of assessment education.

Keywords: assessment education; preservice teacher education; self-study

Inquiring Into the Assessment Education of Preservice Teachers: A Collaborative Self-Study of Teacher Educators

Assessment is essential for teachers and students to inform the process of learning. It tells teachers how their students are learning and students if they are on the right track. If done right, assessment is, essentially, what leads to student success (University preservice teacher, essay, 2013)

This quote is taken from a short essay¹ written by a university preservice teacher² upon the completion of a course in Classroom Assessment and Evaluation, in the first term of her second year in a two-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree. Instead of conceptualizing assessment as a way to *measure* student success in learning provincial achievement outcomes, this preservice teacher demonstrated a deep understanding of the way that assessment may *contribute* to that student success. As teacher educators, we aim to foster a level of understanding about classroom assessment that is illustrated in the opening quote. We realize, however, that this conceptual sophistication is not representative of all the preservice teachers who take our courses; some misunderstand this idea, and still others reject this concept. To pass our course, preservice teachers must demonstrate their understanding of current classroom assessment philosophy and strategies. Our influence, however, does not necessarily change all of their beliefs. Our process is similar to classroom teachers who are guided by a *Success for All* (SFA) philosophy (Stiggins, 2005). We use supportive, ongoing classroom assessment practices with the goal of leading each of our preservice teachers to be as successful as possible, but at the end of our courses, we are required to make professional judgments on the degree of understanding they have achieved. We use assessment practices to both contribute to student success and to measure student success.

For the past several years, we have been involved in a collaborative self-study of our teaching of assessment and evaluation courses to preservice teachers (Munroe et al., 2012). Explicit modeling of assessment practices during preservice teacher education is a process recommended by many researchers (Graham, 2005; Lunnenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2007; Roscoe, 2013; Volante, 2006b; Volante & Fazio, 2007). Thus, the design of our courses and our teaching practices are informed by explicit modeling of assessment *for*, *as*, and *of* learning purposes (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Earl, 2013). We have also examined the tensions and challenges of perspectives surrounding grades when working with preservice teachers, as we help them to experience assessment aimed at promoting what Stiggins (2005) terms “Success For All,”³ while they and we work in a university environment based on a traditional *sort and rank* (Stiggins, 2005) philosophy (Mitton-Kukner, Munroe, & Graham, in press). In our teaching, we systematically provide opportunities for our students to experience current assessment practices with the hope that they will use them in their future teaching. Beyond that, however, we expect our students to formulate wise beliefs about the importance, indeed the urgency, of assessment based on a SFA philosophy. We want our graduates to consider all assessment decisions from a stance of equity and to be able to mitigate persistent remnants of the sort and rank practices still evident in public schools. Table 1, below, illustrates the classroom assessment practices reflecting a SFA philosophy in contrast with traditional classroom assessment practices based on a sort and rank philosophy.

Earl (2013) describes a major philosophical shift in beliefs and practices in classroom assessment, from acceptance of student failure to a dedication to work towards SFA students. As educators, we note that although a philosophy of supporting the success of all students is increasingly evident in the K-12 school sector, many aspects of the school system continue to reflect a philosophy predicated on sorting students in both obvious and subtle ways. Our province has lists of curriculum outcomes and teachers must make summative evaluations regarding the degree to which students have achieved those outcomes. Achieving a thorough understanding of the outcomes might be defined as the highest possible student success. Do all students attain this level? No. Are some students deemed to have only limited understanding of the outcomes? Unfortunately, yes. For us, the question is, what have the teachers done for all students to work towards the highest success possible? The shift in classroom assessment practices lies in the extent to which teachers support all students in a myriad of ways (such as those listed in the left hand column of Table 1), rather than using traditional strategies which are based on the philosophy that student failure is an acceptable option (such as those in the right hand column of Table 1). We hope our preservice teachers will develop a belief in the effectiveness of helping students to be successful throughout the learning process (Black & Wiliam, 1998), so that students achieve a higher degree of success when final evaluative judgments are made (at report card time).

Table 1

Success for All Classroom Assessment Practices Contrasted With Sort and Rank Traditional Classroom Assessment Practices

| Strategies Based on a Success for All Philosophy | Strategies Based on a Sort and Rank Philosophy |
|---|--|
| Descriptive feedback with opportunities to improve assignments | All assignments marked summatively |
| Clear criteria for assignments, given in advance to students, and closely adhered to as assignments are marked | Vague or lack of clear expectations for assignment completion |
| Opportunities for self assessment and peer assessment with reference to course outcomes presented in student-friendly language and to clear assignment criteria | Little opportunity for feedback during assignment work |
| Opportunities to co-construct criteria for assignments with the intent of helping students be very clear on expectations | No input into expectations for assignments |
| Marks for assignments directly reflecting student knowledge and skill in relation to course outcomes | Marks for assignments skewed by aspects of student behaviour or work habits (such as late submissions) |
| Opportunities to demonstrate skill and knowledge through a variety of formats (including visual, oral, and written) | Over-reliance on testing and no choice in format to demonstrate skill and knowledge |

As faculty members who have taught classroom assessment and evaluation courses in our university's Faculty of Education several times over the past five years, we work together as a learning community and we systematically study our teaching practice. When we concluded a phase of our self-study last year, based on our review of the literature and our analysis of our preservice teachers' learning, we proposed two actions for the next time we taught the assessment and evaluation courses (Mittou-Kukner et al., in press). We vowed to:

1. Explicitly describe a SFA philosophy and distinguish it from sort and rank (Stiggins 1999, 2005) in our courses.
2. Create opportunities for students to inquire into their assessment experiences using the two philosophies of SFA and sort and rank as part of their theoretical lens, to interrogate their own assessment histories (Graham, 2005; Wang, Kao, & Lin, 2010).

In what follows, we report on our progress regarding the two aforementioned strategies implemented in our 2013 assessment courses, offering examples of preservice teachers' responses to contemporary assessment practices. As teacher educators, we require our preservice teachers to think deeply about ideas represented by a major philosophical shift regarding classroom assessment (Earl, 2013). Each year, through our collaborative self-study, we understand a little more about the complexity that this shift presents to our preservice teachers.

Our Context

The B.Ed. program at our small rural Canadian university is completed over two academic years. Our university students, whom we refer to as preservice teachers, have previously completed a bachelor's degree with course specifications approved by the provincial Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. We have approximately 115 preservice teachers in each year of our program. Every preservice teacher is required to take a three-credit (one semester; 36 hours) course in classroom assessment and evaluation in the first semester of their second year of study. There are three sections of the course, and approximately 40 preservice teachers are enrolled in each course.

We have observed that when preservice teachers begin their classroom assessment and evaluation course, they are anxious to learn more about this topic. At this point, they have already been in schools for 11 weeks to fulfill their program field experience requirements. During their field experience, they have observed a wide variety of assessment practices implemented by their cooperating teachers; they have taught, and therefore, considered the degree to which their students have learned. They arrive in our classrooms with many questions about all aspects of the classroom assessment and evaluation process. We find the course is often challenging for our preservice teachers and that we may encounter some resistance to the ideas we present. As the semester unfolds, we meet regularly as a self-study group to offer collegial support, but primarily to continue our own learning journey. To situate our study, we turn to recent literature on the topic of classroom assessment and teaching preservice teachers about classroom assessment.

Current Ideas and Practices Regarding Classroom Assessment

Classroom assessment is commonly understood as having multiple purposes with teachers playing a critical role in its purposeful usage (Earl, 2013; McMillan, Hellsten, & Klinger, 2011). In response to the growing understanding of classroom assessment as integral to a teachers' instructional practices and student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Shepard et al., 2005), teachers are expected to be knowledgeable of and comfortable with the application of diagnostic, formative, and summative purposes of assessment (Earl, 2013; Popham, 2011). Assessments are understood to provide teachers with ongoing knowledge of student learning and progress, helping them to make instructional decisions that will positively impact student learning and achievement (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Wiliam, Lee, Harrison, & Black, 2004), while also providing students with feedback and guidance on their learning (Chappuis, 2009). The assessment education of teachers continues to be an ongoing focus in research and educational policies (Klinger, Volante, & Deluca, 2012; Popham, 2009). Underlying this body of work is the fundamental idea that classroom assessment can be informative for both teachers and students in that it is aligned with teachers' decision-making, instructional practices, and learning activities, and with students' progress. For example, in this conceptualization of teaching and learning, students should be aware of curriculum outcomes, the criteria of sound performance for particular assessment tasks, and the progress they are making towards the achievement of specific outcomes as provided in the form of teacher feedback and self-assessment/monitoring.

In Canada, school boards and provinces have responded to the developments in understandings about classroom assessment. School boards and provincial ministries across the nation have addressed the importance of teachers' classroom assessment practices and their connections to student learning and achievement (Alberta Assessment Consortium, 2012; Kids & Learning First, 2012; Manitoba Education, Citizenship & Youth, 2006). Studies have shown that teachers are becoming more acquainted with different kinds of assessment practices (Gunn & Hollingsworth, 2013; Volante & Beckett, 2011; Wilson, 2008), although there is a tendency to depend on summative assessment methods (Duncan & Noonan, 2007; Remasal, 2011; Smith, 2011; Stiggins, 2002; Volante, 2010). At the same time, changes in understanding about the importance of classroom assessment and the role of teachers in student learning have occurred in an era of increasing standardized, large-scale assessment in Canada (Duncan & Noonan, 2007; Erickcan & Barclay-McKeown, 2007; Klinger, Deluca, & Miller, 2008; Volante & Fazio, 2007; Volante, 2006a). Canadian scholars note that because classroom assessment is complex, it is anything but tension-free, as its purposes potentially compete and conflict (Earl, 2013; Volante & Beckett, 2011; Volante, 2010).

Teaching Preservice Teachers About Classroom Assessment

In this current educational context, preservice teachers enter into the field and are expected to be able to understand and apply a variety of classroom assessments that respond to and document student learning (Goc Karp & Woods, 2008; Roscoe, 2013). Yet, for many preservice teachers, the multipurpose nature of classroom assessment goes against what they have experienced as students in schools (Lortie, 2002) and in higher education settings (Koedel, 2011; Rojstaczer & Healy, 2010; Roscoe, 2013). Research

has shown that preservice teachers are largely uninformed about classroom assessment and its relationship with instructional practices and student learning (Campbell & Evans; 2000; Graham, 2005; Roscoe, 2013; Volante & Fazio, 2007; Wang, et al., 2010).

Scholars suggest that in order to educate about assessment, explicit modeling of contemporary instructional and assessment strategies by teacher educators is needed (Graham, 2005; Roscoe, 2013; Volante, 2006b; Volante & Fazio, 2007). These educative experiences allow them to experience the different purposes of classroom assessment as learners (Poht, 2013; Volante, 2006b; Wang et al., 2010). The above literature review illustrates the complexity of navigating the major philosophical shift in beliefs and practices in classroom assessment (Earl, 2013), and provides some insights into our experiences teaching preservice teachers about classroom assessment.

Methodology and Methods

This examination of our teaching practice is anchored in self-study methodology, as recommended by Zeichner (1995). Self-study “supports researchers in understanding their work, [and] questioning the possibilities of practice” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2013, p. 75), and has been credited with improving instruction (Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2007). As colleagues from varying backgrounds and leadership in assessment and evaluation in schools, from two provinces in Canada, and from two international settings (Turkey and Malaysia), we bring to this topic and our self-study unique and shared conceptions and experiences. We concur with Loughran (2006) that “new understandings may emerge as situations become better clarified and questioned” (p. 49) through a collaborative, investigative process.

Applying methods borrowed from other “more established forms of research,” self-study research has been termed “a mongrel” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15). To counter this perception, researchers are encouraged to provide details about data sources, collection, and analysis so that the reader may judge the legitimacy of the research. Our process has been to meet on a regular basis to discuss and ponder over the assessment-related conversations that occur during our classes. The analysis of the data sources inductively unfolds as we meet together to consider and reconsider what is important in our teaching experiences, what the preservice teachers are demonstrating to us, and what this means in terms of next steps in our teaching. Are there trends? Are there outliers? Are preservice teachers responding differently this year in comparison to past years of teaching the Classroom Assessment and Evaluation courses? How much of a shift in philosophy is reasonable to expect in our students during the compact 9-week courses? With these questions in mind, we share our individual reflective field notes and anonymous examples of preservice teachers’ comments and questions and samples of written responses to class activities and assignments. We cluster the responses, as our intention is not to consider any individual student as a research participant. Rather we look upon the whole as a reflection of our teaching and we depend on that whole to help us understand our classroom practices.

Early and Continuous Emphasis on a Success for All Philosophy

One goal for us this past year was to more explicitly describe SFA philosophy and distinguish it from sort and rank (Stiggins 1999, 2005) at the beginning of our courses.

This approach reflects our recognition of the complexity of these competing philosophies and our hope that early and repeated reference to the philosophies would enhance the learning of our preservice teachers. To this end, we set up an activity usually referred to as the Clapping Exercise (Davies, 2004) wherein the preservice teachers watch a series of performances and evaluations acted out by their peers, demonstrating a sequence of increased support on the part of the judges, such that the final performer is able to be far more successful than the first. This year, as the class discussed the Clapping Exercise, Elizabeth intentionally introduced SFA and sort and rank as philosophies that may underlie teachers' assessment and evaluation decisions. She explained that the unsupportive judging techniques applied to the first two performances reflect a sort and rank philosophy of assessment and evaluation, wherein failure was an acceptable option, whereas the supportive judging techniques applied to the third and fourth performances (sharing success criteria, providing descriptive feedback, offering an opportunity for a second chance) reflected a SFA philosophy of assessment and evaluation.

One preservice teacher, thinking about some of the young students she had worked with the previous year during her field experience, wondered how to assess and evaluate growth and progress, and how to give recognition for trying something while still emphasizing success in achieving an outcome. She displayed empathy, realizing that while some students may not easily demonstrate success in achieving an outcome, they might demonstrate success in terms of effort. She recognized that using supportive assessment strategies would be important, but these would not magically erase some students' struggles to learn, and she asked how teachers reported on progress, if not achievement. Elizabeth assured her class of preservice teachers that we would take up that topic in some depth as the course progressed and noted the complexity inherent in living out these philosophies (Elizabeth, field notes, September 9, 2013).

On the first day of the classroom assessment for secondary learners' course, Jennifer introduced the competing philosophies of SFA and sort and rank to her class. In response, a preservice teacher commented that during her field experience she felt she observed her cooperating teacher living out SFA philosophy with her French immersion students and a sort and rank philosophy with her core French students. The preservice teacher felt the French immersion students had more opportunities to experience SFA because her cooperating teacher demonstrated more patience for the French immersion students and their attempts to learn content through French (Jennifer, field notes, September 9, 2013). The preservice teacher expressed her concern that both philosophies could exist in a teacher's practices depending upon the situation and the teacher's perception of the students she/he teaches. It was evident that this student did not yet understand the concepts as philosophies underpinning assessment, but more as strategies a teacher might or might not choose to use. (Of course, we recognize that the philosophy is enacted through strategies, so this distinction is complex).

Thus, on the very first day of class, our discussion began to swirl around issues of the multi-faceted purposes of classroom assessment, terminology, provincially mandated curriculum, grading and reporting policies, and equity. Big ideas were being considered alongside specific strategies. In our self-study meeting following these initial classes, we agreed that it was promising to have started off the course as intended with an introduction to the philosophies of SFA and sort and rank, but it was clear that we would

have to maintain this focus throughout the course if we expected our preservice teachers to gain a deep understanding of the competing philosophies of assessment.

Interrogating Assessment Histories Over the Duration of the Assessment Courses

Our second specific goal in teaching the assessment courses in 2013 was to create opportunities for our preservice teachers to inquire into their assessment histories using the two philosophies of SFA and sort and rank as part of their theoretical lens (Graham, 2005; Wang, et al, 2010). As part of a series of activities over the 9-week course, preservice teachers were asked to think about their prior assessment experiences as learners and as teachers during their first year field experiences. For example, early in Week 2 of the course, preservice teachers were asked to develop a timeline of their assessment experiences and in Week 3, they were asked to bring in an artifact representing one of those experiences. In following weeks, they returned to these items to consider and reflect upon them in light of new content. This series of activities led to a final paper in Week 7 in which preservice teachers were asked to narrow their focus, choosing one pivotal assessment experience and interrogating it using Schwab's (1983) curriculum commonplaces of teacher, learner, subject matter(s), and milieu as a way to better understand its significance and its connection to their future teaching practices.

Some of our preservice teachers recalled positive examples as part of the range of experiences depicted in their timelines, choice of artifacts, and final papers. They described "light bulb moments," when they were able to link their long-term respect for a certain teacher to how that teacher had been so supportive and flexible in classroom assessment practices. We were surprised, however, by the frequency with which assessment and evaluation was mentioned in a negative light. Many examples showed that our preservice teachers had experienced strategies reflective of a sort and rank philosophy, such as marks deducted for each day an assignment was late, lack of clarity on assignment marking criteria, or obvious discrepancy in marks linked to gender or student popularity. It seemed that providing this group of preservice teachers with the opportunity to inquire into their prior experiences in an ongoing manner allowed them to identify the ways their assessment histories informed their teacher identities and, for some, to identify how to disrupt assessment practices they previously understood as legitimate.

Preservice Teachers Misunderstanding, Rejecting, and Thinking Deeply About Success for All

Our preservice teachers demonstrated a range of responses to the SFA philosophy emphasized in our assessment courses through class activities, discussions, and assignments as well as through our own explicit modeling of success-oriented assessment and evaluation practices. We have come to understand preservice teachers' responses as generally falling into two categories: misunderstanding or rejecting SFA and thinking hard about SFA. In what follows we share a sample of preservice teachers' responses, brought together according to the described categories. These examples are reflective of common response patterns we have observed.

Category 1: Misunderstanding and/or Rejecting Success for All

Some of our preservice teachers' assignments seemed to demonstrate confusion or misunderstanding of the SFA philosophy. Comments such as, "Something that I need to work on as a future educator is balancing between Success for All and sort and rank" or "There are a number of strategies and that's why it is important for a teacher to understand them so they can use the best type of strategy for each student or each class" seem to point to the preservice teachers focusing on strategies to use and not making decisions based on a firmly held belief, philosophy, or particular purpose that every student should be given every opportunity to achieve success.

In other conversations with preservice teachers, comments such as "We need to push students to learn to their full potential and if we allow students to be successful all the time then they will not learn to their full capability" seemed to be a rejection of the ideas we were presenting. Or perhaps, we thought, this resistance indicated a misunderstanding of the way in which assessment strategies reflecting a SFA philosophy unfold.

Some of our preservice teachers seemed to reject the success-oriented strategies we were modeling. Jennifer wrote,

At the end of class, I described to the students why they were handing in a small piece of the unit plan on Wednesday. I explained that I wanted to see their understanding of planning instruction and assessment of learning tasks early on in the project so that I could provide them descriptive feedback upon their efforts as well as judge their learning. I asked the class if I was putting a grade on their work; some of the students, said "no" but they seemed uncertain why I was not. I emphasized that I was providing frequent opportunities for them to receive feedback on their learning so that when the time came to hand in their unit plan in Week 9, they would have a solid product, and more importantly a sound understanding of how to plan instruction and assessment when they go into the field. Some of the students said they felt passing in stages of the assignment created extra work for them. (Jennifer, field notes, September 17, 2013)

In this moment, some of the students in this class felt the instructor was asking too much of them by breaking up the assignment into smaller stages and felt they should be rewarded with a grade for their ongoing efforts. Delaying grades and providing timely, descriptive feedback is a practice we regularly employ in the teaching of the assessment courses and has a two-fold intent: to provide opportunities for preservice teachers to deepen their learning and to show the depth of their learning over time, and to model for preservice teachers how they might structure similar learning opportunities in their classrooms. However, we note that our efforts often bump into the expectations and assumptions of some preservice teachers.

The first category of preservice teachers' responses is indicative of their 18-year apprenticeship in schools (Lortie, 2002) and has provided us with new insights into preservice teachers' confusion about contemporary assessment practices as well as their resistance to our use of such practices. We noted several commonalities across their misunderstanding and resistance, particularly around seeing SFA and sort and rank

philosophies as strategy based. We also saw the emphasis that preservice teachers placed upon products as more important signifiers of their learning rather than the processes underlying them. Perhaps most troubling was the comment by a preservice teacher who expressed concern over the idea that experiencing success all the time means students will not be motivated to learn, even though we had discussed Stiggins (2007) suggestion that low marks or rigid timelines do not cause students to work harder, but rather lead students to “give up in hopelessness” (n.p.). Overall, our preservice teachers’ responses indicated to us the deep-seated nature of their prior assessment experiences and confirmed for us the necessity of an assignment that leads preservice teachers to interrogate their assessment histories. The resistance from some of our preservice teachers was mostly subtle, evident in the way they were skeptical about the assessment strategies we were using and advocating. Our self-study group helped to provide us with the resilience to persevere with helping our preservice teachers to grasp more fully the philosophy and purpose underlying current classroom assessment practices.

Category 2: Thinking Hard About Success for All

In her inquiry of an assessment experience for her final paper, one student explained that she had a high school teacher who recognized that students learn in different ways and that students deserve to express their knowledge in a way that works for them, and so the teacher allowed students to do different kinds of projects. The preservice teacher wrote,

She cared about the success for every student in the class and wanted everyone to succeed. If she had not cared, she would have had us all do the same project and have it be that whoever is good at it is in luck and whoever is not good at it is out of luck. (final paper)

To us, this preservice teacher’s commentary indicated considerable understanding of the competing philosophies of SFA and sort and rank. She saw that her teacher’s actions had been positioned towards student success.

Some of our preservice teachers inquired into the ways they worked with classroom assessment in their first year field experiences. Unsurprisingly, past assessment histories have a strong influence on the preservice teachers’ approach to assessment during their first year of field experiences (5 weeks in the fall and 6 weeks in the winter). The following excerpt demonstrates a preservice teacher inquiring into the decisions she made about the development of a test.

During my first practicum, in Year 1 of the program, I created a test. I referred to the test as a ‘Fiesta,’ and told my Grade 10s that it was a celebration of their learning. Nearly all of them moaned and groaned over the change of test name, because it was a test all the same. The part that stuck out the most was the true/false section of my test. I created every sentence so that the only answer was false. As the test progressed, many of the students began to look around at their peers. Because of the true/false section, many of my students were confused when they kept answering false and second-guessed their answers. They raised their hands to see if they were doing something wrong. I then instructed them to read the question

and not to second-guess their answer. I justified it by saying, to myself, that if they knew the material they would not have to second-guess themselves. The students and I had a discussion about the test the following day. One student...said that they were so confused...the true/false [section] made them change answers because they thought there was no way that all the answers could be the same. I told myself never again.... During my first practicum, I often [used] assessment methods that my teachers [used] when I was in high school. I wanted to mirror their assessment so that I could pretend to know what I was doing. (Preservice teacher, paper, October 30, 2013)

This particular moment shows a preservice teacher thinking deeply about a questionable assessment practice. She acknowledged that part of her decision to design the test in that way was based upon her previous assessment experiences as a learner in high school and her wanting to appear knowledgeable to the students, and possibly to her cooperating teacher. This particular moment was not uncommon or unusual. In our experiences of teaching preservice teachers about assessment, we often hear about preservice teachers assessing in the same manner as they were assessed as learners in schools.

The second category is reflective of those preservice teachers who inquired deeply into their understanding of assessment and its role in their classrooms. All of our preservice teachers were required to interrogate their previous assessment experiences. The examples we shared are representative of this group of individuals and demonstrated preservice teachers seriously contemplating prior experiences and actions during a previous field experience.

Although we have made two categories of preservice teachers' responses as a means of organization in this paper, in reality there was a continuum between misunderstanding or resisting the competing philosophies and demonstrating deep understanding of current assessment purposes. As in all classes of students, we saw differences in ability to think critically and a range in the degree to which our preservice teachers were able to move beyond their long apprenticeship with a sort and rank assessment philosophy.

Collaboration as Fundamental to Teaching Contemporary Assessment Practices

When our preservice teachers begin their classroom assessment and evaluation courses in the fall of their second year, they are anxious to learn more about this topic. Although principles of assessment are infused into their first year courses, we have observed that preservice teachers definitely feel the need for a dedicated course in classroom assessment in their second year. These preservice teachers are motivated to learn, yet we observe that the ideas of our classroom assessment course are challenging for them to embrace. We empathize with our preservice teachers, knowing that traditional assessment practices have pervaded their experiences as students. When we visit schools during field experience, we see that this philosophy persists in many ways in the public school system. We realize that developing a deep understanding of a SFA philosophy takes time.

Our self-study has raised our awareness of how fundamental collaboration is to our work as teacher educators. Indeed, we suggest that collaboration is a prerequisite to

the recommendation of explicit modeling of current assessment practices by teacher educators, (Graham, 2005; Lunnenberg et al., 2007; Roscoe, 2013; Volante, 2006b; Volante & Fazio, 2007). While we agree that explicit modeling is essential in a course about classroom assessment and evaluation, we also realize that we need to be able to “bounce back” (Gu & Day, 2007, p. 1303) when our preservice teachers demonstrate confusion or resistance. We have determined three protective factors (Beltman, Mansfield, & Price., 2011) that give us strength and help us to persist in our work: a) collegial team support, b) strong conviction in the effectiveness of contemporary assessment and evaluation practices, and c) success in helping many of our graduates enter the profession well versed in a SFA philosophy of assessment.

As we prepare to teach our courses on classroom assessment and evaluation, we recognize that we are entering into situations wherein the course content is challenging for our preservice teachers to learn. Working on a team of like-minded teacher educators who understand the importance and value of educating preservice teachers about competing assessment philosophies (i.e. SFA and sort and rank) and their impact upon teaching practices, enables us to persist. Meeting regularly throughout the semester to plan course activities, to debrief preservice teachers’ responses, and to discuss our marking contributes to our abilities to be adaptive, reflective, open-minded, and organized. We bolster each other’s spirits to maintain an optimistic and positive attitude and to keep a sense of humour. In addition to the protective power of our team support, we understand our firm commitment to empirical studies that have established the positive impact formative assessment has upon student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Wiliam et al., 2004) as a second protective factor in our work.

Thirdly, our success in helping many of our graduates enter the profession well versed in a SFA philosophy of assessment encourages us to persist with our approach. Because of completing our courses, some preservice teachers do come to understand assessment as formatively integral to student learning and success. Contact with these teachers once they have entered the profession confirms that many contemporary assessment and evaluation practices, supported by school board policy, are evident in the K-12 school system. Ongoing discussions with teachers enrolled in graduate courses indicate that many of our Bachelor of Education graduates are well-prepared to bring leadership to the schools in the area of classroom assessment and evaluation. This evidence of success adds to our determination and enables us to continue to collaboratively and explicitly model contemporary assessment practices.

Concluding Thoughts

Our self-study systematically examined the responses of our preservice teachers as we purposefully introduced competing assessment philosophies early in our courses and as we guided our preservice teachers’ to inquire deeply into their assessment histories through a range of classroom activities and assignments. We have offered in this paper some of our recurring experiences in the assessment education of preservice teachers “so that more can be learned by future practitioners and...by future teachers and teacher educators” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2013, p. 75). The experiential context of teacher educators encountering resistance and challenges in their teaching has not served as a well-established focus of research. In reflecting on this point, we have determined that

rather than diminish the relevance of exploring this further, this lack of research has heightened the need for investigation. MacMillan & Schumacher (1997) reiterate this need: "Exploratory studies which examine a topic in which there has been little previous research, are designed to lead to further inquiry" (p. 395). Hence, we suggest our work can serve as an impetus for further research in better understanding the assessment education of preservice teachers.

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Endnotes

¹ Permission was obtained from students to share excerpts of their work.

² We refer to university students in our Bachelor of Education program as preservice teachers.

³ Stiggins (2005) argues that assessment may be used to help students achieve learning success (Success for All) and describes the notion of "sort and rank" as representing a traditional understanding of assessment fostered by fixed grades where students are spread along an "achievement continuum" (p. 324) representing their rank upon graduation.

Using Art-Based Ways of Knowing to Explore Leadership and Identity With Native American Deaf Women

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Abstract

During a phenomenological-narrative study regarding the perspectives of leadership among women who are both Native and Deaf, a portion of the data collection focused on visual art as a means of interpreting what leadership meant to the participants. Participants produced visual imagery to impart their ways of knowing as women who negotiated their paths between two distinct cultures. Themes of identification with indigenous art forms, spirituality, and evolving self-identities were shared, with the participants leading the development of their artistic renderings. The participant-created visual arts highlight the significance of non-verbal modes of inquiry within Indigenous and Deaf populations.

Keywords: Indigenous; Native American; Deaf; women; art inquiry; identity

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Using Art-Based Ways of Knowing to Explore Leadership and Identity With Native American Deaf Women

One of the least represented Indigenous voices in scholarly research is that of Native Americans who are Deaf, particularly women. To date, literature about Native American Deaf women have been short biographies or generalized dissertations. (Baker, 1996; National Multicultural Interpreter Project, 2000; Paris & Drolsbaugh, 1999; Paris & Wood, 2002)

Part of the difficulty in finding study participants from this small population has to do with the paucity of data regarding Native Americans who are Deaf. Demographic data on Native Americans who are Deaf has been largely overlooked, and is usually generalized to people with all ranges of hearing loss, rather than focusing exclusively on Deaf Native Americans who are primarily American Sign Language (ASL) users and consider themselves part of the Deaf community (Gallaudet Regional Institute, 2011; Miller, 2004; Pleis & Lethbridge-Cejku, 2007).

As a Deaf woman of Native American descent, and as a researcher who works with under-represented Deaf individuals who are Indigenous, I have long been concerned about the lack of literature that includes the perspective of this population. It is important to consider the inclusion of Deaf and Indigenous “voices” in research, particularly those who identify with two distinct cultural and linguistic diverse (CLD) populations. Without their perspectives, their issues continue to be largely ignored or overlooked, rendering them nearly invisible to the rest of the world.

This paper extrapolates upon visual arts products correlating to a larger phenomenological-narrative study of factors that influenced leadership identity development among American Indian Deaf women. The overarching research question that guided this portion of the study was “what does leadership mean to you as someone who is Deaf, Native American, and female?”

It is important to review relevant literature that is pertinent to leadership and Deaf Native American women and how several factors impact their worldview. An analysis of Native American women and leadership is provided as well as a discussion of how Deaf individuals view their identity as a cultural entity, rather than a pathological perspective of deafness as disability. In addition, historical parallels were drawn between the educational and societal oppressions that Deaf Community members and Native Americans experiences, with both communities being forced to relinquish their cultural identities and languages. A distinct commonality exists in visual-gestural languages that are used by both communities, demonstrating how Native Americans and Deaf individuals have bonded and mutually influenced their usage of signed languages. Finally, I discuss the importance of art making as an important means of expressing cultural knowledge for Indigenous and Deaf populations.

Literature Review: Native American Women and Leadership

A growing body of literature addresses the perspectives of Native American women who are in leadership positions (Barkdull, 2009; Chin, Lott, Rice, & Sanchez-Hucles, 2007; Fitzgerald, 2010; Lajimodiere, 2011; McLeod, 2002; Muller, 1998; Napier, 1995;

Portman & Garret, 2005; Prindeville, 2000, 2004). There are no known studies on the leadership experiences of Deaf Native American men or women.

Much of the existing literature addresses the impact of Colonial America on the perceptions of Native American women and their loss of political power. Though it is acknowledged that each tribe is distinct, historically, women have led spiritual, political, educational, and economical decision-making in many tribes (Lajimodiere, 2011; Mihesuah, 2003). Clan mothers chose tribal leaders; preserved culture, language, and history; and oversaw education and social needs of the community. In some tribes, they even served as warriors, fighting alongside their male family members (Lajimodiere, 2011; Mihesuah, 2003; Perdue, 1998).

Native American men and women had distinctly separate, but powerfully equivalent, roles in overseeing the well-being of their people (Muller, 1998; Portman & Garret, 2005; Prindeville, 2000, 2004). When Eurocentric settler's worldviews began to have tribal influence, particularly with government-required elected tribal councils and land allocations given to Native American men, women lost a considerable amount of influence within their own governments (Barkdull, 2009; Lajimodiere, 2011; Mihesuah, 2003; Napier, 1995; Portman & Garret, 2005; Prindeville, 2000, 2004). Today, however, an increasing number of tribal leaders are women, and they continue to focus on the preservation of history, allocation of economic resources, and the educational and social needs of the children.

Deaf as Cultural Identity

Deaf culture encompasses its own richly documented history, language, and heritage (Gannon 1989; Holcomb, 2012; Moore & Levitan, 2003; Nomeland & Nomeland, 2011; Padden & Humphries, 1988). This viewpoint differs from traditional scholarly or academic definitions of culture, which tend to refer to primarily to ethnicity. To be identified as a culturally Deaf person, a variety of factors are considered, including family background of deafness and inherited deafness, familial adoption of ASL as their primary language, or whether the person attended schools for the Deaf, and/or Gallaudet University. This differs from the pathological or medical viewpoint, which focuses on the physical state of being deaf.

“Deafhood” is an empowering concept in the Deaf community (Nomeland & Nomeland, 2011). The term has been offered as representative of a “process—the struggle by each Deaf child, Deaf family and Deaf adult to explain to themselves and each other their own existence in the world” (Ladd, 2003, p.3). Eschewing the pathological term of deafness, which often perceives that the deaf person needs to be medically cured, the exploration of Deaf as a cultural identity is encouraged by members of the Deaf community (Ladd, 2003 Nomeland & Nomeland, 2011). Because Deaf people view themselves as a cultural entity rather than disabled, research and literature often capitalizes the term “Deaf” to indicate cultural membership, while the lowercase “deaf” is ascribed to the physical trait of being deaf, to people who do not incorporate the usage of ASL, or otherwise do not consider themselves as culturally Deaf (Ladd, 2003; Moore & Levitan, 2003; Parasnis, 1998).

Effects of Educational and Language Oppression on Identity Formation

The blend of cultural influences are also important to consider for Native American Deaf individuals because they represent an intersection of two distinct cultures that have experienced parallel historical atrocities directed at their communities. Native Americans (and many Indigenous communities) have experienced cultural genocide by dominant, colonialist societies through education, particularly during the “boarding school era” between the 1880s and 1970s (Child, 1998; Evans-Campbell, Walters, Pearson, & Campbell, 2012; Fey & McNickle, 1959). In accordance with a philosophy of “‘killing’ the Indian to save the ‘man’” (Smoak, 2006, p. 304), Native American children were removed from their tribes and sent to boarding schools far from their homes. The intent was to eradicate their language, customs, clothing, and way of life. Native American children at boarding schools were ridiculed, beaten or starved, and forced into indentured servitude (Child, 1998).

Deaf individuals have also experienced oppression within educational institutions. Residential schools for Deaf children were established in the 1700s as placements for Deaf children to support learning and communication via sign language (Gannon, 1981; Nomeland & Nomeland, 2011). During the late 1800s, a debate surrounding the use of sign language in K-12 classrooms grew in America and internationally. Proponents of ASL maintained that Deaf children should be taught using a naturally occurring, visual-gestural language—ASL—while opponents advocated for the exclusive use of spoken language, which came to be known as Oralism (Winefield, 1987). During the 1880 International Conference of Instructors for the Deaf in Milan, Italy, a majority of international hearing educators in Deaf Education voted to endorse Oralism as the sole communication method for classroom instruction (Baynton, Gannon, & Bergey 2007; Winefield, 1987). For almost 100 years, ASL was suppressed in American classrooms. Horror stories of Deaf children being punished for signing became common, and Deaf people hid usage of ASL out of shame and fear (Nomeland & Nomeland, 2011).

Intersection of Visual-Gestural Languages

A commonality between the Deaf and Native American communities is their use of visual-gestural language (Davis, 2011; Davis & McKay-Cody, 2010; Paris & Wood, 2002). For centuries, Native Americans used a visual-gestural, or sign language, commonly referred to as Indian Sign Language (ISL), American Indian Sign Language (AISL), Native American Sign Language (NASL), or Plains Indian Sign Language (PISL) (Alford, 2002; Davis & McKay-Cody, 2010; Farnell, 1995). In the Native American community, visual-gestural language was used primarily to ensure that Deaf and hard of hearing members of their tribes had communication, and secondarily to communicate with other tribes that did not share a common language (Alford, 2002).

Sign language use in America has been documented among White inhabitants of Martha’s Vineyard in Massachusetts as early as 1600 (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). Approximately one-fourth of the islanders on Martha’s Vineyard were hereditarily Deaf or hard of hearing, with much intermarriage between Deaf and hearing families (Baynton et al., 2007). Laurent Clerc, a Deaf French man, came to America at the beginning of the 19th century to establish and teach at the first American school for the Deaf, adding

elements of French Sign Language to what has since become modern American Sign Language (ASL) (Baynton et al., 2007; Nomeland & Nomeland, 2011; Van Cleve, 1999).

While Native American Signed Languages have waned in usage within tribes as English evolved as the dominant spoken language, many Native American Deaf individuals use a blend of ASL and American Indian Sign Language (AISL), which is typically derived from PISL. Recently, studies have been conducted regarding the potential contribution of PISL to earlier forms of ASL (Davis, 2011).

Art as Method of Inquiry

Art may serve as a non-verbal form of communication that provides an avenue for “hard-to-put-into words aspects of knowledge that might otherwise remain hidden or ignored” (Weber, 2008, p. 44). Art making is an important outlet for groups with a history of oppression by the dominant culture. Both Native Americans and Deaf Community members create art to preserve history and tradition, share their experiences, or make political statements intended to lead to social change (Durr, 2006).

Artmaking by Deaf Persons

Renowned Deaf artist Betty G. Miller (1989) wrote that visual art “is a way of life among Deaf people,” comparing the visual arts to the way hearing people enjoy and relate emotionally to music (p. 770). Sonnenstrahl (2002) concluded that despite the paternalism and oppression Deaf artists have faced for centuries, they still strive to aesthetically record their perspectives. Through the use of visual and tactile modalities, art is a safe means for Deaf people to communicate. Creation of art conveys “unexpressed thoughts or feelings” when words or signs seem inadequate (Horovitz, 2007, p. 20).

Artmaking by Indigenous Peoples

For Indigenous people, art is a way of sharing traditional crafts, dance, and storytelling (Neuman, 2006). Beyond the visual arts, from an Indigenous perspective, literature encompasses the oral tradition of storytelling, singing, dancing, symbols, handcrafted artwork and ceremonies (Snively & Williams, 2008). Storytelling has been long perceived as an embodiment of Indigenous knowledge (Bird, Wiles, Okalik, Kilabuk, & Egleand, 2009), re-establishing traditions and providing safer avenues for resistance to oppression and assimilation by the dominant culture (Sium & Ritskes 2013, p. III). The artistic expressions of Indigenous women are particularly relevant. Author Cynthia Chavez Lamar facilitated an art project with six Native women. Through this process, participants shared stories about earlier Native women artists whose creations were rejected by other artists and even members of their tribes (Lamar, 2010).

Art-Based Ways of Knowing

Art-based inquiry empowers research participants in a way that emphasizes “locally meaningful inquiry” (Finley, 2005, p. 682). Visual arts-based participatory methods “involve research participants creating art that ultimately serves both as data, and may also represent data” (Leavy, 2009, p. 227). Finley (2005) cautions that investigators incorporating arts-based research with Indigenous populations must take

care to include “antipaternalistic and anticolonist principles that forbid the researcher from speaking for people” who are capable of expressing their political and social perspectives (p. 76).

The use of visual arts as inquiry with Native Americans allows participants to select and create imagery expressive of Indigenous epistemologies. As a researcher, I am concerned with ensuring that I have incorporated methodology that places Indigenous participants (particularly for individuals who experience the intersection of racism, genderism, and disablism) firmly at the helm of the inquiry. The objective of this study is to provide a venue for Deaf, Native Americans who are women, to provide their perspective on what leadership means to them, using art-based ways of knowing.

Methodology

This paper extrapolates upon visual arts products correlating to a larger phenomenological-narrative study of factors that influenced leadership identity development among American Indian Deaf women. While other techniques were used to collect data on the phenomenon of leadership development for the overall study, the purpose for this portion of the study was to provide an opportunity for these women to share their ways of knowing through non-verbal images representing their lived experiences and perspectives.

I posed only one question: What does leadership mean to you as a Native American Deaf woman? I did not expound on the question, or define what leadership meant, allowing opportunity for individual interpretations. I provided art materials upon request, or reimbursed the cost of selected materials, and did not directly participate in the development of the visual imagery. I was available for consultation, as requested, while each woman processed her visualization of leadership.

Participants

The five participants selected for this study came from diverse backgrounds and leadership experiences. Each woman was affiliated with a different tribe. It is important to note that all of the women are American Indians. No Alaska Natives participated, thus the experiences of these distinct tribal communities are not represented. Because the Native American Deaf community is small, the identities of participants were held confidential, with tribal affiliations removed. The participants created their own pseudonyms.

Selection of the participants was based on recommendations from the Native American Deaf community. I contacted thirty-five men and women from this community through e-mails, videophone and in person to ask for names of Native American Deaf women whom they felt were leaders. I did not provide a definition of what leadership meant, leaving it to the community to determine what they considered women in leadership roles. While explanations for the recommendations were not solicited, many of the contacts commented on why they felt the women were leaders. Such comments included “She holds both Deaf and Native American traditions, providing guidance and wisdom”; “She is someone I admire, look up to, and want my children to emulate”; and

“I trust her wisdom and dedication to our people.” Seven women were named, with some of the individuals receiving multiple recommendations.

As a Deaf woman of Native American descent, I had interacted with many of the individuals that were recommended throughout my experiences as a biographer collecting stories on Native American Deaf experiences for two books that were subsequently published (Paris & Drosbaugh, 1999; Paris & Wood, 2002). I also served in a leadership capacity national organizations of Native American Deaf individuals. As a result of my active membership in the community, there was rapport and trust, which expedited my relationships with the women recommended by the community, who I also knew on personal and professional levels.

Participant 1: Beulah

Beulah* was appointed as an Elder in a national Native American Deaf organization, and in this role provided support, wisdom and encouragement to Deaf individuals seeking cultural information about their Indigenous heritage. A member of an East Coast tribe, Beulah is in her late 70s. She became deaf at 18 months because of spinal meningitis. Her parents placed her in a residential school for the deaf several hours away from the reservation; she went home only during holidays and for the summer.

Beulah’s leadership and identity development. While Beulah grew up with ASL as her primary language, she felt disconnected from her Deaf peers. Her understanding of her identity as a Native American came through the lens of her Deaf peers. The negative stereotypes of Native Americans in the media, and the fact that there were few resources available at school to educate Beulah and her classmates regarding Native Americans, resulted in painful, discriminatory remarks from her Deaf peers. Beulah accepted these perceptions as facts, not understanding until later that they were stereotypes. “Oh, they really poked fun at me...telling me that Indians were mean and killed White people. I believed them” (Beulah, personal communication, April 9, 2012).

Beulah did not embrace her identity as a Native American woman until she was in her mid-50s. While she visited her family briefly over the years, communication was sporadic since no one in the family was fluent in ASL. It was not until she read a book about her deceased father, who had been a renowned civil rights activist for his tribe, did she discover the extent of her ties to her tribal community.

Despite the lack of communication, Beulah observed the traditional arts of community members during her visits. As she grew older and was drawn to her tribal roots, she sought out knowledge from women in the tribe and learned the quilting process, particularly star quilting. Today, Beulah creates quilts for community auctions, selling them to fund college tuition for tribal members. The walls at her home are lined with ribbons she has won at state fairs for her craftsmanship.



Figure 1. Beulah's quilt

Beulah's arts-based leadership concept. Beulah expressed her perspectives on leadership with a quilt project (Figure 1). She shared that the artistic process of making and selling quilts is important to her for many reasons. As a young woman, she desired a college education, but could not afford to attend, nor could her tribe assist her financially. As her artistic talents became known, she began auctioning off her quilts at annual tribal gatherings in order to raise money for young adults to attend college. Beulah began to influence other quilt makers and artists in her tribe to donate each year, therefore growing the funds to share with college students. By engaging in tribal art making, she felt that she was able to support youth in her community with opportunities to obtain higher education.

Beulah described how the vision of her leadership quilt came to her when she thought how many tribes in mountain regions go to pray during sunrise, beginning their days by asking for strength to nurture their communities. Her tribe believes in giving thanks to the Creator at the dawn of each new day. While Beulah recognized that not all tribal traditions incorporate sunrise prayers and not all tribal regions include mountains, she felt that the symbolism was universal, particularly for leaders, and that it was important to renew and strengthen oneself each morning in order to serve others.

Beulah identified quilt making as a way for her to understand her Native heritage. Through her fellowship with other women in her tribe, she was able to learn more about her tribal values, passing this heritage on to her child, grandchild, and members of the Native American Deaf community. Without this interaction, she felt that she would not have been able to develop her own identity within her tribal community.

Though she has fully embraced her Native American identity, Beulah remains active in the Deaf community through social events. "I am a Native American Deaf woman," Beulah said. "I belong to both communities" (Beulah, personal communication, April 9, 2012).

Participant 2: Julie

Born Deaf and a member of an East Coast tribe straddling the United States and Canada, Julie* assumes a number of roles in the Native American Deaf, Deaf, and Native American communities. She serves as president of a non-profit organization for the Deaf and a council member of a national, non-profit organization for Native American Deaf individuals. In her tribe, she consults with parents whose children are Deaf, teaching sign language courses and providing support and wisdom on educational options for tribal Deaf children.

Though born on a reservation, Julie spent most of her childhood and adolescence in the dorms of a residential school for the Deaf. Upon high school graduation, she chose to go back to her home and marry a hearing tribal member who is now deceased. Currently in her 50s, she remains on the reservation surrounded by her children, grandchildren, and extended family members.

Julie's leadership and identity development. Julie did not fully understand her role in the tribal community until she was in her late 30s. One reason that she was unfamiliar with tribal traditions was because her grandmother was also Deaf, and did not receive full access to cultural information to pass on to her children. The lack of signed communication between Julie and her parents further constricted the flow of information. It was not until she participated in Native American Deaf Spiritual Gatherings that she learned in-depth information about her own clan (Bear Clan). Today, she is an advocate for tribal Deaf children, ensuring an avenue for passing on information about tribal traditions.

Julie feels connected to the tribal tradition of fashioning tribal regalia and clothing to be worn at powwows. She learned to sew in elementary school, a skill that was introduced to her by her Deaf grandmother. Through participating in this creative endeavor, she was exposed to visual representations of tribal beliefs. Julie learned to make traditional costumes by observing, and through written communication with tribal women. However, she did not always understand what the regalia represented until she began teaching sign language within her community. As she advanced in her skill as a seamstress, she gained prominence on the reservation for crafting regalia used for dancing during tribal events.



Figure 2. Julie's dreamcatcher

Julie's arts-based leadership concept. Julie chose to express her concept of leadership through a dream catcher (Figure 2). Julie cut strips of dyed rawhide, and wove colored twine around a small metal hoop to form a small "spider's web" design. She added beads and feathers around the hoop and picked small silver feathers and a bear charm to interweave into the web. Julie explained that dream catchers filter out good and bad dreams in different ways. Good dreams go through the web and down to the feathers, where they are retained so the dreamer can continue to experience them again. Bad dreams struggle through the web, get caught, and then released through the center of the web into the dawn, where they fade away in the sunlight. This imagery represented what Julie felt leaders needed—to filter the negative and focus on the positive traits of giving to their community.

Julie explained that the most significant piece of the dream catcher, for her, was the image of the bear. "This represents my clan and it is my heritage, which is my strength" (Julie, personal communication, April 10, 2012). Proud of her dual citizenship in Canada and the United States, Julie states both the Native American and Deaf communities contribute to holistic balance in her sense of identity. Julie commented: "I prefer socialization with the Deaf community the most because I am not left out of communication...I feel that I become involved in Indian spirituality and the Creator and learned to pray the Indian way" (Julie, personal communication, April 10, 2012).

Julie expressed concern that there are limited opportunities for Native Americans who are Deaf within the tribe. While she has occasionally experienced employment discrimination, Julie has been able to move beyond poverty due to the support of her children and the tribe. She hopes to serve as a role model for young adults in her tribe who are not gainfully employed, a support that she did not have during her formative years.

Participant 3: Zabrina

Born Deaf to a mother whose tribe comes from the Western and Midwestern regions, and a father of Canadian French descent, Zabrina* was not born on a reservation, nor has she experienced reservation life. Her father was in the military and she grew up moving to a variety of places across America, as well as the Pacific Islands. In her 50s, Zabrina is the executive director of a national organization for Native Americans who are Deaf.

Zabrina's leadership and identity development. Zabrina did not have the opportunity to participate in the Deaf community as a young person. She grew up attending public schools and relying on speech reading to communicate. Feeling isolated from hearing and Deaf people and not understanding how she fit in with the Deaf and Native American communities, Zabrina recalls feeling anger and mistrust. It was not until early adulthood that she interacted with both communities. A spiritual leader took her under his wing and taught her many of the traditions of her tribe. Zabrina also took ASL classes and began to participate in Deaf Community events, finding comfort in the visual-gestural communication of other Deaf people.

Zabrina expresses her traditions, especially spirituality, through artwork. She sews, does beadwork, and paints. As Zabrina explored the issue of leadership in her art project, she expressed discomfort at being called a leader. She shared her perspective about why she found the label of leadership uncomfortable:

I guess I don't really label myself as a leader. I just do for my people...I see the pros and cons of this label and recognize that what I do fits into that definition...It feels like bragging and I am not comfortable with that...Indians don't tend to say "I" or "me", we tend to say "we" or "us" or "our people" because we are a group, a family. (Zabrina, personal communication, June 3, 2012)



Figure 3. Zabrina's medicine bag

Zabrina's arts-based leadership concept. Zabrina created a medicine bag as her visual representation of leadership (Figure 3). She explained that what one puts inside of the bag (herbs, stones or a small gift given by others), becomes sacred. "You honor it," said Zabrina, "and hold it close to you as part of your healing as your walk on your path on Mother Earth...to overcome something, reach a goal or achieve healing" (Zabrina, personal communication, June 3, 2012). This healing is for four major areas—mental, emotional, physical and spiritual. When one is healed, one returns the items inside the bag to Mother Earth.

Zabrina explained that the design on the outside of the bag symbolizes the path of leadership for Native American Deaf women. The circle represents the medicine wheel, as well as Mother Earth, also referred to as a turtle. Citing the Seven Cardinal Directions, she stated they were representative of the Creator, Mother Earth, the Four Directions, and the soul. The four directions represented her tribal colors. Zabrina attributed much symbolism to the number four (the four elements, the four directions, the four seasons, and the four cycles of life.).

As one traverses these four-part cycles, individual challenges are faced to encourage personal growth. Each cycle needs to be worked through until the healing is completed. Zabrina felt the symbolism of the four directions was particularly important for her. East signifies clarity, while South reminds her to demonstrate love and empathy when listening to others. West is representative of strength and courage, while North encourages prayer and connection to the Creator. Zabrina described the beading on the upper right side, which represents stars or nations. She pointed to the single bead on the other side of the bag, which represented her spirit and was placed as a reminder to attend to her soul.

The fringe at the bottom of the bag appeared to be backwards, with the suede side in contrast to the leather of the bag. "I did this on purpose. It is a reminder that life on this earth is not perfect. It is okay to make mistakes" (Zabrina, personal communication, June 3, 2012). Zabrina stressed that people who are in leadership roles must honestly portray the imperfection of life, which will assist one in personal growth.

Participant 4: Winona

Winona,* whose heritage includes Midwestern and Plains tribes, is a Deaf American Indian female in her late 30s. She affiliates mostly with her mother's Midwestern tribe. A self-described "Urban Indian," she did not grow up on a reservation. Her family maintained cultural ties, so she attended powwows at least four times a year. Winona is the director of a business that has clientele nationwide.

Winona's family members were very active in her tribal community. She grew up with strong and independent female family members who were involved in tribal community events, including tribal councils and powwows.

Winona's leadership and identity development. Winona's hearing loss was discovered while she was attending preschool. After briefly attending a day school for Deaf children, she was placed in public school. This was difficult for her because she did

not have an interpreter. Later, she had access to sign language services and her school experience improved.

As the only American Indian Deaf student in her school, she noticed immediately that she was “different,” particularly since other students did not attend powwows. Despite this difference, she felt more comfortable with her Indigenous roots than with being a Deaf person. “I think that it was easier for me to identify and be an Indian in that environment than Deaf. I always seemed to manage to pass myself off as a hearing person,” she said (Winona, personal communication, March 21, 2012).

During her college years, Winona met a number of other Deaf students and was able to fully integrate into the community. As a result, she began taking on leadership roles within the Deaf community, including the presidency of a non-profit organization for Deaf individuals. Today, Winona feels fully acculturated into both communities, although she has a special affinity with her Native American roots.



Figure 4. Winona’s female hoop dancer

Winona’s arts-based concept of leadership. Winona chose to draw a female hoop dancer as her visual concept (Figure 4). Since childhood, Winona has been a gifted hoop dancer. She has found this was a way to learn and emulate her tribal traditions, and has passed on these values to her four children, who are also hoop dancers. Her family has traveled extensively to perform at powwows and for international arts communities. Her home serves as a display of hoop dancing regalia, with her first hoop dance outfit on display as well as some of her children’s regalia.

Using her son’s crayons, she drew a Native American woman in dance regalia, holding out three hoops on each hand. On the right side of the page, she drew a Medicine Wheel, colored in the quadrants, and wrote out the different concepts that the four directions represented. She explained that hoop dancing is representative of the Circle of Life dancing in an out of a hoop demonstrates the struggles of life. Upon completion of the dance, she overcomes her challenges. “I drew the woman in hoop dance regalia because it represents me. I know I have freedom when I show my culture and my dances” (Winona, personal communication, March 21, 2012).

The circle, Winona said, represents the four directions and seasons—spring, summer, fall, and winter. She listed objects in her community that had circles—the bottom of a teepee, the drum, and powwows, which are always circular in movement. The circle represents an important leadership aspect to her, in that Native Americans often think in a continuous circle, “which also represents equality and harmony interconnecting with people. No one person is better than the other and that is one reason why the circle is sacred to us” (Winona, personal communication, March 21, 2012).

The six hoops and the circular shape of her beaded necklace represented the seven traditional values: respect, honesty, harmony, humility, courage, wisdom, and generosity. Winona emphasized that humility was important, despite the oppression her communities (Deaf and Native American) have experienced, while courage was necessary to ensure that they are able to protect themselves when needed. Winona also felt generosity in her community was abundant—that giving was part of her culture, particularly when celebrating life events.

Participant 5: Cortelia

Cortelia,* who became Deaf from a fever at two years of age, is in her early 60s and is enrolled in a Southern tribe. Her family has been with the tribe for several hundred years. Cortelia directs outreach services for educational institutions that serve Deaf and hard of hearing children.

Cortelia’s leadership and identity development. Cortelia was the only deaf child attending a tribal school and the majority of the teachers were not aware of resources to support language development during her formative years. “They did not know how to help me, so they just had me do artwork while other students were learning to read and write” (Cortelia, personal communication, April 21, 2012). As a result, she was illiterate until she transferred to a school for the Deaf when she was eleven. She vividly recalls visiting the school, stating:

It was a weird experience at that time. When I first arrived, all of the girls were White! I looked at my mother and looked at the girls and I said, “It’s the first time I met all White girls. And they talk with their hands.”
(Cortelia, personal communication, April 21, 2012)

It took only two years for Cortelia to catch up with her classmates. Despite experiencing oppression in the school, often by White instructors (there was only one Native American Deaf male instructor at the school), she was determined to obtain higher education. She eventually completed her Master’s degree and counts among her job experiences directorship of a non-profit organization and administrator in a higher education program.



Figure 5. Charcoal drawing of a woman superimposed in trees

Cortelia's arts-based leadership concept. Cortelia's visual representation of leadership (Figure 5) focused on a woman superimposed into a background of swamp trees, which reminded her of her family's backyard on the reservation. She rendered her artwork in charcoal. She was visibly moved by what she produced, remarking that it had been the first time in many years that she had sat down to sketch a drawing. Cortelia explained that the trees in her drawing were representative of her Native American Deaf people and the ages and sizes represented "Young to old, big to small" (Cortelia, personal communication, April 21, 2012). The water symbolized nourishment for the community. The woman in the background was drawn in the image of her daughter. "She represents all of us as she watches, encourages, and supports the growth of the trees. To me, that is what leadership means—support and growth of the people" (Cortelia, personal communication, April 21, 2012).

Cortelia credited both the Native American and Deaf communities with providing an influence on her leadership development. "The Indian community instilled strength, value, and a cultural belief system. But the Deaf community made it easier for me to go up and beyond in my career" (Cortelia, personal communication, April 21, 2012).

Successfully blending both worlds into one holistic identity, Cortelia believes balanced growth is critical to achieving leadership success through nurturing their communities. She felt that she had equal footing into both communities. She explained: "I feel that I incorporated both cultures into one. I am Native Deaf. It's hard to separate the two" (Cortelia, Personal communication, April 21, 2012).

Discussion

While these visual representations of Native American Deaf Women's leadership are diverse, three important themes relative to cultural and disability identities emerge from these five women: identification with Indigenous art forms, strength in spirituality, and evolution of cultural identities.

Identification With Indigenous Art Forms

The process of creating visual art provided a catalyst for discussing the ways in which traditional arts and values influenced the leadership perspectives of the participants. Winona centered her artistic piece on her hoop dance experiences. Ward (2014) described the hoop dance as a ritual among many tribes that merges the endless cycle between creatures and natural elements.

Beulah produced another traditional art form—quilting—to demonstrate elements of leadership characteristics. Her piece included the vivid use of earth tones to represent mountains and a rising sun. Though Europeans are credited with introducing quilt making to American Indians, early patchwork quilts were made by Chippewas by tying rabbit skins together prior to the use of cloth (Weagal, 2007). Native American women have since introduced their own tribal symbols and colors into the quilting process.

Zabrina chose to use another Native American craft (the medicine bag) to demonstrate tribal symbolism of leadership as a balance of mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional strength, with imperfections. The creation of a dreamcatcher by Julie represents a craft most often used by Plains tribes (Shore, Orton, & Manson, 2009). By releasing negative influences that leaders experience, Julie feels that positivity will assist Native American Deaf women leaders in tending to their communities.

Strength in Spirituality

Deeply rooted spiritual themes arose in the art renderings from each participant. Beulah offered prayer within the backdrop of a natural environment as an important source of strength for leadership. Cortelia focused on the natural elements for strengthening leadership, choosing the nurturing aspect of a Native American Deaf woman overseeing the symbolic growth of her people.

Both Winona and Zabrina included the medicine wheel, the four directions, and the symbolism of circular representation. These traditions are prevalent in many Indigenous populations and are used in research and therapeutic practices, which focus on healing and understanding the balance of life (Dapice, 2006; Gone, 2011; Lavallée, 2009; McCabe, 2008). Winona described the seven value systems, which included spirituality. Zabrina focused on the soul of the leader, and the need for balance. Julie's art focused on the spiritual need for positivity, deflecting the negative influences inherent in the physical world.

Evolution of Cultural Identities

Each of the visual representations was decidedly Native American in appearance, infused with symbolism, and colors and motifs steeped in traditional craftwork. Through discussions following the creation of their visual representations of leadership, all of the women expressed a firm identification in both Native American and Deaf communities. The evolution towards an identity that intersects both communities was not easy for participants, particularly since they did not have Native American Deaf women role models. Poston (1990) proposed that bi-racial (and in this particular context, bicultural) individuals go through five levels of identify formation: *Personal identity* (children who do not completely link to a specific racial or cultural group); *Choice of group*

categorization (choosing to identify with a specific group based on factors that include appearance and background knowledge of culture); *Enmeshment/denial* (the experience of feeling guilt or shame at not being able to connect with all parts of one's heritage, resulting in anger or frustration); *Appreciation* (through exposure to their heritages, one may choose to identify more with one group than another); and finally *Integration* (an individual begins to value all aspects of their cultural identities).

Cortelia appeared to integrate into both Native American and Deaf communities at an early age. This suggests strong environmental factors that encouraged her self-identity as a member of both groups. Zabrina experienced the most barriers in identity development, finding personal connection to the Native American and Deaf communities in adulthood. She has experienced several identity shifts throughout her journey to a community leadership role.

While Julie and Beulah were both born on reservations, each had limited knowledge of their Indigenous heritage and had to obtain this in adulthood. Both were able to gain some cultural knowledge through observations of traditional craft making within their tribes, and both chose to identify with the Deaf community until adulthood, later moving into appreciation and integration with their Native American identities.

Winona had a strong sense of her identity as a Native American, which was cemented through powwow participation. Accepting her identity as a Deaf individual was a slower process, particularly since she was mainstreamed in public school and did not interact with other Deaf individuals until college. Winona appeared to have minimal anger or guilt in relation to her identity formation. Access to college-level exploration enhances identity development among young adults who are from biracial/bicultural backgrounds (Renn, 2008).

Implications: Further Research and Policy Making

The original intent of this project was to explore the viewpoint of leadership through the lens of Native Americans who are Deaf and female. An interesting aspect of the project revealed that there are identity formation themes that can be further explored with future research. All of the women included their perspectives on how they arrived at their identity as members of two cultures that are distinct, yet held many similarities in terms of experiences of oppression and belief systems. Additional research is needed to investigate the issue of identity formation, particularly given the fact that none of the participants had other Native American, Deaf, female leaders to emulate while growing up.

The fact that at least three of the participants were born into tribal communities that were situated on reservations, yet did not understand the traditions and belief systems of their tribes until well into middle adulthood, emphasizes the need to ensure that communication access within tribes is available. Not all of the participants come from tribes that use visual-gestural languages, further compounding their ability to obtain information that is traditionally passed down orally from generation to generation, or from elders and clan mothers. Living part of their youth in residential schools for the deaf, a considerable distance from their tribal communities, they would not obtain indigenous knowledge from an educational system that is overseen predominantly by

non-Indigenous professionals and classmates. These participants had to struggle to find information and understand it through observation only, and during limited periods of time when they were out of school on vacation.

Elders and tribal leaders oversee the welfare of their community, and there are many issues impacting Indigenous people today, from increasing violence committed on female members, often by non-Natives, to a variety of health issues that impact their tribal members such as the high prevalence of diabetes, substance abuse, and high suicide rates among their youth. Violations against their lands through destruction of natural environments by corporations are another issue tribes are dealing with. With all of these issues faced by tribal leaders, it is not surprising that the needs of a handful of tribal members who are Deaf may slip through the cracks.

Despite warring priorities, there is a responsibility to address the needs of this population. It is difficult to address them, however, with few resources or knowledge of how to provide support to tribal members who are Deaf. Leadership at residential schools for the Deaf are equally responsible for ensuring that all of their students' needs are acknowledged and strategies are implemented that enrich the educational environment of their students.

As noted before, there is a connection between Deaf and Native American populations, based on shared historical oppression and the usage of visual-gestural languages. However, tribal leaders and their communities do not have in-depth knowledge of Deaf culture or American Sign Language, and because of the remote location of most reservations, there is difficulty finding a sign language interpreter willing to travel for several hours one way. Even if they were willing, most sign language interpreters are not knowledgeable about Native Americans in general, let alone each specific tribe's mores, traditions, and ceremonies. Access to Native Americans who are sign language interpreters is very rare; to date, it is estimated there are a maximum of 25 interpreters who are Native American, and they are scattered all across the entire USA.

Educators, counselors, and other personnel are typically knowledgeable about ASL and accessibility, but do not know of, or understand, tribal perspectives. Policy implementation may help improve the experiences of these tribal members. In every state, Early Newborn Screening programs help identify hearing loss earlier. The purpose of this mandate is to ensure there is no delay in language development in Deaf children,

Policy implementation may help improve the experiences of Deaf tribal members. A policy that encourages shared resources among educators, counselors, and tribal leaders will increase the chances of that child becoming immersed in both cultures, and coming away with a stronger sense of identity. Educators in schools for the Deaf (particularly Native users of ASL who are also Deaf) could impart knowledge of ASL, Deaf culture, and technological resources. Tribal members could share valuable Indigenous artifacts, knowledge, and culture that these educators could use to reinforce Indigenous customs while the child is in school. One of the best examples of a school for the Deaf incorporating Indigenous culture would be the Kelston Deaf Centre in Auckland, New Zealand. In 1992, they constructed a Deaf marae (Maori communal

meeting place) specifically to encourage Indigenous knowledge among their Maori students. To date, it is the only Deaf marae in the world.

None of the participants were exposed to Deaf Native American female role models during childhood and adolescence. Several participants remarked that this was a barrier for them; they had difficulty visualizing their own journeys without someone to look up to or emulate who were similar to them in terms of cross-cultural identity. It is suggested that schools for the Deaf and pertinent members of the tribe work together to develop programs that bring in mentors to encourage the indigenous knowledge of deaf tribal members. Such policy will go a long ways towards ensuring there are future role models for their indigenous, Deaf, and female members.

Concluding Remarks

The inclusion of art inquiry in an unstructured environment created a forum for the women in this study to express their identities as leaders in both Indigenous and Deaf communities. These women's ways of knowing, as expressed artistically, further enriched the sharing of their experiences as individuals working through complex issues of identity in two cultures historically dominated by paternalistic, oppressive societal perspectives. By providing an opportunity for visually oriented communicators to express themselves in a visual format, participants were empowered to share their wisdom as Native American and Deaf women leaders.

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Reading Silenced Narratives: A Curricular Journey Into Innu Poetry and Reconciliation

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Abstract

Using a life writing research methodology in this article, I seek to understand the complexities implicated in reading silenced narratives as a way towards reconciling inter-nations relationships. To do so, I weave in the poetical *territories* of Josephine Bacon, Innu poet from Pessiamit, Quebec. I analyse how a poetic text has created spaces for re-interpreting silence[s], that journey into and beyond my *whispered* narratives as an emerging, settler scholar and curriculum theorist. As I tune into several layers of silences, I examine the pedagogical implications lying within public and intimate territories of *silenced narratives* and the *narrative(s) of silence(s)* in our various practices as educators.

Keywords: Postcolonialism; Indigenous education; educator's role; pedagogy

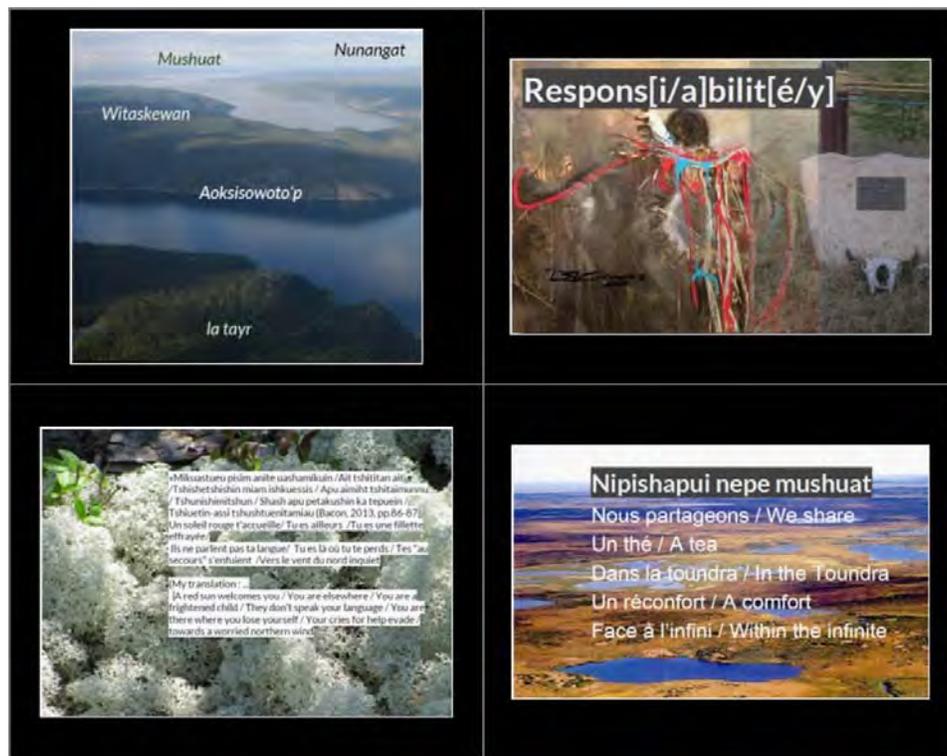


Figure 1. A visual abstract is offered here as an alternative way to enter the space of silenced narratives of symbolic literacies (see Battiste, 1986).

Reading Silenced Narratives: A Curricular Journey Into Innu Poetry and Reconciliation

In this article, I enter a conversation on the various ways we might teach and learn silenced narratives. To do so, we might first ask, who defines “silenced” narratives? How can our teaching practices recognize the various ways in which we are attentive—or not—to various voices that are outside of our contexts of recognition? How should we approach silenced narratives in class? How might we work within, and revisit representations of “indigenous” and “land” in the context of Quebec, where I am from? In response to such crucial curricular questions, I draw on four pedagogical moments that create what I am calling a *lived poetic artefact*. In this essay, then, I aim to illustrate my poetic journey as an educator and as a lifelong learner. Each of these moments reflects the ways I relate to silenced narratives within my teaching and learning as a non-Indigenous curriculum theorist, mother, and educator now living on the traditional, unceded territories of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people.

Silenced Narratives?

An initial word of caution might be appropriate. Should I refer to a well-respected Innu author in Quebec as “silenced”? After all, Joséphine Bacon was shortlisted for the 2014 Governor’s General Literary Awards (Note: the award went to American-Canadian Cherokee author Thomas King). Moreover, in June 2015, she became the first Innu author to enter l’Institut de France, invited by Haitian-Québécois author Dany Laferrière for his induction ceremony. Natasha Kanapé Fontaine noted the irony of the situation in *Le Devoir*: “Two Quebec poets enter the famous Académie française—one through the main door, the other, a tiny woman carrying the fabulous heritage of our language, Innu-aimun, on her back” (2015, par. 6, *translation*). As one can see, the term “silenced narratives” is, indeed, charged with several layers of colonization. In line with Hoy (2001), I recognize the risk of creating racial binaries in tuning into silenced narratives. In fact, my own positionality, as a francophone Québécoise scholar attending a bilingual university, writing this story in English, can easily become tangled in such argumentation. Rather, my intention is to translate Bacon’s poetry without betrayal or appropriation. Hence, the *translation* effort should be seen as tiny threads, containing possibilities to expand, anchored in open-spaces inspired by brief encounters with the author. To illustrate these invisible threads in humility and respect, I refer to them as *whispers*. My hope is that whispers, and the type of intimacy they create, can be reflective of a certain way of listening, which, in turns, reveals itself as a certain way of learning.

Echos of Silence

Buber (2003) refers to silence as a mediating moment, where “nothing needs to mediate between me and one of my companions in the companionship of creation, whenever we come near one another, because we are bound up in relation to the same centre” (p. 25). In this iteration of silence, genuine relationality stems from stillness and attentiveness. A certain connection to the land and to each other may occur.

To begin, I point out some of the various complexities encountered in developing a relational, place-based ethics. In so doing, I employ the concept of *Aokisisowaato’p*, a

Blackfoot concept that calls our attention to “the ethical importance of visiting a place as an act of ethical renewal that is life-giving and life-sustaining, both to the place and to ourselves” (Blood, Chambers, Donald, Hasebe-Ludt, & Big Head, 2012, p. 48). To understand such attendance to place, in this essay, I translate and analyze poetic lines from Bacon (2013) “*Nipishapui nete mushuat - Un thé dans la toundra,*” as aesthetic, intertextual objects in my attempt to find ways to teach and learn from silenced narratives. Secondly, I enter the emotional affect of silenced narratives. Here, a poem inspired by silence is contextualized within the historical, linguistic, and physical suffering experienced by Indigenous populations at the hands of the Indian Residential Schooling system (IRS), and through the intergenerational consequences of this regime. Drawing on tensions between absences and presences in the Canadian curricular landscape, I focus on language as a central component of a reparative curriculum (Mishra Tarc, 2011). I note absences and losses concerning Indigenous languages in Canada, and the sense of respect and resilience derived from this tensioned, pedagogical space. Third, I explore silence as international, intercultural, and pedagogical spaces of such silences. Finally, I enter the narratives of silence in pedagogy. How can they inform our process of reading silenced narratives? How may we as teachers position “silenced narratives” in reparative curriculum, particularly in how we relate to each other as nations, as humans, as learners, and as praxis of indigenizing the curriculum (Battiste, Kovach, & Balzer, 2010; Chambers, 1999) and reconciling inter-nation relations? Inspired by Andreotti, Stein, Ahenakew, and Hunt (2015), I end with a reinterpretation of silenced narratives when revisiting our colonized relationships to land and languages as part of a reparative curriculum.

Towards Poethical Readings of Indigenous Narratives

As a settler college educator, I am interested in pedagogical crossroads derived from inter-cultural and inter-nations collaborations. In my first steps of my doctoral research, I examined emerging pedagogical collaborations between Quebec colleges and First Nations, Metis, and Inuit communities. In this context, considering my reading of silenced narratives assisted in engaging a curricular conversation on absences. On a global scene, I join other voices in seeking to *de-monoculturalize* curriculum (Abdi, 2011), and bringing forward ethical considerations into the discourse of international education and inter-nations education. (Emongo & White, 2014; Garson, 2013; Haig-Brown, 2008; Kulnieks, Roronhiakewen Longboat, & Young, 2010; Pidgeon, 2008; Pinar, 2006a; Pretceille, 2013; Wang, 2004). How does the coexistence of epistemologies influence our reading of silenced narratives?

To understand and build linguistic richness into curriculum, Chambers (1999) invites curriculum theorists to listen to “the languages and dialects that both predate and follow the arrival of English and French” (p. 143). This brings an opportunity to see other aspects brought by socio-cultural readings of text, notably the relations of power reflected in the absence-presence relationships (Hall, 1997). A curriculum on reconciliation needs to include dialogue on how history and identity shape our learning processes (Stanley, 1999; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). In response, I wish to find ethical-relational ways to read and be influenced by Bacon’s poetry. Through reading Innu poetry, I began a journey *within*, which has transformed my reading of literatures-of-the-other, my approach to teaching, and my reading of my practice and agency as an educator.

Knitting Personal Narratives

Poetry and other ways of telling stories in education can help us to “better understand the intricacies of language. . .by creating opportunities for learner[s]. . .to foster an excitement about developing aesthetically pleasing forms of expressions” (Kulnieks et al., 2012, p. 94). Moreover, Leggo (2008) proposes life writing research as an “ongoing process of understanding how we invest space and chronology with significance” (p. 20), and invites us to carefully construct our stories. Poetry does not emerge when weaving our learning, readings, teachings, writings, and listening—without the silences.

In life writing research, transformative engagement emerges from new ways of seeing and understanding different worlds (McIvor, 2010, p. 137). Archibald (2008) invites readers to web the invisible and visible connections among several stories as a way to engage one’s mind, heart, body and spirit. Weaving personal stories offers narrative foundations to our intentions as a curriculum developers and theorists (Blood et al., 2012; Pinar, 1974; Weenie, 2008). A poetic knitting of personal narratives, or *currere* (Pinar, 1974), opened spaces where I could reflect on specific moments of (my) educational path and their transformative or limiting powers. It emerged as a way to tell this story.

I grew up on the North Shore of Quebec, on unceded Innu territory. It was there that I met Josephine Bacon, originally from the Pessiamit. My experience of hearing her poetry was transformational for several reasons that I will recall in this paper. The first reason was based on assumptions about territory. As a child, I spent my summers on the beach, close to Pessiamit. In the winter, the beach covered with ice; the water transformed to mini-iceberg islands, becoming imaginary boats, *letting go* of the land from which we came. I did not realize this connection until my family moved. While in “exile,” I started longing for the land, and realized that the land inhabited me.

Bacon and I might have looked at the similar landscapes in our childhood, over different times, and thus both of our experiences of longing for the land entail proximity and distance. My migration was voluntary, however, and included my family as a whole. Hers was forced by the Canadian Residential School System. How does our relationship to migration influence emotions like fear, trust, protection, and care? What does it mean to survive? What does it mean for me? Landscapes, *land-escapes*, or *land-spaces*?

Several of the elements described above—nomadism, language, place, encounters, and absences—are themes that have been central to my life-path, and still haunt and inhabit me as an emerging curriculum theorist. As such, I identify with Chambers (2006) remarks:

In fiction written by Aboriginal people three motifs strike the reader: the *land*—loved, lost and found; creation and re-creation as simultaneous events where life, *time and space* are one force in perpetual motion; and finally, *homecoming*. Oh yes, and there is a fourth: [...] multiplicities that constantly erupt into *chaos*, a chaos we must not fear but through which our stories are always map and compass. (para. 45)

Attempting to recognize and navigate such chaos has profound echoes with Andreotti, Ahenakew, and Cooper's (2015) in their mapping of the complexities and paradoxes that emerge in different processes and ideals of decolonization (p.22), which I hope to further explore in future research.

For now, we may ask: How can we read poetic Innu esthetics in ethical ways as a way to bring a conversation on processes of indigenization and reconciliation in Quebec's college curriculum? As an initial echo to Andreotti et al. (2015), I examine how we may, as educators, follow various pedagogical paths in reconsidering a curriculum of reconciliation (and beyond), as an attempt to focus "on equipping people to face the incoherence (and frustration) of the juxtaposed, incommensurable contexts they will have to inhabit, navigate and negotiate in" (p. 30).

Here, a multilingual poetic evocation of the countenance of [silence] becomes an in-between space.

Whispers.

Landscapes.

Mushuat.

Toundra.

Land-escapes.

Eka tshituk.

Chut!

Quiet! Quoi?

Land-espaces.

Echo.

We?

Nipishuat nepe Mushuat.

Tshinashkumitin.

Whisper. "Landscapes."

As we journey on the land, or dwell, or are exiled, our relationship to place opens conversational spaces about how we relate to each other as a moment of ethical renewal. These concepts of sustenance and of sustainability, and their cultural evocations of reciprocity, have inspired my journeys into the territories of curriculum inquiry.

My first reading of Bacon's poetry is an analysis of her (possible) relationship to land through entering these words:

**An Excerpt From *Un thé Dans la Toundra - Nipishapui nete Mushuat*, a Poem by
Joséphine Bacon (2013)**

Tshitamishkun e minuat assi
 Anite etain
 Missinaku niminiku
 Papakassiku nuitsheku
 Uapitsheushkamiku nitashamiku
 Massekushkamiku kashinamu nissishikua
 miaian
 Ninatuapamau mishta-utshekataku
 Uin nuitamak tshe ituteian
 Ekute ute namian ashit uashtuashkuan
 Nipimishin, apu matenitaman
 Ninipun

*Tu me promets une terre pure
 Où tu existes
 Missinaku m'abreuve
 Papakassiku court avec moi
 Le lichen me nourrit
 La mousse soigne mes larmes
 Je reviens à la grande étoile
 Mon guide
 C'est ici que je danse
 Avec les aurores boréales
 Étendue, Je n'agonise pas*

In the purity of promised land
 Where you exist
*Missinaku** quenches thirst
*Papakassiku*** runs with me
 Lichen nourishes me
 Moss sponges my tears
 I come back to the great star
 My guide
 Here I dance
 With Aurora borealis
 Lying
 Not agonizing.
 (pp. 16-17, English interpretation
 by author of article)
 **Missikanu* (Master of Waters)
 ** *Papakassiku* (The Master of
 Cariboo)

Whisper. "Mushuat."

In this first hearing/reading of the poem, several elements can be interpreted as symbols of the author's relationship to the land. Lichen, aurora borealis, moss, and the references to Papakassiku and Missikanu bring us into the tundra. The poet can also become absorbed in interpretations, and become a symbol of "Indigenous," "Peoples," or "Native voice." I interpret Bacon's authorship as "speaking for," or "as a member of one's own group" (Werner, 2000). Werner (2000) suggests that, "speaking... from one's location has a form of authority based upon the assumed richness of first-hand experience" (p. 203) A last word of caution comes from Hoy (2001), pointing out some of the risks of the endeavor of pedagogical representation of Native women narratives:

the risk of creating Indigenous/non-Indigenous writer binaries, of using race as explanatory, and of using these texts as cultural documentation (p. 20). What are the hidden stories behind this initial representation of an author's relationship to her land of origins?

Whisper. "Toundra."

A first representation of silenced narrative in relationship to territory could remain a mere contradiction between the desire for indigeneity and the negation of the past traumatic events. In labeling the author as "Indigenous," critics point out that the author is perceived as a cultural representative, as speaking for Indigenous people in Quebec. In fact, through Bacon's celebrated Indigenous poetry, Quebec's literary critics bring to light intercultural tensions in Quebec:

After oppressing their people, we now see Joséphine Bacon as a key figure in Aboriginal culture. Where does she stand in the mist of this popularity? Does she think we are trying to embrace a new "us," when we were throwing rocks at Mohawks during the Oka crisis? (Leclerc, 2014, p. 24) (*translation*)¹

Leclerc points out the paradox between celebrating a poet's Indigeneity and the layers of colonization that took (take) place in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. Ralston Saul (2015) observes that there is need to go beyond postures of empathy, romanticism, or denial of land claims to tackle reconciliation: The creation of new narratives is needed.

In this reading, idealizing Bacon's relationship to land, I am blinded by my own desire to forget harmful events of the past and find a way to relate. I am prisoner of racial binaries. Could envisioning Bacon's relationship to land through poetics; aesthetics, or cultural lenses be solely a "premature attempt at reconciliation" (Tuck and Yang, 2012). These authors warn:

The absorption of decolonization by settler social justice frameworks is one way the settler, disturbed by her own settler status, tries to escape or contain the unbearable searchlight of complicity, of having harmed others just by being one's self. The desire to reconcile is just as relentless as the desire to disappear the Native; it is a desire to not have to deal with this (Indian) problem anymore. (p. 3)

In the same way, Bacon's work cannot be seen as speaking for all First Nations in Quebec; as an educator/researcher, I cannot speak for all settler descendants, or only from that point of view. I feel a tension between proximity to an Indigenous voice and the cultural distance created through genocide of language and culture. The pedagogical endeavor is to find ways to go beyond my positionality as an outsider without erasing the other.

A Poethical Polyphony

Looking for other readings of silenced narratives, I turn to Buber's (2003) suggestion:

When we really understand a poem, all we know of the poet is what we learn of him [*her*] in the poem—no biographical wisdom is of value for the pure understanding of what is to be understood: the I which approaches us is the subject of this single poem. But when we read other poems by the poet in the same true way their subjects combine in all their multiplicity, completing and confirming one another, to form the one polyphony of the person's existence. (p. 17)

Whisper. "Land-escapes."

In reading a second excerpt, I revisit Bacon's (2013) self-identification as a Tundra nomad.

Bacon (2013) writes:

*Kasikat apu natamik papamutein utenat /
Nin au ka matshit Mushuat*

*Je ne suis pas l'errante de la ville /
Je suis la nomade de la Toundra.*

I am not a lost soul in the city/
I am a tundra nomad. (pp. 56-57)

(English interpretation by author of article)

In this second excerpt, lichen becomes grass, using the tensions between Bacon's positionality as urban, Aboriginal artist in Montreal, and reclamation/celebration of the Tundra as cultural territory. Having those two images side-by-side, the "tundra poet" and "the resilient urban," enriches my reading of her poem. A short promotional [video](#) evokes the dynamics between the places we live and the inner territories. In this clip, she walks in her white socks on the green grass of Parc Lafontaine, a landmark in Montreal. She reads, first in Innu-aïnum, then in French, a poem that is not part of the book, but which refers to "the songs that inhabit us." She concludes with an invitation: "*La ville où j'erre est l'espoir que tu m'accueilles / Puisque / Je suis toi.*" As envisioning tundra and city as juxtaposed in some Indigenous identities provoked me, I translated this vision into a workshop with college students, as a way to include identity conversations in my work as a pedagogical advisor in a college. Bacon's words became an entry point for students to describe and share about the land they were from, and read into the poem to imagine whom the author might be, from where the author might come, and so on.

In fact, my goal is to open spaces for paradigm shift about territory/Indigeneity/Indigenous, where an urban Aboriginal artist, living in exile and having been through IRS, can still celebrate territory and language from within. When stories are heard, performed, and contextualized, they create various openings into curriculum, including a particular sense of ethics. For my students, a conversation ensued, focusing on deconstructing stereotypes, as an initiation to exploring racialization and identity in a social science class. Part of this initial conversation with the students aimed at deconstructing representations of Aboriginal and land. The image of Joséphine Bacon as both a "tundra nomad" and a "resilient urban woman" created new readings of her poems. In this sense, can we dream of new readings on reconciliation based on our collective responsibilities? How may we incarnate Reconciliation principles (TRC,

2015), which include “supporting Aboriginal peoples’ cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the reconciliation process” (p. 4), in our everyday practices?

Reading Into the Absence of Bacon in College Curriculum

What can reading into the absence of an Innu author in the Quebec college curriculum teach us about colonization?

Stanley (1999) asks us to “recognize that the language we speak, English (with some help of French), has displaced and silenced the languages of the people that populated the land on which our houses now sit” (p. 36). In this sense, the term silenced narratives refers to denial and unrecognized presences in history, language, land, and identities. Silences can refer to the lasting impacts of the annihilation of territorial rights of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (Chambers, 2012), and to the loss of educational rights to language(s) (Egéa-Kuehne, 2012).

My next whisper describes pedagogical endeavors in this regards. In a context of reconciliation, Simon (2005) mentions our responsibility as educators to frame testimonies about residential schools in a pedagogical manner.

Whisper. “Eka tshituk. Chut.” Silence as Violence

An excerpt from Bacon’s (2009) poem, *Tschissinuatshtakana*

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| <i>Eka tshituk.</i> | <i>Silence.</i> |
| <i>Nikanuenimikaun.</i> | <i>Je suis adoptée.</i> |
| <i>Ninekatshikaun.</i> | <i>Je suis maltraitée.</i> |
| <i>Tshiussan nin.</i> | <i>Je suis orpheline.</i> |
| | Silence. |
| | I am adopted. |
| | I am maltreated. |
| | I am orphaned. (pp. 54-55, translation) |

In this third *whispered* excerpt, lichen is seen in its fragility. Looking at what the verse does not say (Werner’s absences) induces several other possibilities. Werner (2000) remarks, “questioning absence interrupts the taken-for-grantedness of dominant text and allows for richer readings,” including ways to “protect privilege and marginalize opposition” (p. 205). In the residential school system, many Innu-ainum speakers, along with Cree, Inuktitut, Michif, and others were ostracised and deprived of the right to learn in their first language. According to Statistics Canada’s most recent census (2011), Innu/Cree is spoken by 11,335 persons in Quebec. The Canadian Residential School System, in its objective of obliterating Aboriginal culture and language, obliged stolen children to let go of the land. Testimonies of suffering are inherent to the work

undertaken by Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. However, as Simon (2012) points out, listening to testimonies, though necessary, does not guarantee a renewal of ethical relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. The formal and aesthetic operations of works of remembrance hold infinite lessons if learners can bear to make meaning from a traumatic history's difficult content (Simon, 2005, cited in Mishra Tarc, 2011).

Stories of the survival of culture, against all odds, are less present in the main discourse. Josephine Bacon's poetry can be read as a story of resilience, maintaining a strong inner connection to her land and language despite exile and fear. Her connection to the land remains as an inner song; perhaps this is what attracted me to her words. In this context, her work may be referred to as a silenced narrative. It may also be referred to as resilience.

Bacon's poetics of resilience, published in Innu-ainum and French, also echoed in my family. As I approached her at the book launch for a dedication, I found myself saying: "My son does not speak Innu, but I am buying your book for him." In her dedication (see Fig. 2), she included that notion of language, "*ces mots dans ma langue, je te les offrent.*" Indeed, as I came home, I read the book with my son in both languages, playing with words and sounds unknown, and rejoicing in their introduction in our landscape.

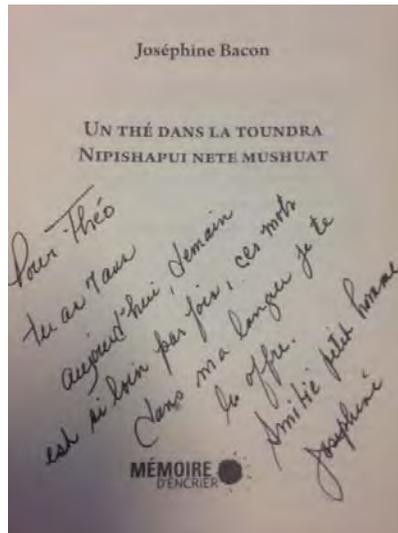


Figure 2. Josephine Bacon's dedication

In Canada, at least, home is that place where the past is continually present, both complicating this moment right now, and giving us and them, children and students, the courage and the confidence to face the future (Chambers, 2006). This is part of why I am engaged in this process, for current and future generations, not as a savior, but as a listener.

Entering deeper, I plunge into the emotional affect of silenced narratives. Here, a poem inspired by silence is contextualized within the historical, linguistic, and physical suffering experienced at the hands of the Indian Residential Schooling system (IRS).

Whispering. Wish. *Nipishui nete Mushuat*

I come back to the texture of lichen. Soft. Taking its shape back. Growing close to the land. Growing slowly, horizontally. Opening of spaces. Land-spaces.

I tune in to absences and losses with regards to Indigenous languages in Canada, and the sense of respect and resilience derived from this tensioned pedagogical space. Taking a distance from voice and authorship of text allows for a different reading of the poem, what it says about experiences of oppression, and how it relates to a tension of distress or trauma felt. In the poem below, a child is silenced and frightened.

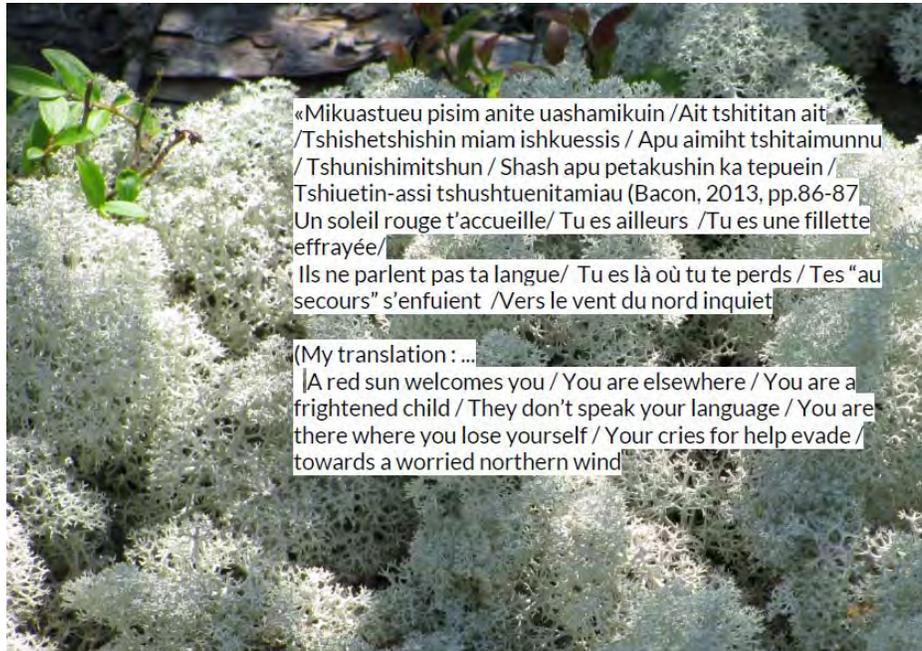


Figure 3. Poem excerpt from Bacon (2013, pp. 86-87). I have juxtaposed this image of the Tundra lichen with Bacon's poem.

As I experienced Bacon's performance of the poem, spoken in Innu-Aïnum, I was struck by a moment where her voice became frail. I cried without knowing what her words were, perhaps because, intuitively, her words echoed in my history. Intercultural linguists Uryu, Steffensen and Kramsch (2014) explore how "the increase in human migration ha[s] catapulted intercultural interaction out of modernity," so that "the words [we] speak are not necessarily [ours] and the memories these words evoke are not necessarily shared" (p. 42). Uryu et al. (2014) suggest that a micro-attention to emotional responses might uncover new information on processes operating at a subconscious level. Their account of linguistics viewed on multiple dimensions, emotional, unconscious, and energetic responses to certain stimuli, provides insights on defining what an ecological perspective means for learning and teaching languages. In their empirical method (filmed video conversations) they deconstruct various representations affecting language, as shown in this example:

Six decades of post-war trauma and cultural accusation and guilt has accumulated into a high-energetic symbol, and on the latter the full energy

of this symbol is released in a short moment, exploding in strong emotional and cultural cascades in the entire dialogical system. (Uryu et al., 2014, p. 53)

How might this apply to our experiences of silenced narratives? May this echo in going beyond the “narcissistic isolation” evoked by Pinar (2006b) when he writes:

Our problem of proximity to the nightmare that is the present, we. . .can encounter the “other,” and in so doing, reconfigure our present, thereby providing passages into the future. (para. 5)

Somehow, this invites quieting a genuine “desire to help” in order to learn to relate. This concern about one's intention is qualified by Buber (2003) as “technical dialogue” (p. 12). In silence, a paradigm shift may occur between observing and on-looking, intention and attention, restlessness and stillness.

Whisper. “Quiet ! Quoi?”

A Poethical Responsibility Transcends

The lichen is gone. Land is stolen. Children are missing. Sisters are still missing. Silenced narratives are political. Actual. I dream of resilience confronted with adversity. I also dream of collective responsibility. I dream of curriculum that does not erase, negate, or drown diversity.

Here, weaving in Buber's (2003) recognition of silence as a fundamental force of transforming our relationships, and our experience of “becoming human” with Werner's (2000) questions on voice and absence in authorship brings perspective to an educator's journey in reading silenced narratives. To repair social relations our attentiveness to an inherent brokenness within, between, and across our shifting selves is required (Mishra Tarc, 2011).



Figure 4. A painting by Diane St-Georges honoring the memory of missing women on unceded Anishnaabe territory. Juxtaposed with Bison Sentinels, monument at First Nations University.

Nous revenons ouvrir le dialogue dont nous rêvons.

Parce que rien ni personne ne peut vivre longtemps étouffé dans le silence.

We come back for the dialogue we envision. Nothing and nobody, can live strangled in silence.

(Natasha Kanapé Fontaine, 2015, p. 5)

In the classroom, this may be compared to how we approach silence as educator? Do we find it intimidating? Helpful? Pedagogical? Perhaps, it is misinterpreted as a lack of interest and engagement on the student's part. However, it has again several layers—some of it relating to how we create spaces for our students to interact, others to how we respect silence as a fundamental space in communication. Buber (2003) describes this as letting go of “monological” (centered on self) dialogue. In my initial teaching experience, when confronted by silence, I felt uncomfortable and responded by focusing on how to escape the moment, creating a restlessness that did not serve the students. In retrospect, these particular moments taught me to suspend judgment, to listen with my eyes. “Chut!” Stand still. Wait. Such could be the teachings of silences, if we tune in.

Whisper. “Echo.”

“What kind of a passport will allow us to cross the borders *within* this country, as well as *beyond* it, to be at home here, as well as, abroad?”

(Cynthia Chambers, 2006)

For Battiste (2010) developing “what Elder Albert Marshall called ‘Two Eyed Seeing’” would

bring a powerful and dynamic contribution to solving issues of racism and Eurocentricism ...through normalizing Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum so that both Indigenous and conventional perspectives and knowledges will be available—not just for Aboriginal peoples, who would be enriched by that effort, but for all peoples. (p. 17)

In the following unpublished poem dedicated to Dr. Stanley Vollant, Bacon evokes a transcendence of imaginary, and real boundaries.

Ma richesse s'appelle

saumon

ma maison s'appelle

caribou

mon feu s'appelle

épinette noire

mon canot s'appelle

boulot

ma robe s'appelle

lichen

ma coiffe s'appelle

aigle

mon chant s'appelle

tambour

moi je m'appelle

humain

my wealth is called

salmon

my house is called

caribou

my fire is called

black spruce

my canoe is called

birch

my dress is called

lichen

my headdress is called

eagle

my song is called

drum

and I am called

human

(Translated by Museum of Human Rights)

In-spirited by the words of scholars like, Ng-A-Fook (2010), one might ask:

How might we provoke an asking of narrative moments, of thinking, of doing, that takes time now to act in response to the ecological things we do, could do just now, and/or put off doing just now? (p. 53)

Indeed, are we as educators attempting to transform our pedagogies, curriculum, and institutions according to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation with regards to our collective responsibility? How may we use the current momentum towards reconciliation in Canada as an exceptional agency to understand how history, identity, languages, and land shape our learning processes?

Whisper. “We”



Figure 5. Poem by Josephine Bacon juxtaposed with photo of Tundra (Bacon, 2013, p. 86-87)

Wang (2004) identifies a “third space” (p. 4.) in the double encounter—alterity in the other and the other in oneself. Wang (2004) explains that in the third space one travels “beyond the current forms of life” (p. 16). The third space opens when the stranger calls one out of oneself, when the stranger inside oneself emerges, enabling one to move away from home toward a destination not yet known (Pinar, 2006b).

If we are to read silenced narratives in post-colonial ways, are we ready to accept the transformation that may occur in this liminal space? In Buber’s (2003) space of genuine dialogue, the subject-object relationship is transformed by presence:

This man is not my object; I have got to do with him. Perhaps I have to accomplish something about him; but perhaps I have only to learn something, and it is only a matter of my “accepting.” (p. 12)

Reading this last verse of Bacon’s book, I relate to silence as comfort and I see its pedagogical potentialities. Exploring the unsaid plays an essential role in shaping relationships, dialogue, and becoming “wide aware” as educators. Buber (2003) notes the powerful incidents of dialogue *occurring* when he says “in its highest moments dialogue ...is completed outside contents, even the most personal, which are or can be communicated” (p. 5).

Investigating silence as communication, he continues:

We may term this way of perception becoming aware. It by no means needs to be a man of whom I become aware. It can be an animal, a plant, a stone. No kind of appearance or event is fundamentally excluded from the series of the things through which from time to time something is said to me. Nothing can refuse to be the vessel for the Word. The limits of the possibility of dialogue are the limits of awareness. (p. 13)

I have attempted to point out challenges, as educator and curriculum theorist in Quebec, in my capacity to inhabit or imagine spaces of liminality with Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. Certain poetic inquiries have provided a space for me to reconsider my relationships to territory and engage in a sense of proximity. Buber (2003) identifies this as letting go of “monological” (centered on self) or “technical” (centered on intentions) dialogue, to enter “genuine dialogue,” characterized by open meeting spaces, and being fully present to relations/relationships.

Silence tunes in to the *irrational* world of intuition, ancestors, feelings, dreams. Despite the sometimes *esoteric connotations* given to silence as a way to hear intuition from the mainstream world of academia, the experience of intuition is part of the human experience. What happens when, as an educator, I “trust [my] organic work which preserves what is worth preserving?” (Buber, 2003, p. 11)

A Tea in the Tundra

Whisper. “Nipishuat nepe Mushuat.”

At ceremonial feasts, why is it important to recognize those who have been invited? One answer is that the act of recognition has been found to be an effective way of negotiating a reality that seems to range from the utter destructiveness at one end to sublime harmony at the other.

E. Richard Atleo (Umeek), (cited in Ralston Saul, 2015, p. 248)

I have enjoyed and suffered silences as a means of creating ways to relate which encompasses all these landscapes, land-escapes, and land-espaces.

Drinking tea in the Tundra, I visualize stillness, quietness that is soothing through the presence of the other. I see Buber’s (2003) “intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them” (p. 39), where, despite our cultural differences, we accept and learn different ways of listening, especially when we are faced with listening to a charged colonial past. (Simon, 2012; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2012; Stanley, 1999). I visualize reconciliation.

I am sitting in the Tundra, with you, as your guest. I am drinking tea, thus being aware of “I”; the tea is hot, sipping slowly. The wind around us claims our silence. Our eyes claim silence. In this moment, “puisque je suis toi”, we are. You are teaching me to stand still. To respect the land. To respect my relations. To respect the past. And re-learn how we can be. Your whisper, «tundra as no boundaries», becomes a wish. Tundra is. We are wide aware. In silence.

I have shared here some whispers of my life writing research, to reflect certain ways of listening. I described pedagogical endeavors around my representations of silence[s] in curriculum. In whispers, I turned and tuned in closer to someone’s secrets; where their echoes need silence. Pause. A different listening.

As I am writing this, and reading over with attention to how I narrated this story, I remember a dream I once had, that I was a spider weaving a web of relationalities. Focusing on the tensions of these relations, I see tiny, invisible threads, which would not exist without their anchors. I see open-spaces. I see fragility and resilience. I strive to

make those threads visible in my pedagogy of silenced narratives and the narratives of silence. The beauty of poetry lies in spaces created by the untold.

My whisper to you, Josephine.

“Tshinashkumitin.”

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Endnote

¹«Après avoir séquestré, déculturé, affamé, infecté, violé et disséminé son peuple, on présente Joséphine Bacon comme « une figure incontournable de la culture autochtone ». Que pense-t-elle de sa popularité? Dira-t-elle qu'on joue à l'Indien, comme l'a écrit Jim Harrison dans *La route du retour*, ou qu'on se fait des *accroires* sur nous-mêmes, sur ce Nous qui, il n'y a pas vingt-cinq ans, lançait des roches aux Mohawks durant la crise d'Oka ?» (Leclerc, 2014, p. 24).

Bush Cree Storytelling Methodology: Northern Stories That Teach, Heal, and Transform

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Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory paper is to introduce key aspects of Bush Cree storytelling methodology. In this essay, I provide a foundation for further articulation using a Cree worldview framework as an umbrella for northern-based storytelling discourse. The underlying current in this paper makes links to Cree stories that teach, heal, and transform.

Keywords: Woodlands Cree; storytelling; methodology

Bush Cree Storytelling Methodology: Northern Stories That Teach, Heal, and Transform

Moon rays flash through dark clouds across a frozen lake. A blanket of snow glistens like a thousand gems. The North is fully alive at this time of the year. Sacred and mysterious ancient voices from the land travel in whispers through air entering dreams and thoughts of storytellers where there is no beginning and no ending. Winter is a time when certain stories are told in northern Bush Cree trapping families. My thoughts travel back in time. I remember shadows of movement on cabin walls, the smell of wood smoke, and the sounds from fire humming the night into being. The stories would begin. Slowly at first, quietly, picking up momentum at times, thought-provoking words unleashed, followed by inaudible whispers, deep sighs, leaving footprints in minds to interpret. Time blurs in unknown story spaces. Words illuminate a colorful tapestry of people, places, and experiences unfolding into the present. Storytelling is a way of passing on knowledge in many cultures around the world (Kroeber, 2004; Kovach, 2010; Smith, 1999). The purpose of this exploratory paper is to introduce key aspects of Bush Cree storytelling methodology.

According to a study done by MacLean and Wason-Ellam (2006), storytelling is one way of “Indigenizing” the curriculum, telling stories that link with local communities. It is important to provide safe avenues for students to share their stories. The ability to express orally or in written form is healing. Sharing stories validates their identity as social beings in relationship with others within a community. As an author of Woodlands Cree heritage, I remember the evening storytelling moments with my mother. I could listen to her for hours. She had her own storytelling demeanor, no doubt from listening and experiencing stories from her own teachers, the Elders and relatives who live and occupy her storied memory. I could see them by the way she expressed her words, touching my psyche, teaching me, and showing me guidance. Colorado (1988) writes about this sense of “collapsed time” in stories that Indigenous people describe as a temporal, spiritual essence, connecting the past with the present:

When my grandmother used to tell me stories, I would close my eyes and I would feel as if I were walking through that time. I could just imagine everything the way that it looked, the tools that people used, what kind of clothing they wore, how the weather felt, what people were feeling; it all came alive to me! It is as if I was right there at the time. (p. 55)

Cree storytellers have a unique way of using voice, face, and body movements to keep listeners grounded and connected to story. Stories are lived and some are well thought out before they are told. Storylines are formatted with clearly articulated thoughts, links, and impressions. Traditional Cree stories of *Wishâkêchâk*, *Witîgô*, and *Mîmîkwîsîwâk* (Cree mythical beings) are intriguing because they allow one to think deeply while connecting with hidden messages of Cree origins, worldview, and ways of knowing. Cree stories are used to teach history, values, natural laws, and life skills. The following Cree values can be found in oral stories and are used to guide how we think, how we relate to one another, and how to take care of one’s self, others, and the natural world:¹

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Ayâmîhîwâtôsowin</i> | Spirituality |
| <i>Tâpowâkêthîtamowin</i> | Faith/Truth |
| <i>Kîsêwâtîsowin</i> | Love |
| <i>Wîyâtîkwêthîmowin</i> | Happiness |
| <i>Pîkîsowin</i> | Cleanliness |
| <i>Kîstêthîtamowin</i> | Respect |
| <i>Nânâhîtamowin</i> | Obedience |
| <i>Tâpahtêthîmowin</i> | Humility |
| <i>Nânâskômôwîn</i> | Thankfulness |
| <i>Wâhkôhtôwîn</i> | Kinship/Relations |
| <i>Opîkîyâsôwîn</i> | Child rearing |
| <i>Wîchîtôwîn</i> | Helping/Sharing |
| <i>Sôkâtîsôwîn</i> | Strength |
| <i>Kânâwêthîmîsôwîn</i> | Protection |
| <i>Iyîtâthîhtâmôwîn</i> | Hope |
| <i>Kîskînôtâhsôwîn</i> | Guiding one's self |
| <i>Sîtôskâtôwîn</i> | Unity |
| <i>Sîhtwêthîmôwîn</i> | Seal |

There are other Cree words depending on community, region, and language dialect (Wolvengrey, 2001).

The underlying teachings and lessons within traditional Cree stories can be used to dialogue about contemporary issues and events. Different stories intermingle and blur with contemporary lives and events of people and places. The past connects, verifies, and legitimates other stories in the present, setting in motion an essence of relevance, continuity, and knowledge transmission with core lessons intact. The act of storytelling fosters reciprocal engagement, requiring active listening and sharing. A particular story can be told repeatedly with different meanings and interpretations each time and sometimes teachings reveal themselves years later. Storytellers have unique ways of sharing: using vocal inflections, verbal skills, content omissions, additions, shifts in events, and change in characters (Kroeber, 2004). The voices of ancestors within stories come alive through the energy of the words expressed, metaphors, analogies, and sounds from the land.

Many Cree stories are tied to the northern landscape where you can actually hear sounds from nature within the language. Cree scholar Neal McLeod (2007) states, “Cree collective memory is anchored in places and landscape. Various place-names within Cree narrative form the basis for a shorthand encoding of experience, of various relationships, and the articulation of core Cree values and worldviews” (p. 19). The Cree have had a long period of cultural and linguistic development within particular regions that give rise to different Cree language dialects. The Woodlands Cree (“th” dialect) live in northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the Plains Cree (“y” dialect) to the south, the Swampy Cree (“n” dialect) in the middle of northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and the Moose, Attikamek, and East Cree (“r” dialect) in Ontario. According to one theory, the Woodlands Cree moved to their present territories at least four thousand years prior to European contact (Siggens, 2005; Smith, 1987). David Meyer (1987) provides a summary of archeological evidence known as the Selkirk composite and concludes Cree occupation of northern Manitoba can be traced back to the 1200s (c.f. Brightman, 2002, p. 7). However, more recent arrowhead discoveries in Manitoba and Saskatchewan known as the Oxbow complex suggests the Cree were hunting and trapping in the North as far back as 2500 BC (Siggens, 2005).

The Woodlands Cree are originally an oral literate Algonquian language group associated with the Montagnais, Naskapi, Ojibwe, Attikamek, and Beothuk peoples. The term “Cree” originates from the French word *Kiristino*, which is an Ojibwa name for a division of Cree-speaking people south of James Bay in the mid-17th century (Brightman, 2002). Eventually the term transformed into *Kri* and then the current term Cree. The Cree are the largest and most widespread Indigenous group in Canada. They occupy land in the northern boreal forest parts of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. They also live in cities, towns, and villages across the country. According to the 1996 Canadian census, 76,475 people identified the Cree language as their mother tongue (Steckley & Cummins, 2001). In northern Saskatchewan, we identify ourselves as Rock Cree people or *Nihithawak* who traditionally lived along the Churchill River system and its tributaries.

The Cree language is an inseparable part of the *Nihithaway Pimitasiwin* (Cree way of life). The language reinforces how we see the world and our place in it (Wilson, 2008). Our Cree worldview provides a framework for our beliefs, values, experiences, and knowledge system (Michell, 2005). Cree words used in stories contain teachings. Some stories are considered sacred, such as those shared in ceremonies. Cajete (1994) states the language is sacred because “...the spoken or sung word expressed the spirit and breath of life of the speaker” (p. 33). Language is powered with energies and can move people in different ways. Language is used to express human thought. The words expressed carry a responsibility. Words are known to soothe, instruct, and bring happiness. Words can be used to heal the wounded. Sharing stories and experiences gives voice to the lost and silent. Stories create a community of learners who respect each other’s voice. On the contrary, words can also destroy and bring harm if used inappropriately. The use of words through stories must be learned and applied with great respect for they are “connected to the land” and the “four cardinal directions” (Cajete, 1994, p. 53). Rules of sharing are important in storytelling circles. In order to understand Cree language and stories, one has to speak, listen, observe, and be immersed in Cree way of life. Learning the language is not just about memorizing words, phrases, and sentences, although this is a good start; the language must be lived, spoken, and illuminated through stories. Access to Cree knowledge of the natural world requires sustained contact and relationship with the land under

the guidance of *Khîtyâk* (Elders) and traditional land users who speak the language in all of its facets (Michell, 2011).

Cree storytelling is one way of passing on knowledge. Listening to stories allows people to engage in deep thinking processes such as critical reflection, predicting, relating, and imagining. We learn by relating the "known to the unknown" as we make sense of the story using previous knowledge and experiences (MacLean & Wason-Ellam, 2006). *Khîtyâk* often use stories when providing guidance. A tone of compassion and humility are key aspects of sharing. When Cree people reflect and share stories about their culture and traditions, they convey the spiritual connections they feel to the places from which they come through their language. The stories give voice to their communities and of spirit that is manifested in the land. Stories shed light on the complexity of Cree thought and our northern land-based identity. In a study by Friesen and Orr (1993), stories shared by teachers of First Nations ancestry in an Aboriginal focused teacher education program in northern Saskatchewan revealed they learned traditional knowledge from their ancestral connection to the land. When they talk about these special places in their languages, they connect their spirit to them through their words, thoughts, and feelings. According to Cajete (1994), "There are key words, phrases, and metaphors that act as signposts to the way we think about the world and ourselves" (p. 45).

There are different types of Cree stories and different types of storytellers. Today, storytellers use different mediums such as technology, videos, music, art, drama, comedy, poetry, painting, writing, photos, plays, puppetry, dancing, drumming, and singing. Storytelling can be used to reinforce mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional development depending on the types of activities planned. Some Cree stories are private and can only be shared by those given that responsibility. There are certain stories that must remain oral. Quite often meaning is lost in translation to the English language. Brightman (2007) identifies two types of stories among the Woodlands Cree: *achimowina* (regular stories) and *achithookiwina* (traditional stories). The northern Cree have their own creation story from which all other traditional stories flow. These stories contain deep philosophical principles that are linked to Cree identity. It is these stories that we must turn to in order to heal from colonization and impacts of residential schools. *Wisakechak*, the Cree trickster/transformer crosses physical and spiritual boundaries to teach us life lessons. *Wisakechak* teaches us to embrace ambivalence, change, and transformation as a necessary part of survival. Showing respect and helping others are relational values rooted in our Cree creation story. It was *Wisakechak* with the help of Muskrat who restored the earth after diving into the depths of the lake to grab soil. In this story, everyone makes an attempt and is ready to make a sacrifice. Finally, Muskrat takes the challenge despite the risks involved. The story evokes compassion for others, putting aside individual comforts for the sake of the collective. In our Cree belief system, animals give up their lives for the hunter and thus a deep respect is held for the natural world. Proper protocols are used to honor the sacredness of life. Offerings are made that remind us of the Cree ethic of reciprocity.

Many Cree trappers and hunters are storytellers, and have an intimate knowledge of the land, lakes, and river systems. Their stories contain valuable knowledge of the environment and sustainable ways of living and being. Stories about traditional land use activities are an excellent way of bridging Western science and Cree ways of knowing (Aikenhead & Michell, 2011; Michell, 2012; Michell, 2013). I remember sitting and listening to trappers when they visited our camp. Complex topics included social, historical, economic, and political issues. Some trappers and hunters use specific Cree words, striking oral phrases, and body nuances to express

underlying concepts so that people "remember." Lessons and stories on bush etiquette are a matter of survival. Berry picking excursions are times when bear stories are shared so that children do not wander too far away from the group. Storytellers use voice tones, singing, clapping, and sounds of animals, birds, wind, and other aspects of the natural world. A skillful storyteller is one who can work with a variety of memory anchors. The more vivid the story, the more easy it is to retain certain pieces of information. The listener looks for patterns of meaning. Some hunters filter humor into storytelling. *Laughter is good medicine*. It brings healing and it breathes life into stories. Depending on the age of listeners, naughty stories are always shared with sensitivity. The more seasoned elderly hunters use language in a "tone of voice" that acts as an overall guide on how we share stories in a respectful way. In our Cree belief system, the spiritual breath of *Kitchi Munto* filters through our words and indeed through the entire circularity of life.

In conclusion, many Bush Cree stories are open-ended, allowing for a diversity of possible meanings with no beginning and no ending. *Khîtyâk* teach us humility by disclaiming individual authorship of stories (Michell, 2011). They often say they heard the story from someone else, thereby expunging subjectivity. Many Cree stories are re-workings, refinements, and revisions that result in a sharpness of words and sentences to an increasingly complex meaningfulness. In this paper, I have outlined essential aspects of storytelling within Bush Cree culture. The content is incomplete in order to invite critique and a starting base for others who wish to expand on Cree storytelling discourse. It is through story that our experiences and knowledge of the northern landscape can be shared, taught, and passed on. The energy of stories enters and leaves our inner consciousness and outward into the minds of others in a relational way. *Ekosi!*

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A Review of *There is No Need to Talk About This: Poetic Inquiry from the Art Therapy Studio*, by Karen O. Wallace

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In her book *There is No Need to Talk About This: Poetic Inquiry from the Art Therapy Studio*, Karen Wallace seeks to communicate and express the “joys of living and working” (p. 125) as an art therapist who engages with clients to facilitate change through a creative process of art making. Her contemplations on her work, creatively expressed in this collection of narrative poetry, reveal her dedication to, and respect and care for, clients as they work to transform feelings of pain and loss into healing, into re-imagined, re-invented, and re-envisioned selves and worlds. Her poems are composites, “small vignettes” about her work as an art therapist and her clients explorations towards personal healing and wholeness.

Wallace views her role as an art therapist as a witness, an observer, one who, in her words, “know[s] and understand[s] that process” of change; in this role, she validates the struggles involved for clients in the process of creating something new and desired in their lives. Wallace describes her role as *holding space*, exploring without judgment and without attempting to fix problems, coming alongside her clients as they courageously venture out on heroic journeys to isolated inner locations, reclaiming and accepting the darkness in their lives; darkness, “which is really only the flip side” (p. 126) of light, she says. Through, “interrupting, guiding, being mindful, present with the birth of change” (p. xv), Wallace seeks to “nurture and make visible an often invisible and very charged process” (p. xv). She searches out, and creates, moments and spaces between the darkness, with the hope that in momentary and spatial relief, in the creative liminal spaces, new ideas, hopes, and changes will be born. Through her poems, readers see Wallace searching intently for the unspoken languages of symbols, images, creations, and mythologies to learn the languagess of her clients, and so, for the space of an hour, join with them in their isolated places, to dialogue there, to confirm, understand, reinforce, and validate the feelings, fears, and needs of clients.

In her art therapy practice, the change process is facilitated by art making; as clients become “engaged emotionally, mentally, and intuitively in art making, they are being mindful,” connecting and becoming “available to the moment” (p. 101). The images created in art often convey thoughts and feelings that are not easily communicated through words. The inability to express pain and loss in ways that are understood creates isolation. To help alleviate the isolation of unexpressed thoughts, memories, and emotions, Wallace uses her expertise in archetypal, narrative, mythological, and symbolic meaning making, her understanding of forms, and the art making process, along with a combination of therapy techniques, to engage with clients dealing with a range of issues. Her integrative approach generally helps to create a bridge of understanding between herself and her clients. The challenge of understanding is especially expressed in her poem, “Secret Bridges,” where she writes, “These are not landmarks I know./ What are the lines, shapes, and colours I can’t see?/ Teach me this language” (p. 40).

The book is organized into two groups: poems from art therapy and poems from art therapy groups. In Chapter 1, “What is Art Therapy?” Wallace begins by explaining the aims of art therapy, and attends to points of resistance, such as who can do art. “It is not about doing ‘good’ art, as judgement is irrelevant. All that matters is whether it gives the client a new

perspective, helps to get in touch with feelings and or make changes” (p. 1). Trusting the process is a major theme throughout her work; one does not always understand how change happens, but one can trust in the creative process to effect change. The poetry in Chapters 2 to 7 explores a range of issues worked through in art therapy: trauma, dissociation, depression, autism, addiction, and grief. Each chapter begins with an explanation about the process involved in working through the selected issue, and introduces the included poems. Chapters 9 through 15 offer reflections on what occurs through art therapy groups. Chapter 16 explores the power of transformation in art therapy. Through art therapy, “We learn to read ourselves and find what we need to heal” (p. 117). Wallace closes with thoughts about her poems, the process work, and her hopes for the poems she has included in this collection: “My hope is that these poems express change” (p. 125).

The work is crafted for an audience that ranges from educators, teacher educators, and educational psychologists to social workers—anyone in a position of caring for others, especially young people and early childhood educators. Educators and teacher educators can benefit from reading these poems, if for no other reason than to gain sensitivity and patience in working with students. Further, because a major aspect of teaching is about observing and understanding one’s students and the ability to speak the “languages” of one’s students, this book is a must-read because it inspires and teaches readers to begin to watch for, and learn from, the nonverbal communications expressed by students. Behaviours and issues occur in classrooms, and educators who have the desire to hold space with their students and to gain understanding of their students so they can effectively engage with them will want to read this book. Wallace’s poems demonstrate Nodding’s (1984) ethic of care, of being “totally and nonselectively present to the student” (p. 180).

With only 127 pages, the book is a quick but intense read. The heights and lows of holding space with others are touchingly expressed, and may even be the beginning of a transformation in readers.

References

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