

Welcoming the Other: Understanding the Responsibility of Educators

by

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Education

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University of Victoria

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Abstract

This research brings the thought of Emmanuel Levinas into play in attempting to understand the responsibility of a group of educators of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage working amidst the tensions of ethno-cultural difference in an inner city public high school in Western Canada. The concept of ‘welcoming’, that is born in the words of Levinas, and that I further fashion into an interpretation framework while relying on the writings of Jacques Derrida and Sharon Todd, is employed in articulating this research. The research involves exploring: if, how and to what extent the responsibility of these educators might be understood as a welcoming of the Other and; if, how and to what extent the notion of welcoming itself, and particularly the thought of Levinas, might be potentially helpful in understanding the responsibility of educators?

This study articulates a philosophical hermeneutic that is an interpretation of participants’ stories developed through a close examination of Levinas’ philosophy aided by insight from Derrida, Todd and other writers. This research articulates how educators revise and reenact their responsibility wherein their success and that of their students involves the establishment of a non-coercive relationship educators believe is fundamental and crucial to any other form of success their schooling context. This study offers examples and insight concerning how educators are interrupted by the difference of others; how educators realize their vulnerability to others and respond to others where their relationships with others change from merely being-with others to a “being-for” the Other; how educators negotiate the difficult tension of being an hôte or a guest in one’s own situation and; how educators receive the gift of learning from the Other or learn

what their responsibility demands of them as they seek to serve others in amidst ethno-cultural difference.

This research is helpful in offering an alternate way to approach how educators' understand and enact their responsibility amidst ethno-cultural difference and does this by offering an atypical consideration of what is ethical, where responsibility is reconceived as a welcoming of the Other. In this pursuit insight is offered into the helpfulness and use of Levinas' philosophy with the suggestion that his writings remain challenging to decipher as well to apply, offering few if any specific guides for action. Despite this, I suggest that Levinas' philosophy when refashioned as welcoming, relying on scholars such as Derrida and Todd, can be helpful in prompting us as educators to think differently about our responsibility and therefore to perhaps act differently. In this capacity this study is potentially helpful to educators in assuring them that what is ethical is not necessarily defined within the confines of convention, legal codes and rules nor is what is ethical solely determined within such confines, but rather in our attentiveness to others and our attentiveness to our attentiveness, where we realize the welcoming nature of responsibility and what is actually demanded of us in being responsible to the Other.

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Acknowledgments

My gratitude to the Regina Public School Board for allowing me to conduct my research and in providing me with a study leave while I was in their employment.

I would like to thank my participants who said, “Yes!” when I asked for help in trying to understand what might be involved with their school experience. You are responsibility embodied, willing, vulnerable, accommodating, and bring the gift of learning.

My thanks to all members of the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan and particularly those in my department and the support staff for their kind patience and emotional support.

While at the University of Victoria my coursework with Dr. Antoinette Oberg was pivotal in shaping my understanding of the research I would pursue. My heartfelt thanks to you Antoinette.

I offer my very heart felt thanks to my committee members, Dr. Larry Yore, Dr. Kathy Sanford, Dr. Tim Hopper and Dr. David Blades. You have aided me so helpfully as I made slow but sure progress during the formulation, development and writing of this dissertation. That you were willing to welcome me, to encourage me, and to offer me your insight and wisdom without reservation speaks to just what wonderful people you are and how fortunate I have been to work with you.

Larry, thank you for asking “so what?” and continuing to ask that question, for this propelled my research in a direction that I know is now more meaningful and potentially helpful to others. Your questions and comments have interrupted me in a wonderful way and that has helped me find my way.

Kathy, I have greatly appreciated your support, whether through the comments and conversation you have provided me to improve my academic efforts or through the kind hospitality that you frequently offered to my family and myself. When I needed a place to come to finish what I had started you did not hesitate to offer your help. Having friends who believe in what you are doing, but more importantly are for-you, is a great gift.

Tim, your directness and insight concerning educational matters and what was important about my research, and how I might proceed helped me immensely. Your enthusiasm, optimism and insightful perspective arrived on my emotional shores at sorely needed times and for these gifts, that come so naturally to you and you share so graciously, I am very grateful.

David, we have journeyed long together. You provided for my well being and my families' well being in ways that are immeasurable and continue still. You did not turn away from me, but responded to the face of the Other with faith, support, and belief. I "commanded you to command me", as Levinas said, and you did command me. You provided me with challenges that were often not easy but were always well measured and ensured my intellectual growth. You provided me with questions that did not always have clear answers but led me to deeper understandings, where you continually and without fail were truly "for-me", seeking an outcome in my best interest. I find it hard to convey in words my very deep appreciation and sense of gratitude for what you have done for me and my family in supervising and supporting me and allowing other opportunities to emerge. You are a masterful educator, a wise philosopher and a wonderfully joyful and responsible human being, who brings the gift of learning. I am privileged to call you friend. My deepest thank you to you David and much love.

Through out this venture my family has been patiently supportive. My daughters Rachel, Meghan and Alexandra and my son Jared have all shared in the demands placed upon them as I sought to complete this research and writing. Thank you my dearest children for persevering with me and for just being you.

My very deep thanks also go to my in-laws, Ray and Christine Reyda, who supported Siobhan and myself in various ways, the least of which was financial and logistical. Without your support I would not have completed this work.

What can one say to a spouse who faithfully supports and encourages the "striving" of their partner in pursuing doctoral work? Such people endure the emotional highs and lows as their partner does research work and attends classes and anguishes over what has been done and what still remains. Such individuals often work to support their family as their partner studies, studies that often mean fore-going financial and employment security and missing moments they would otherwise share. This research is an outcome I share in the fullest sense with my wife Siobhan for without the loving commitment of this wonderful person I would not have completed this work. My dearest Siobhan, thank you for your trust, your patience, and your belief in me.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This research concerns ways that educators understand their responsibility with/in the tension of ethno-cultural difference and what ideas or philosophical stances may help us in this pursuit. I begin this study by establishing the necessity of examining the emerging reality of cultural diversity in Canadian education, in particular the tension that pertains to people of First Nations and Métis heritage who sometimes experience poverty in an urban context. A discussion follows concerning difficulties resulting from more programmatic or prescriptive approaches educators may assume in seeking to be responsible while negotiating situations of ethno-cultural difference. Emerging from this discussion is a description of one school setting as an example where educators seemed to experience success in aiding students and their families. In relating this context I describe the experience of educators of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal heritage working within an inner city public high school in Western Canada. These educators, who were previously my colleagues, served students, students' families and an ethno-cultural community that were predominantly of First Nation or Métis heritage and who often had a long association with poverty. There seemed to be a form of success with these educators that emerged in part from educators' welcoming of others and this welcoming appeared pedagogical in nature.

As these educators welcomed others they seemed to renew their understanding of responsibility, to learn again or perhaps for the first time, something of the nature of responsibility and what this may mean for them. This renewal seemed to involve change not only to the pragmatics of their instructional practice and school organization but in how they understood themselves, others and the nature and importance of their

relationship with others. Like my experience, theirs appeared to involve in some manner an interruption of one's solidarity and sameness of self by the difference embodied in others and a vulnerable response to the difference of others where one's beliefs, values and actions come into question. Among these educators, as with myself, there seemed a struggle to accommodate the difference we encountered with others, to find a place for others, to be hospitable to others, not only in the practical terms of schooling but in the depths of our sense of self and place. Through such interruption, vulnerability and hospitality I wondered if the encounter with others were moments where others taught us our responsibility, where we learned responsibility from the difference of others.

In attempting to understand the experience of these educators as well as my own I entered into an exploration and examination of the writings of Emmanuel Levinas (1961; 1981; 1985), a philosopher who engages concepts such as interruption and vulnerability most directly. Therefore, the work of Levinas became important in a consideration of how educators might understand their responsibility. In relying upon Levinas to fashion an understanding of these educators' responsibility I brought together and outlined pertinent aspects of Levinas' writings and other philosophers such as Derrida (1978; 1999; 2002), Todd (2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2003c; 2006; 2007) and Bauman (1993; 1995), who write extensively about Levinas. Drawing upon these sources I re-fashioned the notion of welcoming to aid me understanding responsibility amidst ethno-cultural difference.

This reveals the two general thrusts of this research. The first involves exploring if, how and to what extent the responsibility of these educators might be understood as a welcoming of the Other? The second attempts to determine if, how and to what extent the

notion of welcoming itself, and particularly the thought of Levinas are potentially helpful in understanding the responsibility of educators?

The Need for Understanding Responsibility

With the increasingly diverse multicultural reality of Canadian society, attention to issues concerning teaching and learning in the context and tensions of ethno-cultural difference are becoming increasingly important (Aikenhead, 2006; Blades, Johnston, & Simmt, 2000; Labelle & Ward, 1994). Accompanying such concerns are questions and discussion pertaining to how educators might act in a manner responsible to diversity and alternate epistemologies (Villegas & Luca, 2002). Such questions address how educators involve themselves responsibly with others, where there exists the educational demand for students “to become something more than themselves” (Britzman, 1998, p. 10); a ‘something’ often envisioned by others rather than the individuals involved, whether student or educator. This responsibility involves safeguarding the uniqueness of the subject where individuals are seen not only as a “particular instance of something more general” (Biesta, 2003), for example, but also approached as the embodiment of the beliefs and values of a singular ethno-cultural group. In seeking a more responsible pedagogy educators hope perhaps, as Todd (2001) notes, “that people can think differently, can change the way they relate to each other, and can form new understandings of themselves and the world that makes possible the very act of teaching and learning” (p. 435).

Discussion concerning how such a pedagogy is enacted may be found when encountering writings about communities of difference (Shields, 2001, 2003, 2004; Shields & Seltzer, 1997), post-traditional educational communities (Ling, Burman, & Cooper, 2002) and specific cultural epistemologies (Berg, 1998; Berry, 1986; Bowers, 1995; Cajete, 1994). In such contexts the interplay of different ethno-cultural expectations and ways of understanding often leave educators grappling with how they

are to respond to others, and how they might determine a proper course of action which is both respectful and supportive to individuals and ethno-cultural groups. The tensions, challenges and questions encountered by educators appear interwoven with the activities educators undertake, the nature of educators' relationships with others, and the decisions educators make. In turn such activities, relationships and decisions are likely not divorced from educators' beliefs, values and sense of identity (Thomashow, 1995).

Given this involvement, understanding what occurs with educators and how they are in relation to others seems a crucial aspect to understanding any contemporary educational setting where ethno-cultural difference exists. This need for understanding appears equally, if not more pressing, in educational contexts involving those of First Nation and Métis heritage in urban settings (Silver, Mallet, Green, & Simard, 2002; Tymchak, 2001). Whether of Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal heritage, educators come together in these educational settings for the purpose of educating children. They must find ways to do so amidst the tensions of difference. In such searching, educators face both questions concerning how they understand their responsibility, as well as the ethicality of enacting that responsibility.

The need to understand aspects of such responsibility seem evident when one considers the increasing body of literature produced by academicians and educational practitioners that concerns improving the educational experience of First Nation and Métis learners. Such literature illustrates the pressing and urgent nature of understanding and engaging approaches, materials, programs and pedagogy that are conducive, respectful and enhancing to individuals and cultural groups of Aboriginal heritage. This discourse often focuses on past circumstance (Bopp, Bopp, & Lane, 1984), identification

and remediation of social problems (Battiste & Barman, 1995) and recently more elaborations of cultural epistemologies aligned with First Nation and Métis beliefs and values (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Cajete, 2000a, 2000b; Hampton, 1995).

Such literature characteristically alerts educators and the public to the need to ground education involving youth of Aboriginal heritage in appropriate ethno-cultural perspectives and practices, while simultaneously preparing students to engage mainstream Western culture. There seems tension and confusion in this “intercultural play” (Brown, 2003) for educators and others, especially when such intercultural play is conceived in terms of borders or boundaries (Aikenhead, 1996; Giroux, 1992), or where, for example, epistemological and cultural knowledge and the right to use such knowledge is claimed by a particular cultural group (Brown, 2003; Kynoch, 2001). Tension is found, for example, concerning who may be eligible to teach those of specific cultural affiliations, what epistemological assumptions might or should undergird curricula shared across differing ethno-cultural groups, and how the structure of schooling might exist in a specific context (Curry & Tymchak, 2003).

In response to such tensions, well-intentioned programs, curricula, and methods seek to aid particular groups in establishing, developing and enhancing particular epistemological and cultural realities; for example, Aikenhead’s curriculum work in the area of science education (Aikenhead, 1996). These efforts are warranted, however, one might ask to what extent educators should be cautious concerning the creation and employment of programs or curricula that rely heavily on lists or prescriptions for guidance or perhaps do not examine closely who is speaking, what they are saying, and

how it is said (Warner, 2006), where there may reside the possibility of looking past one's responsibility to individuals in efforts to be responsible to categories of persons.

My experience personalized many of the concerns outlined above. Often I questioned my status as a cultural and educational community insider or outsider—an uncertainty involving concerns about the suitability of myself as a non-Aboriginal educator teaching those of Aboriginal heritage. This uncertainty involved a sense of unease concerning the suitability of mainstream education's instructional approaches and curricula in meeting the needs of students of Aboriginal heritage, their families and the cultural communities. At moments there existed confusion and uncertainty regarding claims pertaining to what was Indigenous or Aboriginal, what such claims meant for how I interacted with others and for what I needed to teach and how I was to teach in a manner that best served students and their families. Through self-reflection and my observations of other educators with whom I worked I began to wonder if we shared common concerns and questions regarding the suitability of our actions, beliefs and values in relation to responsibility. This left me interested in understanding what others' understandings of responsibility and ethicality might involve and what may be a meaningful way to make sense of responsibility in an educational context.

I continued to wonder whether changes to programs, curricula and instruction alone can address the need for deep fundamental change in how educators involve themselves in affirming and enhancing other ethno-cultural epistemologies or in understanding their responsibility. Will adherence to structure and protocol effect intended changes in programs and curricula that bring about deep changes in people and organizations? Are there perhaps other fundamental concerns, which educators might

also attend to while negotiating with/in the tensions of cultural difference? Are there ways of understanding or being where educators become expressions of ethicality (Todd, 2006); ways which affirm and support the difference, freedom and epistemological leanings of both individuals and cultural groups?

Before proceeding to discuss the possibility of such embodied ways of knowing and acting which emerge in this study, I offer a brief caution concerning what may lie hidden alongside or in the shadows of program, curricula and instruction. These are shadows cast perhaps by a reliance on more instrumental, technical or behaviouristic approaches to education. The shadows may hide from our view the necessity of fully coming to grips with the poignancy and need for educators' attentiveness and response to the very real presence and difference of others (Bogert-O'Brien, 2000) that Levinas suggests is the call of the Other (1981). Perhaps this call is where a transformation in our understanding of responsibility takes place and we come to view others and our responsibility to them differently.

The Difficulty in Understandings of Responsibility

There is little argument against the need for culturally sensitive programming and curricula undertakings in which people learn while acknowledging and affirming alternate cultural epistemologies while they fulfill the demands of contemporary conventional Western education. Perhaps not surprisingly, educators, when in the full glare of cultural difference, rely on programs, curricula and instructional method to help find their way with/in the tension of cultural difference. Such effort is needed. Educators make efforts trusting in the efficacy and utility of such undertakings to help guide them.

They attempt to bring light to their situations hoping for illumination and to see a way for possible passage through the difficulties found with/in the tensions of cultural difference.

However, what might be less clear is how such learning, acknowledgement and affirmation may emerge in any fullness if educators, in relying on such programming, curricula and instruction, are not attending to changes in their understanding that may be required regarding their own beliefs, values and identity in fulfilling their pedagogical responsibilities—in effect bringing to light what may be asked of them as they engage with people amidst cultural difference in the context of a Westernized educational system that is highly scripted, prescriptive and technical in nature (Bowers, 1997, 2003; Bowers & Flinders, 1990; Orr, 1992).

To be concerned with one's involvement with others amidst cultural difference is to be concerned with human relationship. If one is concerned with human relationship, then one is concerned as an educator with their responsibility to others and the ethicality of their decisions. But what may hamper the development and enactment of responsibility, and where can we position ourselves in understanding how we might act properly to others?

There seems a danger residing in the shadows of even the best programming, curricula and instruction where there is often a singular focus on success defined as academic achievement. A shadow perhaps cast by a belief in the “rule-governed procedures of fixed techniques” (Caputo, 1987,p. 226) where, if only the correct approach or method is engaged, success will follow. This singular focus understands even difficulties in human relationship as “technical problems for which an appropriate technology of behavior is required” (Caputo, 1987,p. 233). Such instrumentalist or

technical orientations towards human experience are not without utility. If writers such as Todd (2001) and Jardine (1992; 1998) are to be believed, there is perhaps a shadow cast that may hide from us the need to keep open the question of human meaning and action that arises when we are face to face with another person. Standing in such shadows, perhaps overlooked by educators who are dealing with the pressing matters of programs, curricula and instruction, is the very real and unique presence and difference of other human beings (Bogert-O'Brien, 2000). These are people, if we believe Levinas (1998), to whom we are entirely and endlessly responsible and who ultimately defy any attempt at manipulation and prescription where we are seeking in Todd's estimation a pedagogically nonviolent or non-coercive relationship (Todd, 2001).

While our responsibility to others may involve technical approaches, educators like Lesko and Bloom (1998) sense a danger looming in the shadows of more technical views of education, providing examples of the difficulty a naïve reliance on “positivist” approaches may entail. A difficulty, they argue, that often “invokes and supports oppositional structures of knowing crucial to the fashioning of ‘othering’ discourses of racism, sexism, classism, anti-Semitism and homophobia—those very same discourses we seek to undermine” (Lesko & Bloom, 1998, p. 377). Or, as Säfström suggests, where educators stay on the “safe side of knowledge...in which the subjects involved in the process of teaching are subordinated to the rationality inscribed in knowing the other...the student is the other one must know something ‘about’ in order to ‘do’ something with him/her...reduced to a cluster of more or less developed concepts, to an ‘it’ that is not yet fully human” (Säfström, 2003, p. 22). This need to do “something with him/her” is singularly defined in terms of academic achievement, rigour and

accountability as if these alone count for success in educational settings. However, in encountering this “not yet fully human” who we may approach as a “cluster of more or less developed concepts”, an “it”, do we forget we are in conversations with people, whose understanding and embodiment of success and a need for learning demand an ethical response, a response that transforms our understandings of ourselves as educators and our responsibility?

One might ask if the prescriptive ‘othering’ Säfström discusses, emerges paradoxically in programming, curriculum and instructional attempts, attempts that at their roots are efforts to act responsibly to individuals, families, communities, and to the larger society. These are perhaps moments where the interplay of culture is considered in terms of crossing cultural borders or boundaries (Aikenhead, 1996; Giroux, 1992) or through outlines of epistemological orientations specific to particular cultural groups (Cajete, 1994, 2000a, 2000b; Warner, 2006). In these moments as educators we act on assumptions concerning the stability of groupings, themes and categories that are distinguishable, generic, perhaps timeless and unchanging, that are available for consideration and manipulation regarding programs, curricula and instruction. Despite the contestability of such groupings (Haraway, 1989; Kumashiro, 2000; Mukhopadhyay & Henze, 2003) and what seems the inherent dualistic nature of such thinking (Plumwood, 1993), educators acting with good intention delineate groups and factors crucial to educational situations and create programs, alter curriculum and change instructional practice relying on the veracity of the themes, categories and groupings they envision. They intend to address issues of prejudice and marginalization but perhaps unknowingly cast a shadow created by their attempts. This overshadowing of the very

real presence and the difference of others perhaps undermines the good intentions of respecting and acting upon such categorizations as Aboriginal or White.

Such identification and labeling, particularly concerning ethno-cultural designations, gives me pause. I immediately consider such boundaries and borders with their themes, groups and categories, in the context of my relationship with my brother of Cree ancestry who has been my brother from infancy. For my part, our relationship does not seem to fit neatly within boundaries and borders. Tensions and realities exist in our relationship that seem to violate and rupture borders of personal and ethno-cultural identity, altering their potency even as difference remains. His very real presence is one of unknowability wherein his difference seems to overflow any constriction I may attempt to put upon him, even as he and I call each other brother. We rely on our common but differently understood experience, even as we share a mother, a father and a family. He seems “not a mere object to be subsumed under one of my categories and given a place in my world” (Levinas, 1961, p. 13). If this is so, neither is he perhaps any other individual or groups’ object for such categorization despite other peoples’ claims upon him. The social realities of political and ethno-cultural categorization at times leave me cautious and wary as they reflect on my relationship with my brother.

This constitutes part of my wariness concerning borders and boundaries, even as I also rely upon them, and this stays with me as I consider my experience and relationships with colleagues and students who have complex, sophisticated and multifaceted identities, experiences and lives. What causes such wariness seems not the existence of difference nor attempts to affirm and support ethno-cultural difference through programming, curricula and instructional practice, but the ways educational practitioners

and researchers may construe difference. By the structure of schooling, programming, curricula and instruction, at times there is the risk of losing sight of the very real presence and difference of others, the uniqueness of individuals and their situation, and what this implies concerning a person's responsibility to others. Like some philosophers I am in agreement that the abundance of difference, the incompleteness and tentativeness of categories and the difficulty with assuming that categories are consistently uniform, generic, reliable and applicable, are reasons to be cautious of approaches which rely on such formulations and assumptions (E. Fraser & Lacy, 1993; N. Fraser, 1997).

Although writers such as Mukhopadhyay and Henze (2003) suggest that categories in themselves may be neither good nor bad, most likely what is done with such categories and the ways in which such categories are conceived can be problematic. As Kumashiro (2000) suggests, there are countless differences in society such as those based on "race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, [dis]ability, language, body size and the intersection of these differences... Yet, 'difference' always exceeds singular categories since identities are already multiple and intersected"(p. 5). Here, in this confluence of difference and multiplicity, we find people with complex and sophisticated identities, needs and wants, who while existing in the dynamic of culture, might not always be regarded as singular expressions of a generic uniform cultural community. Here we come face to face with the unique presence and difference of another human being who can never be simply represented in any iconic or stereotypical fashion.

Themes and categories present the question of how to approach the other, how to welcome the other from the shadows of program, curricula and instruction or prevent their entry into such shadow, and in doing so fulfill one's responsibility.

Are there situations where educators enact their responsibility with/in cultural difference as a welcoming of those individuals who are present before them--where perhaps the reliance on technical approaches to program, curricula and instruction cast fewer and less ominous shadows over human relationship? Are there situations in which educators of differing cultural heritage, operating with/in contexts of cultural difference while fulfilling program, curricular and instructional obligations, seem attentive and responsive to very real presence of the other? Situations where, perhaps in welcoming the other, there "is a refusal to allow oneself to be domesticated or tamed by a theme" (Levinas, 1981, p. 100). Do such situations exist? What are people doing in these situations and what are the observable signs of success of such attentiveness?

What an Alternate School Reality Shows us Concerning Responsibility

The school where the educators I interviewed worked and I worked as well had approximately 95% of the students claim Aboriginal heritage, 19% were parents, 50% had previously attended four or more elementary schools, while 71% had attended a different high school before this school and 81% had attended a school outside of the city¹. The population of the school varied over the school year ranging from highs of over two hundred students to sometimes less than one hundred. The school year was divided into four semesters and the school day composed of three class periods per day. This school was situated in lower socio-economic neighbourhood where there were social challenges such as high crime rates.

My experience and observation over several years as an educator of non-Aboriginal heritage within this inner-city high school setting led me to believe that some educators moved beyond understanding their responsibility as simply following rules or convention. Whether overt or tacit, their understanding and enactment of responsibility seemed to transcend merely technical or instrumental approaches typified perhaps by close adherence to sets of principles or conventions, following rules or regulations. In this movement, or perhaps transformation, educators appeared to embody ways of being and acting that moved beyond a reliance on principles or convention. For several educators I interviewed there seemed a transformation in their views and actions that involved a developing attentiveness to students, families and teaching colleagues. Philosophers such as Levinas (1998) might suggest this attentiveness involves a response to the call of Other

¹ Information from a 1998 needs assessment survey for the school (conversation with the school principal).

or the difference constituted in others—to an incontestable and infinite difference embodied in human beings that Levinas also refers to as the face of the Other.

Educators in this schooling circumstance served families and students who faced various challenges in their pursuit of success academic and otherwise. For example, students often faced the challenge of living in poverty or of living on their own while simultaneously being responsible for siblings, their own children, parents or other relatives or all these. This type of situation is seen in many urban centers in Western Canada (Haig-Brown, 1997; Saskatchewan-Education, 1998) and were familiar to myself and the participants in this research. The challenges for many students, families, educators and the community at large were not atypical of those found for people of First Nation and Métis heritage enmeshed in the workings of urban inner city life (Tymchak, 2001). Such situations have been characterized in some instances by a persistent culture of poverty, the effects of previous generation's experiences of residential schooling, and systemic racism and oppression in society (Silver, Mallet, Green, & Simard, 2002).

In this setting, initiatives by Federal agencies, Municipal Government, Tribal Councils and the Public School system attempted to address the difficulties and challenges students and their families faced through efforts such as School to Work programs, childcare programs, curriculum development efforts and culture building activities (Curry & Tymchak, 2003). However, the nature of much of current educational curricula and organization, when coupled with larger societal challenges involving those of First Nation and Métis heritage, at times appeared to often hamper students' efforts. Their efforts became stymied, in part, by residual and ongoing obstacles perhaps emerging from the systemic reality of colonization in education (Battiste, 2000; Battiste

& Barman, 1995; Silver et al., 2002). Despite the difficulties and challenges encountered by students, their families, the surrounding community and educators in this inner city school, educators believed students and themselves were often successful.

Signs of Success?

Evidence for success, academic or otherwise, was observable in several forms, such as the consistent and continuing graduation of students, and the often intimate, cohesive and supportive relationships among people. Success was evident in the flexibility and willingness of people to try different instructional approaches, to alter the focus of curricula to reflect more Indigenous ways of knowing, to provide students with unique programming to aid in building their personal and cultural capacities, and in the persistence of students and their families in returning to the school to be educated despite significant life interruptions such as violence in the home or the death of family members.

There were difficulties, challenges, tensions and failures in this particular school setting, yet there seemed to exist a deep commitment, solidarity and attentiveness to others among educators that appears intertwined with their willingness to serve each other and their students. Periodically, educators, individually and as a staff, made decisions and undertook activities that in more mainstream school settings might have been less acceptable and perhaps unworkable. For example, significant alterations were made to time schedules allowing students opportunities to complete course work, young mothers could bring their young children to school for care and sometimes to classrooms, and assessment methods were altered in efforts to address student interest, need and abilities.

Also evident was a strong commitment by those involved with this school, including students, parents and others from various agencies, to come together to address the difficulties that students and families of Aboriginal heritage experience in the current educational system (Curry & Tymchak, 2003). The strong leadership and involvement by the First Nations and Métis communities and Elders in significant initiatives, such as curriculum change, was considered success as these initiatives through planning and action helped recover, rediscover and reestablish epistemological and ontological orientations emerging from First Nation and Métis values and beliefs. Such efforts resulted in a new curricular undertaking emerging from Indigenous epistemological understandings that integrate knowledge and practice from school, community, city, provincial and federal levels. This new curricular undertaking benefited those involved in this educational community, whether of Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal heritage. Underlying such efforts there seemed a commitment to attentive face-to-face relations that appeared to help those involved to successfully find a path among contending influences and motivations. This commitment appeared to shape the reality of the school as educators sought a way to exist with/in the tensions of ethno-cultural difference and the demands of school as part of the larger society.

An Alternate School Reality: What Was Happening?

In this school setting educators seemed to do more than just cope or manage the tensions arising with/in ethno-cultural difference found in more typical or mainstream school settings—where rules, regulations, and procedures are often more strictly expected and enforced. This is not to say that moments did not occur when educators were seeking to cope or manage situations in a manner more typical of mainstream schools. Nor does it

mean that educators did not employ strategies and tactics that were used in more mainstream educational settings. However, there seemed a sense that whatever procedures or choices were made regarding program, curriculum or instruction, the origin of consideration for action resided significantly with the individual involved, the uniqueness of their situation and ultimately their specific needs. In such moments there did exist the characteristic slate of guidelines and mandated procedures typically enlisted in schools to help educators enact programs and direct teachers and groups of students. Here though, the guidelines and procedures seemed to act as a starting point for consideration of activities such as timetabling and participation in school events that yielded somewhat to the uniqueness of individual need. This additional consideration appeared to truly and seriously engage and welcome the difference each individual embodied. In this engagement educators appeared to understand the need for singular responses to the unique demand of others. These demands caused educators to question their own involvement and relation to the rules, programs, curricula and instructional practice, especially if supporting such rules, programs, curricula and instruction seems to come at the expense of human relationship.

Perhaps because of this sensitivity to human relationship, educators involved themselves with individuals and events beyond the confines of school. Such activities are typical of other school settings, where educators facilitate sport teams, art displays, drama, field and outdoor trips. What is perhaps less expected in a public school setting is the involvement of educators in the ethno-cultural communities' activities and events as well as regular school activities. For these educators they often found themselves involved with Treaty Celebrations, visiting "old people" or Elders, attending cultural or

spiritual ceremonies, powwows and feasts, raising teepees, or participating in local Aboriginal performance venues for art, music and sports. Together educators of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage embarked on such activities. What also seemed of significance was the degree of involvement of educators of non-Aboriginal heritage in such undertakings despite some anxiety and uncertainty over both their reception by others and their role in such events. This has left me to wonder if it might be helpful to consider such involvement as a welcoming of the difference of others such as students by these educators emerging amidst cultural difference and if so what may have been happening in this particular school setting?

Welcoming as a Possibility for Understanding Responsibility: A First Glance

In reflecting on my experience in this school, as a colleague of these educators, there seemed among us a sensitivity and desire to avoid the possibility of a type of ontological or metaphysical violence (Derrida, 1978) to others. In other words, an aversion to pressing our values and beliefs upon others such as our students. Whether regarding individuals' ways of knowing or the ethno-cultural ways of knowing others such as those that students claimed for themselves, these educators seemed wary of re-enacting what some see as the oppressive and coercive reality of contemporary school programs, curricula and instruction, a coercion often inflicted upon those of First Nation and Métis heritage (Battiste, 2000; Battiste & Barman, 1995; Battiste & Henderson, 2000). Writers such as Todd (2003c) and Castoriadas (1991) suspect such violence or coercion inhabits Westernized education, where “ ‘learning to become’ is an inherently violent activity where the social environment exacts a traumatic price from the psyche” (Todd, 2003c, p. 19). The apparent sensitivity displayed by this school's educators

appears to have emerged from the interruption of self by the presence of the difference of others who, by their difference, put into question educators' thoughts, feelings, actions and even identity.

Educators in this school with whom I collaborated and observed, whether they were aware or unaware of the nature of this sensitivity, nevertheless seemed sensitive to the possibilities of a type of pedagogical coercion that alienated students from themselves. The response of these educators is typified by one teacher, who reinvents a wellness course employing fundamental understandings of the "four directions" (Bopp, Bopp, Brown, & Lane, 1984) as the framework for planning and teaching in an attempt to avoid an exclusively Eurocentric curriculum orientation. These educators appeared to demonstrate a sensitivity and aversion to coercive elements and processes often inherent in mainstream curricula and instructional approaches in relation to marginalized groups (Battiste, 2000; Battiste & Barman, 1995; Battiste & Henderson, 2000). This sensitivity seemed to emerge from an openness and vulnerability to others where others such as students seemed to teach them their responsibility. In educators' encounter with difference, their beliefs, values and actions appeared to come into question and within this opening, learning seemed to occur for these educators. Such learning seemed to involve not only understanding the need for change and enacting change in pragmatic ways, for example, acting on concerns for cultural suitability of materials, curricula and instruction, but also of the necessity for change or a transformation in their personal belief, values and ways of knowing. The urge for pragmatic change did not seem to emerge substantially from any list of ethical guidelines, programs or prescriptive methods where they might find relief from the anxiety involved in questioning their understanding

of responsibility and themselves by simply following rules or regulations. In other words, their sensitivity seemed infused with a degree of uncertainty and anxiety that brought about considerations of how they were to enact their responsibility and what this would require of them regarding their identity and psyche.

If one is to rely upon Levinas' understandings, then the vulnerability and openness educators experience may perhaps be conceived as a welcoming, where welcoming the individual or the Other is also a welcoming of the difference that others embody. Perhaps considering responsibility as welcoming will allow us to shine a light on educators' experience, possibly revealing something further about the nature and enactment of responsibility.

Given this motivation I seek through this research to explore the possibility of and nature of conceiving of responsibility as welcoming. In considering responsibility as a welcoming I am attempting to create a space for us as educators to consider more fully responsibility, where we can learn something about our role as educators but also ourselves as persons, where as Freire notes, "the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue..." (Freire, 1993, p. 61).

Central to the notion of welcoming are ideas suggesting that the difference embodied by the others around us interrupt the sameness of self, that this interruption is not merely an inconvenience but a radical interruption of the solidarity of one's thoughts, feelings, actions and identity. Involved with this interruption is an openness and sensitivity to others where we attempt to accommodate the difference of others even as we strain to remain ourselves and maintain our situations. Together these realities find us learning from the difference of others or the Other, and so our responsibility is

pedagogical in nature and involves not only our duty to teach but to learn our responsibility from those around us. Together these ideas comprise welcoming and the philosopher who is most likely to aid us in further understanding welcoming is Emmanuel Levinas. The following chapter discusses why we might employ Levinas by explaining in more detail what is involved with welcoming.

Chapter 2

Encountering Levinas

To rely upon Levinas in making sense of educators' sense of responsibility is potentially a difficult undertaking, yet potentially fruitful in what we may discover about others' circumstance and also our understandings of responsibility. While it may seem odd to begin an argument for the use of a writer by describing the difficulties one may encounter with that writer, having some forewarning about Levinas may help in alleviating what might be initially frustrating encounter with his ideas and use of language.

Todd (2003c), Chinnery (2003), Davis (1996) and Hutchens (2004) are examples of researchers who, in discussing Levinas' thought, offer ample warning concerning the difficult nature of his writings, writings that often seem to contain paradox, repetition and a purposeful under determination of language. Todd (2003b) states such concern when she says, "reading his words, approaching his texts, requires some suspension of our attachments to trusty principles if we are to make sense of the world he is proposing" (p. 1). Chinnery (2003) notes, "In reading Levinas, we must remain ever vigilant of the tendency to slide back into traditional ways of thinking. Levinas' use of ordinary words in extraordinary ways is one of the reasons his work is so difficult to comprehend" (p. 7). Key terms such as Other, otherness, alterity, face, welcoming, hospitality and vulnerability have a sense of the familiar and ordinary, but as Davis (1996) notes, Levinas divests them of their common meanings resulting in a tension "between what we think we understand and the repeated insistence that we still have not got the point" (p. 132).

However, this divestment and re-investing of meaning that Levinas undertakes offers an opening where we may find an opportunity to consider our understandings of responsibility and success as educators in a new light. As mentioned earlier the need for reconsidering responsibility is crucial in educational situations of increasing diversity among people who bring with them a range of understandings concerning self and others.

In this research I offer an interpretation that attempts to clarify and summarize some of Levinas' thought as I read his ideas alongside educators' words, descriptions and explanations of their experience. This in no way eliminates the tensions and ambiguity inherent with Levinas' ideas; ideas which continue to confront and challenge any final interpretation. This confrontational challenge while imbued with some difficulty also presents opportunity for expanding our awareness and understanding of responsibility. This opportunity emerges through Levinas' attempt "to break with Western thought and with the very modes of thinking that have come to characterize ethics" (Chinnery, 2003, p. 5).

Levinas: The Relationship of Self and Other

Before discussing further Levinas' importance for this research and examining the notion of welcoming, I offer some comment on what Levinas means by the terms 'other' and 'Other'. Such terms feature prominently in his discourse, are not used consistently by Levinas and offer a challenge to how we might typically understand these terms. In what follows I offer several reasons why the work of Levinas (1961; 1981; 1985) may be useful in relation to the site of this research; this site being educators' experience of the tension of the difference they encounter. In subsequent sections, when appropriate, I will attend to other terms, which Levinas relies upon in his discussion of responsibility.

Levinas' use of the terms 'other' and 'Other' overlap, sometimes used interchangeably and with variation. The use of 'Other' by Levinas, as Todd suggests, refers not simply to a "sociological other...nor does it simply signify another person who, as subject, resembles oneself" (Todd, 2001, p. 437); the Other in a manner as Levinas says is

the Stranger who disturbs the being at home with oneself [le chez soi]...Over him I have no power. He escapes my grasp by an essential dimension even if I have him at my disposal. (1961, p. 39)

What does Levinas mean by this? For Levinas, Other is the unknowable, inviolable and inviolate—the face of a human reality that we cannot efface regardless of our efforts, even if we were to actually physically destroy someone. The Otherness or Other we encounter, or as Levinas sometimes phrases, "the alterity of the other," is beyond us and is always ultimately, despite efforts, beyond our ability to eliminate. Otherness is found with our encounter with other human beings and this meeting involves a fundamental interruption of self or ego. We are challenged in our attempts to have the Other "at my disposal." Yet at the same time we must respond in an ethical manner, yet Levinas gives us little indication what a proper response may involve. My use of the phrasing Levinas employs are intended to evoke thought in discussing educators' encounter with difference. I employ them for primarily two reasons.

First, by switching between words and phrasings, I wish to highlight Levinas' concern for the very real presence and difference of other human beings that is so crucial for Levinas. These, according to Levinas, are beings not the abstracted concepts and categories we allot them and while we may approach people entirely in an instrumental or categorical manner, they remain human beings whose difference overflows any category. These others embody difference signified by such terms as alterity, the Other, the alterity

of the Other, or the Otherness of the other. These phrasings suggest the foreignness and incontestability of difference that demands our respect; an incontestability that Levinas suggests speaks to us as if to say, “you shall not commit murder” (Levinas, 1961, p. 199) or perhaps in less dramatic fashion “do no harm to me.”

Second, by using various terms and phrases sometimes separately, in series or combination, I wish to keep alive a sense of tentativeness and uncertainty in which others and the difference they embody cannot be conveniently identified, tagged and put away; essentially captured and contained. This is an attempt to respect Levinas’ intent and keep alive the sense of play and uncertainty concerning our understanding of others or the Other—staying true to how Levinas attempts to undermine our certainty where he hopes we sense the infinite difference of others avoiding complacency concerning how we understand the Other or difference in and of others. In other words, he wishes us to remain uncomfortable as we consider our ethical responsibility to others.

Why Rely on Levinas?

Levinas’ writings resonate on a fundamental level with my sensitivity towards avoiding epistemological or pedagogical coercion or violence (Castoriadis, 1991; Todd, 2003c) as these may become more poignant amidst the tensions of ethno-cultural difference. Relying on Levinas is not to approach him as a teacher who will “provide us answers, but rather as a teacher who asks questions, and who opens up new possibilities for questioning” (Biesta, 2003, p. 65). Therefore in my reliance on Levinas the reader should be aware that I will also ask questions and offer ideas for consideration that will not in all instances conclude with a definitive “answer”. Levinas, as Todd (2001) notes, appears to offer a possibility for considering a nonviolent or less coercive relation to

others such as our students, offering us the opportunity to envision alternatives particular to our unique situations. In anticipating the possibility of pedagogical coercion, Levinas suggests that our understandings of responsibility and human relationship emerging from Western epistemology and ontology require a reorientation. He supposes in such Western understanding there remains the possibility of denial of the very real presence of the Other; the Other who is “what I myself am not” (Levinas, 1987, p. 83).

I wonder if such Western understandings perhaps participate in forming the shadows of program, curricula and instructional practice or rules and guidelines, shadows created in our reliance on ethics emerging from Western epistemology and ontology that may hide the very real presence of others from us and overshadow our responsibility? Cohen (2000) tries to make clear Levinas’s concern in reorienting us regarding epistemology and ontology when he states, “at the bottom of Levinas’s thought is not the epochal power of being but the moral authority of human integrity”; a moral seriousness, where “the flesh and blood self is mortal, suffers, and hence the I is responsible for the other. I am—to be a self is—responsibility for the other” (p. 30). The implications for such a reorientation, where responsibility prefigures what we know and who we are, seems radical as well as utopian and cannot be removed from Levinas more religious leanings. Perhaps more rhetorical than philosophical, Levinas’ idea of reorientation outlines a hope of what may be instead of what actually exists (Botwinick, 2006). The hope in this is perhaps that we do not blindly follow rules, roles or regulations believing we are being responsible while we fail in our moral capacity as human beings.

Accepting this reorientation opens up questions concerning how we understand being, responsibility and human relationship as well as how we carry out such

responsibility. In this reorientation Levinas inverts the notion that “if we can know who we are we will then know how to be responsible” (Todd, 2003, p. 2). Instead he offers that our subjectivity emerges through the interruption of self by the other in which is born simultaneously our responsibility. To be is to be responsible not only for one’s self but for others (Blades, 2005) even as enacting entirely this responsibility is an impossibility. For Levinas this responsibility is “about surrender and openness to the other; about saying “yes” to the otherness of the other; and about suffering through anxious situations not of our own making, but to which we are nevertheless called to respond” (Chinnery, 2003, p. 7).

Responsibility then, for Levinas, comes not as an after thought of a singular being who decides whether to be responsible or not, but emerges in the presence of the Other. The suffering through anxious situations reminds me of many of the situations I encountered in contexts of ethno-cultural difference, and I am reminded of the phrase, “before I knew it.” Before I knew ‘it’ I was helping to plan an event, before I knew ‘it’ I was fulfilling an Elder’s request for a ceremonial prayer. This ‘it’ is perhaps the enactment of responsibility; a responsibility to which I respond and which comes before knowledge and before being, even as I become who I am.

Such a radical alteration to how Western thought typically considers relationship and responsibility may offer some difficult lessons. However, in the sometimes contested and confusing reality of ethno-cultural difference which increasingly typifies Canadian education experience (Blades et al., 2000), reading Levinas alongside educators’ experience of difference may at least cause us to reconsider or rethink such responsibility. Such reconsideration may perhaps confirm or prompt further questioning concerning our

responsibility and the ethical dilemmas we face. In prompting us to reconsider the nature of responsibility Levinas offers a way beyond “the tendency to make ethics programmatic in its orientation to education: a set of duties or obligations that if well enough defined and followed will produce the ethical behaviour desired” (Todd, 2001, p. 436). Given the confusion, anxiety and sensitivity often felt by myself and other educators as we live with/in the tensions of difference, ethno-cultural and otherwise, this non-prescriptive invitation for reconsideration might be the most ethical course of action when one seeks to understand our responsibility.

Levinas contends that our experience of responsibility arises from the call of the Other, a call where the comfort and sameness of self is disrupted and questioned by the presence of the Other—“where the Other does not subjugate the Same but awakens it and sobers it up” (Levinas, 2000, p. 143). Throughout my experience of working amidst ethno-cultural difference this sense of interruption seemed frequent. My experience seemed to resonate with Levinas’ description of the radical interruption of the sameness within self by the presence of an Other. In this resonance I felt compelled to consider how understanding this interruption may help me better understand my responsibility and the ethicality or correctness of my decisions with/in the tension of cultural difference and also that of other educators.

This interruption, according to Levinas, challenges us in a profound way, which again leaves behind understanding our subjectivity as a “sovereign rational autonomy” grounded in ontology and suggests our subjectivity “is constituted by ethical responsibility” (Chinnery, 2003, p. 5). By this thinking subjectivity comes not before responsibility but emerges from responsibility; in relationship “responsibility is the very

nature of subjectivity itself' (Chinnery, 2003, p. 8). In other words we become who we are through enacting our responsibility.

This leaves me to wonder if I am alone in feeling such interruption and why in seeking to fulfill my responsibility I begin to encounter challenges and changes, not only to what I know and how I know, but who I am and in particular how I understand my relationship to others. Is this sense of being interrupted particular to me, or were there among my colleagues those whose experience involved such interruption and questioning? What might exploring such interruption tell us concerning educators' responsibility for those persons who work in educational settings typified by difference, ethno-cultural or otherwise?

While the interruption of self by the Other is a reason to call on Levinas for understanding, the difference of the Other in this interruption represents a third reason Levinas may be helpful for building an understanding of educators' experience of tension with/in cultural difference. My experience of the difference others embody, whether in my classroom experience or during other activities such as helping conduct culture camps, resonates with Levinas' contention concerning our encounter with difference or Other. The difference the Other presents seems beyond my capacity to contain, control or capture, unsettling and questioning me directly and deeply concerning my response; the ethicality of my being and doing. In my experience of difference there seemed to be what Levinas describes as an infinity of difference. These are moments where I can never claim to know the Other in any final or absolute sense, where any detailed prescriptive course of action, whether found in program, curricula or instruction, can relieve me of attending to the difference of people; difference that always overflows my assumptions

and my attempts to use categories or protocols to prescribe events or ensure compliance. In facing difference I wonder if a set of guidelines, rules of practice, program, curricula, instructional strategy or other prescriptive devices can relieve me of the need to continually address such difference and so my responsibility takes on a unique aspect relative to those I encounter. I can learn from others, whether educator or student. However, I cannot follow their enactment of ethical relationship or responsibility via programming, curricula and instruction hoping they can prescribe for me how to think, feel and act. Considering this, I wondered if my former colleagues experienced this infinity of difference and a realization that following guidelines, rules of practice, program, curricula, instructional strategy or other prescriptive devices was insufficient in enacting our responsibility?

Levinas offers no prescription for how we enact our responsibility. His work, as Todd (2003a) notes concerning Levinas, responsibility emerges “from a signifying encounter with absolute difference that cannot be predicted beforehand” (p. 33). Given this the reader needs to be cautioned, for if we rely on Levinas to avoid the struggle of considering what is ethical or responsible by relying solely on practical advice, straightforward answers or prescriptions we will be disappointed. Levinas “claims no recourse to moral principle, no appeal to codes of conduct” or adherence to “the ‘right’ norms, virtues or values” (Chinnery, 2003, p. 5). Levinas is perhaps only prescriptive in as much as he asks or invites us to think about the ethicality of our own situations, the meaning of ethics and of responsibility, and the possibility of nonviolent relationships to the Other.

The elusiveness of attaining desired outcomes by believing in the certainty of prescription and manipulation of realities such as programming, curricula or instruction leave me looking to the Other for direction; not in a prescriptive manner but in what the Other teaches me about my responsibility. In welcoming others perhaps the Other teaches me and therefore responsibility may be a pedagogical relationship where we as educators learn from the Other (Todd, 2003). Levinas talks of such welcome as a reception of the other and the Other where our responsibility is enacted (Levinas, 1961) and where we become expressions of ethicality (Todd, 2003). The following discussion outlines the notion of welcoming by reading one educator's story along side Levinas' ideas attempting to better understand welcoming as a possible catalyst for building understanding. Through this example the central focus of this research becomes more clear.

Levinas and the Notion of Welcoming

My experience of working with people in settings of ethno-cultural difference seems one of interruption where students and colleagues unsettle my solidarity, confounding and defeating attempts to confine them to my ways of knowing and acting. I feel failure, but also experience liberation involving the interruption of my sameness and solidarity in which I welcome the otherness of others—the Other. The notion of welcoming prompts my interest, for perhaps in understanding responsibility as a welcoming of the Other, we may understand something about how we encounter others and their Otherness, and prompting a more thorough consideration of how we might act in appropriate, suitable and just ways—in other words, how we might embody responsibility.

However, what does Levinas mean by welcoming and does the notion of welcoming in the sense Levinas supposes, hold potential for helping us understand educator's involvement with/in the tensions of cultural difference? This question constitutes a core feature of this research and in the following discussion I attend to aspects of Levinas' writings concerning welcoming. In doing this, I illustrate the possibility of employing Levinas' writings to build understanding and to offer an understanding of the idea of welcoming.

To welcome means typically to embrace, receive, usher in, or take pleasure in the presence of someone (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989). For Levinas, however, welcoming is where we encounter difference and in this engagement are taught by the Other. This learning, by contrast, concerns less the content we may learn about some topic, subject or person, and more how a person learns their responsibility through a particular orientation or relation to the Other (Todd, 2003a). In this way welcoming is both a pedagogical and ethical act that does not lose sight of the other's difference in the shadow of such realities as program, curricula, and instruction or in the routines and roles of schooling; a shadow cast perhaps by our efforts to thematize, categorize and classify. This teaching could be a situation in which we realize we cannot collapse the difference another embodies into the sameness of our own thoughts and ways; a sameness we assume we share and is common among us. In this realization are perhaps the moments of affirmation and respect and disruption, which inform us as we undertake programs, curricula and instruction with/in the tensions of cultural difference. In writing about such collapse I am not suggesting an objectified knowledge one might transmit to another person but rather the difference the other embodies that, Levinas suggests, always has the

potential to teach us. Anyone attentive to the recent history of First Nation's and Métis people is attentive to the travails they have suffered through attempts at bringing the difference of their reality into the sameness of Anglo mainstream society. Education is only one venue among many for such attempts at what Levinas calls 'totalizing' (Levinas, 1981).

For Levinas, the other's difference confounds our attempts at capture, control or containment. The difference of the other is infinite in strangeness. There is no final total accounting or 'totalizing' of such difference. This is perhaps why as I reflect on my experience, I am wary when educators with the best of intentions, in attempting to fulfill the obligations of their roles in relation to their roles and programs, curricula or instruction, appear to lose sight of the very real presence of others and the difference they embody. In this loss there also seems a loss of conviviality, that seems crucial to any pedagogical undertaking (Bogert-O'Brien, 2000).

Reflecting on this engagement with others and the difference they embody prompts me to wonder if educators encounter difference in a welcoming manner and to what extent, if any, Levinas may be helpful in understanding educators' responsibility?

A Story of Welcoming: A First Interpretation

Thinking about welcoming in the context of ethno-cultural difference I recall a story by an esteemed educator of First Nation heritage, which seems in part to illustrate Levinas' concern for enacting a non-violent or non-coercive relationship with others where there is perhaps the welcoming of the Other.

A self-described American Indian educator Eber Hampton (1995), born of a Chickasaw father and a white mother, relates a story that seems potentially helpful in

grappling with the notion of welcoming. In his work, Hampton is writing for “both Indian and white educators” and his writing involves a redefinition of First Nations or “Indian” education in which he begins to articulate a theory of Aboriginal education. He discusses the hostile structure of Western education offering how Aboriginal epistemology differs. His writing is insightful and seems to embody welcoming; an embodiment in which we may consider our understandings of self, epistemology and pedagogy. Nonetheless, welcoming in this context also seems to exist in other fundamental ways.

Hampton relates his encounter with an old white man in a convenience store. Hampton is searching for soup on the shelves of this store when an old white man approaches him. Describing this situation Hampton relates his openness to the old man’s request but also his puzzlement and caution as the old man, after asking Hampton, ‘Do you have a little time?’ leaves and then returns with a box, thrusting the box towards Hampton. Unsure of the old man’s intent, Hampton balances himself defensively anticipating what may come. However, instead of hostile intent the old white man poses a question as Hampton relates:

I looked at him, shaking where he stood, bright eyes,...His question came from behind the box. ‘How many sides do you see?’ ‘One,’ I said. He pulled the box towards his chest and turned it so one corner faced me. ‘Now how many sides do you see?’

‘Now I see three sides.’ He stepped back and extended the box, one corner towards him and one towards me. ‘You and I together can see six sides of this box,’ he told me.... I thought he wanted me to carry his groceries but instead he gave me something that carries me, protects me, and comforts me...You can see in writing about Indian education I am often so close that I can see only one side....As in all conversations, it is the difference in our knowledge and language that makes conversation difficult and worthwhile. (Hampton, 1995, p. 42)

There are various ways to consider what Hampton has written and while reading his work alongside Levinas’ ideas I am neither contesting his insights, judging their

veracity nor attempting to subjugate his efforts to some final judgment. Instead, I am trying to build understanding in a way that may be helpful in provoking and prompting our thought concerning welcoming. What strikes me concerning what Hampton has said, that goes beyond the immediate story and beyond his reflection concerning this incidence, is how his experience may be understood as welcoming—a welcoming where he experiences interruption and vulnerability attempting to accommodate the difference he encounters that also involve a learning from the Other.

In his story Hampton is interrupted by another, a literal stranger, who is Other and, if we believe Levinas, whose difference is beyond his or our ability to capture, contain or ever fully understand. Hampton encounters the difference of an Other, in the visage of a smaller old white man who, though familiar as a theme, seems to provide little sense of similarity. Hampton appears to feel the traumatic interruption of the Other, an exposure to the Other brought about by the Other's proximity and difference (Levinas, 1981). Here difference is encountered—a moment where his ability to contain or border such difference is overwhelmed. In some manner this old man is both what he expects and also surpasses what Hampton understands or anticipates. We seem to find Hampton already in response to the proximity of difference, already responsible even as he struggles to fashion a response. This interruption seems to constitute both responsibility and the possibility of welcome, as he says, "I expected he wanted me to carry something and felt good to be chosen" and later "he gave me something that carries me, protects me, and comforts me" (Hampton, 1995, p. 41). Is what Hampton receives only the object knowledge that there are multiple perspectives for viewing reality or some understanding beyond words and explanation? Perhaps there is the more fundamental learning Levinas

talks of where Hampton “*receive(s)* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity. But this also means: to be taught” (1961, p. 51). He seems to sense the gift of teaching and receives this in an act of learning “*something* [my italics] that carries me, protects me, and comforts me.” What is this something? Is this ‘something’ the educators I worked with and myself received in our experience of working amidst ethno-cultural difference? Perhaps this something is the unique always contextual understanding of how to enact one’s responsibility’ that Levinas (1961) suggests emerges in the face-to-face encounter with the Otherness of others. Is this an experience of the radical interruption of self, where the difference of the other, or their Otherness, overwhelms us and involves an inescapable and unconditional responsibility for another?

Hampton in this interruption seems responsive, sensitive, open and vulnerable. The old man is before him, interrupts him and Hampton’s words appear to show the face of welcoming. This welcoming does not seem the typical greeting where only pleasantries are present. In this welcoming there seems the vulnerability or ascendancy of another, that Levinas discusses; an openness and vulnerability where the needs and approach of another person overtake one’s concerns. Hampton appears to transcend a dichotomy where, in a paradoxical way, the difference of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal remains, but the dichotomy of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal dissolves in the very real presence of a person, an Other to whom Hampton is responsible. Perhaps in this situation this ‘something’ Hampton senses is the freedom of responsibility, which for Levinas (1981) are not antithetical but fulfill each other, where freedom emerges in our unavoidable responsibility to others. I wonder if this is similar to what Cajete discusses

concerning Indigenous epistemology when he talks of how an individual's identity and worth emerge in the service of their community, a service to others that features as a significant aspect of Indigenous ways of knowing (Cajete, 1994)? Perhaps this 'something' is welcoming.

Nonetheless, as Levinas might suppose, we might consider that Hampton is not only taught but also offers the gift of teaching to the old white man, who also welcomes him. This seems the generosity and receiving Levinas discusses; the simultaneous activity and passivity of welcoming (Levinas, 1961) that Derrida calls the difficult act of receiving from the Other (1999). Perhaps this is the discourse where

the experience of something absolutely foreign...a *traumatism of astonishment*...The absolutely foreign alone can instruct us. And it is only man who can be absolutely foreign to me-refractory to every typology, to every genus, to every characterology, to every classification-and consequently the term of a "knowledge" finally penetrating beyond the object...The strangeness of the Other, his very freedom!" (Levinas, 1961, p. 73)

Is Hampton's encounter a moment of freedom where he experiences the happiness of knowing and enacting his responsibility as well as the gift of object knowledge he has received? What has Hampton learned? What might we learn? The situation Hampton relates seems a moment of realization of learning and responsibility, perhaps responsibility as learning or responsibility as welcoming. For Levinas learning seems to emerge not from the sameness of self, a maieutic, the confirmation that certain knowledge exists in others and that this can be brought out, for "teaching is not reducible to maieutics; it comes from the exterior and brings me more than I contain" (Levinas, 1961, p. 51), but is this the case? This old man appears to have brought more than Hampton contains. Hampton welcomes but is also welcomed, realizing perhaps his responsibility and responding in an ethical manner—he welcomes him and receives the

gift of learning from him. His response is not pre-scripted but emerges in a unique non-repeatable manner in response to the difference constituted in the Other, a person—a welcoming that seems both generous and pedagogical.

Reflecting further I consider the larger context in which Hampton shares his story. In his writing criticisms of Western education are discussed and seem well warranted. His desire for a nonviolent or less oppressive education is clear. However, his task seems difficult for, even as he outlines the beginnings of a theory of Indian education in which there is the dichotomy of Indian and non Indian and an apparent claiming of epistemological territory, he wishes to “speak person-to-person,” (Hampton, 1995, p. 6) giving less emphasis on categories even as such difference remains. He asks us to “read carefully not so much what I write as the way I write it, and especially what I do not write” (p. 6). He makes an appeal to his reader to attend to his words, to the difference they contain, explaining, “there are many things I do not understand and many gaps I have not filled” (p. 6). Yet in the cultural and epistemological divisions he relies upon, we find Hampton warning, “no name encompasses a people, and none is truly accurate” (p. 6). I mention these words as evidence of the difficulty and struggle that educators face, even one so insightful as Hampton, when sensing the need to attend to the very real presence and foreignness of others, the Otherness of others. The tension that perhaps Hampton, other educators and I sense, in considering our responsibility with/in the tensions of ethno-cultural difference, is a tension where we search not to deny difference even as we must accommodate difference. These tensions may be moments of the hospitality found in welcoming, where we are simultaneously guest and host. A *hôte*, a guest-host who both accommodates the difference they encounter, seeking to

accommodate others, yielding to the guest an ascendancy over their desires (Derrida, 1999), yet attempting to remain in control, to offer a place that only the host can provide or otherwise they would no longer be the host.

There is irony if not paradox in this situation for there is a call to an epistemology that seeks non-violence. There is a search for justice for marginalized others that is anti-oppressive in conception, yet relies in a manner on categories that embody to some extent ways of knowing that are totalizing. There is a call that borders off difference, that in effect says “us/them”, however, the story Hampton relates, that is so poignant to him, concludes with a recollection not of collapsing Levinas’ (1961) “saying” or unknowable difference of another person into the “said” of the themes and categories, for example Indian/non-Indian or White/non-white, but with an example of the welcoming of the Other, who surpasses all categories and themes, of others who teach us regardless of categories we may attempt to impose or accept, the Other whose very presence is a teaching. Even as Hampton offers particular themes bound up in theorizing about Indian education, he seems to sense something may be amiss, a shadow looms where there is perhaps the potential for coercion or violence; a shadow where the very real presence of another human being and the difference they embody is under threat of not being seen because of human propensity for categorizing and thematization, and he seems sensitive to the possibility of such oppression.

Hampton ends his story saying, “As in all conversations, it is the difference in our knowledge and language that makes conversation difficult and worthwhile” (1995, p. 42). I would also suggest that beyond the difference of knowledge and language is a difference, or Otherness, which we embody that not only includes these but perhaps

surpasses these. This is possibly our response to the very real presence of the Other or the otherness of others, who interrupt us, and with whom we are vulnerable, whom we must accommodate as a respected guest and whose presence teaches us our responsibility by bringing the gift of learning.

In the intersection of ethno-cultural and societal realities involving difference, educators, in a manner similar to Hampton, face questions concerning responsibility and their embodiment as ethical beings. In contemporary educational settings educators' sense of responsibility maybe narrowed to concerns regarding the delivery of content, materials and instructional process—where there is perhaps an overriding and narrowed concern for grades and academic achievement as indicative of student well-being and success, as well as educator success. In these instances educators are perhaps enacting a different responsibility sensitive to how best to serve others and what this service means. How do educators in such settings understand their responsibility and how is this responsibility enacted? Levinas' writings seem to hold promise for exploring or developing a deeper understanding of such questions—an understanding I frame as a welcoming of the Other.

Given this context, the guiding question of this research asks, “To what extent do educators understand their responsibility as a welcoming of difference arising from the call of the Other?” The following sections outline how I addressed this question.

Prelude to Method

This research involves building understanding in the modality of a philosopher. This is an interpretative modality where I offer readers opportunities to discuss their understandings concerning welcoming and responsibility. Through various discussions I

explore the utility and meaningfulness of employing the notion of welcoming as I have interpreted this notion relying on the work of Levinas (1961; 1981), Derrida (1978; 1999; 2002; 2000), Todd (2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2003c) and Bauman (1993; 1995) for exploring educators' understanding of responsibility. The articulation I provide is not a positivistic undertaking that might suggest there is some final objective assessment of participants' understandings or of the utility of Levinas' writings for understanding participants' experience. However, neither do I slide into what may be suggested is the relativism of post-modern or post-structuralist theory (Lather, 1991) where meaning and truth are entirely relative. I seek a way between these polarities by offering evidence from participants' understanding, scrutinizing my understandings of Levinas and responsibility, as well as drawing upon others such as Derrida and Todd, who while relying on Levinas, are also critical of his writing.

A Theoretical Orientation

Richardson (2003) suggests the necessity for a researcher to indicate their relationship to the research topic and to their associated literature, as well as sufficiently outline their epistemological and methodological orientations, for each influences how one articulates their research. This articulation helps orient the reader to the personal, cultural and epistemological tensions that may be at play, providing more insight into what is presented. The previous discussion already alerts readers to specific ideas concerning welcoming and indicates the form of my discussion concerning welcoming. This form is philosophical and interpretive and requires further clarification.

My research is a pedagogical undertaking seeking to prompt readers to consider how they understand their responsibility. This, however, does not relieve me from

offering determinations concerning welcoming and Levinas' writings that are interesting, coherent and have verisimilitude (Richardson, 1994) or possess value and virtuosity (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). However, given that knowledge is contingent and locally bound and the meaning humans make is context-dependent (Foucault, 1978; Haraway, 1988; Richardson, 1994, 2003), interpretation can vary in depth and scope and is always invested in power. Therefore, the value of what I write lies in prompting readers to consider an alternative frame of reference when considering responsibility in the context of cultural difference and also in the strength of the determinations I make regarding the helpfulness of employing Levinas writings and notions of welcoming.

To provide this opportunity for determination I provide a close reading of Levinas alongside educators' understandings of responsibility relying as well on Derrida, Todd and Bauman. This involves specific rather than universal knowledge claims because any research is confined by limits such as culture and language (Haraway, 1988). Language in this case is a "constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality and of the Self" which is not merely a reflection of social reality but "produces meaning, creates social reality" (Richardson, 1994, p. 518). Gadamer (1994) suggests language is co-emergent with an individual's understanding—where self and subjectivity are brought into being by language. If we accept this, this means understanding a social reality such as educators' experience of responsibility in a cross-cultural situation is entangled with subjectivity, not lying somewhere beyond us, an objective artifact or experience to be captured and presented where there will be exact and precise agreement.

I do not seek this kind of prescription in this research for Richardson suggests, "knowing the Self and knowing 'about' the subject are intertwined, partial, historical,

local knowledges” which direct “us to understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times” (Richardson, 1994, p. 518). This reflexivity does not align with the desire for ‘objective’ knowledge very well but does open up possibilities concerning how to interpret and share this research. However, the seemingly relative nature of knowledge of self and subject does not entirely ease the difficulties and complexities of interpreting and presenting an articulation helpful to readers. There remains the need to seek ways to “describe the irregularities and the differences by which we are inhabited...” and engage “the ruptures and gaps, let us say, the textuality and difference, which inhabits everything we think, and do, and hope for” (Caputo, 1987, p. 213).

To address such difficulties I develop and employ an interpretive framework relying primarily on Levinas (1961; 1985; 1988; 1999), Derrida (1978; 1999; 2002; 2000), Todd (2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2003c) and Bauman (1993; 1995) that allows me to provide a reading (Blum & McHugh, 1984) of these writers alongside educators’ understandings of responsibility. This strong reading is a reflexive undertaking that in part is a form of “self-study” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Feldman, 2003) involving autobiographical elements (Grumet, 1992). This type of interpretation is a trend away from modernism’s assumptions about legitimate knowledge and knowledge production and broadens what counts as research (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). Acknowledging this trend is also important in this research for Levinas offers possibilities for re-conceiving responsibility in ways that undermine western conceptions of ethicality that cannot be disentangled from the oppression of marginalized peoples of Aboriginal and Métis heritage.

Given this context, I attempt to keep in play understandings of educator's responsibility and the notion of welcoming. This pedagogical play provides an opportunity to consider their understandings concerning responsibility and hopefully to prompt questions concerning their own assumptions and understanding which ultimately influence our embodiments as expressions of ethicality (Todd, 2003).

My Relationship to the Research

Writers and researchers involved with people of Aboriginal heritage and culture need to avoid engaging in research that may be colonizing (Smith, 1999), seeking to avoid reproducing the same instrumental and dehumanizing effects seen in the oppression and abuse of minority peoples. This concern mirrors predominant aspects of Levinas' work that at their core seek a non-violent relation with others (Davis, 1996) and such concerns are pertinent to me as a person of non-Aboriginal heritage engaging in research that involves people of Aboriginal heritage. I attempt to minimize possible acts of colonization and appropriation concerning this research in several ways.

First, this research occurs against the backdrop of my long time participation as a person of non-Aboriginal heritage involved in urban educational communities affecting people predominantly of First Nation and Métis heritage. While such settings are unique, my experience and familiarity in such settings provides a degree of sensitivity that helps guard against the violation research undertakings may visit upon those of First Nation and Métis heritage. This sensitivity involves acknowledging the limits to my understanding as a person of non-aboriginal heritage possessing an essentially middle-class upbringing and a recognition and resistance to the limits of such understanding. Despite my familiarity and shared experiences with the participants, there remains the

need to be continually vigilant in “exploring assumptions and seeking clarity, about events and experiences” (Kvale, 1996, p. 36). This understanding is and was essential in developing the trust that exists between my self and those who participated in this research—a trust that emerges through our participation together in various education and community activities as well as through numerous conversations.

Second, while this research reveals in part how persons of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage understand their responsibility, my research does not seek to establish value judgments nor take a critical stance concerning these individuals, Aboriginal heritage, culture or epistemology. Instead this is an opportunity for reading peoples’ experience alongside notions of welcoming. This reading is an interpretive act that unavoidably is an act of imagination and reasoning (van Manen, 2001) and entails “perceiving importance, order, and form in what one is learning that relates to the argument, story, narrative that is continually undergoing creation” (Peshkin, 2000, p. 9). There is a radical aspect to such interpretation where, as Caputo (1987) suggests, there can be no final judgments but perhaps only interim ones. There is perhaps only a spiral of recollection, recovery and projection that cannot encompass some final and true articulation, but where there is a constant questioning and provocation to what one has come to understand.

Given this there is no way for me to stand outside of this research context or educational situation presuming some objective orientation. Doing so is antithetical to the nature of my research for doing so presumes a more technical and instrumental approach to understanding responsibility, that seeks to close down the play and difficulty Caputo (1987) suggests is necessary concerning human understanding. Plumwood (1993)

cautions us regarding the nature and hidden assumptions of instrumental approaches that often accompany more technical approaches to human experience and understanding, where technical perspectives and approaches often hide “a mode of use which does not respect the other’s independence or fullness of being, or acknowledge their agency. The aim in using this mode is to subsume the other maximally within the sphere of the user’s own agency” (Plumwood, 1993, p. 142) for one’s own ends. Such intent envisions human experience, challenges and problems whether political or social as “technological problems for which an appropriate technology of behavior is required” (Caputo, 1987, p. 233). Jardine echoes a similar thought when he says, “once human life becomes the object of technical-scientific reconceptualization, the difficulties of that life become understandable only as technical problems requiring technical solutions” (Jardine, 1998, p. 122). In assuming such technical discourse there exists the danger of doing violence to others by collapsing the difference and unknowability of others (Levinas, 1961), in effect colonizing the difference of the other into a sameness of the self (Smith, 1999) or the sameness of assumed categories.

With this perspective we are relieved somewhat from concerns Levinas himself offered where he was wary and even dismissive of the philosophical turn of hermeneutics. Fortunately writers such as Warren (2005) demonstrate how hermeneutics or a philosophical interpretation and Levinas’ concern for respecting the other are interdependent, compatible and even complimentary. As he suggests, “the trace of otherness calls out to me and the understanding of this Other transcends my already formed conceptions of her, causing breach and re-interpretation...Even as the

understanding of the Other transcend my current prejudices, this understanding becomes thematized and need to be re-breached by the Other again” (Warren, 2005, p. 9).

Finally, in acknowledging my status as a researcher and writer of non-Aboriginal heritage, I alert the reader that I cannot and do not desire or attempt to write from an Aboriginal perspective. While relying on participants’ words and understandings to provoke and guide my thought I do not presume to speak for any of the participants—realizing that presenting their words or recollections in whole or in part must be done with care and sensitivity and carries judgment only in relation to the usefulness of employing Levinas’ and other writers’ work. To minimize the possibility of unsuitable, misleading or incongruent representations, I have shared with participants both transcripts and my summaries of their words seeking clarification of their understandings and intent, as well as acting on their suggestions and requests concerning their understanding of responsibility.

Welcoming: A Conceptual Vocabulary

Levinas’s writings hold promise for understanding human relationship and responsibility (Davis, 1996), yet these writings are voluminous, sometimes vague and often difficult to understand (Hutchens, 2004). Despite such challenges, writers such as Todd (2001; Todd, 2003c) and Derrida (1978; 1999; 2002; 2000) employ Levinas’ writings to discuss how we might understand ourselves as ethical beings. Todd (2003c) in particular explores Levinas’ work as a pedagogical undertaking but does not frame this encounter as one concerned with contexts of cultural difference. Nonetheless, her work seems potentially helpful in understanding Levinas’ notion of learning from the Other as it pertains to educational and psycho-analytical contexts.

In relying on Todd's and Derridas' work involving Levinas as well as Levinas' writings directly, I drew upon them to re-fashion a conceptual vocabulary and interpretive framework to guide this research that I termed welcoming. The conceptual vocabulary provides an orientation to phrasing and wording frequently used in relation to Levinas. The interpretation guide serves as a device to allow a determination of the extent to which educators might understand their responsibility as a welcoming of difference and by inference how well the notion of welcoming serves us as a way to understand educators' responsibility. The interpretation guide offers a structure that allows me to present evidence of welcoming within the words, descriptions and explanations of educators providing the opportunity to discuss welcoming and responsibility. The general considerations of welcoming for this conceptual vocabulary involve four basic, interwoven realities that occur together, involve each other yet are not linear progressions one from the other.

The first reality involves the interruption of the self by the Other which unsettles our solidarity and sameness challenging us in our belief, values, action and identity, and in which we realize the incontestability of the difference embodied in others whose difference we cannot dominate, envelope or surmount (Levinas, 1961; 1981). Interruption and all aspects of welcoming involve the face-to-face encounter with others, with the Otherness of others, or as Derrida might suggest, "la difference" (1978). Interruption emerges in the face-to-face encounter with other persons but also in the echoes of such encounters where there is heard the intense reverberations which shake and unsettle our assumptions and beliefs concerning others and our attempts to overcome the difference, foreignness, alterity or Otherness of other people.

The second feature of welcoming as I have fashioned it comes in the realization of our vulnerability as persons to other persons, where we embody an acceptance and affirmation of the moral height of others that is beyond ourselves, yet calls us to be responsible. We experience a substitution of the “for-oneself” by the “one-for-the-other” where others’ concerns dominate our moral landscape (Levinas, 1981, p. 95). In this vulnerability we find ourselves at risk, exposed in the demands which others place upon us by their very presence. For Levinas this vulnerability involves the affirmation of the Otherness of others we encounter, an affirmation of their alterity or difference, even when such encounter involves disagreement. Vulnerability in this manner is not a superficial giving way to others’ desires but involves something more fundamental in our response to the approach of others. These encounters involve a sense of the moral height or ascendancy of others which demand a response, as Cohen says referring to Levinas, where one “substitutes the others concern for its own” (2000, p. 29). This moral height emerges in our approach to others in “saying as exposure to another” and is prior to all meaning-making, thematization and objectification where “to say is to approach a neighbor, dealing him signifyingness” (Levinas, 1981, p. 48). Vulnerability refers to our moral exposure to the Other, an exposure that exists before efforts to thematize or categorize and resists such moves, before Being if we believe Levinas, where we find ourselves “one-for-the-other.” This is a substitution that involves risk where the concerns and need of self, ego or sameness become open to delay, change or rejection and also sacrifice in being “one-for-the-other.”

The third reality, hospitality, finds us with a sense of being simultaneously guest and host or an hôte (Derrida, 1999) where we find ourselves as a guest in our

circumstance, role, domain or identity—displaced or discomforted by the difference of others. Here a person is no longer the sole arbitrator of what happens, becoming to some extent a stranger in familiar or intimate surroundings, a servant to the Otherness of others (Derrida, 1999, 2002; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000). This involves the substitution of one's concerns for others that involves our interruption by the difference constituted in others and our vulnerability to the moral height of others. Welcoming, as Derrida notes, is part of a series of metonymies that involve making room for, adapting to, or accommodating the Other where “the relation to the other is deference” (Derrida, 1999, p.46).

Finally, there is learning from the Other where as Levinas suggests “the absolutely foreign alone can instruct us” (1961, p. 73). The Other teaches us our responsibility. This teaching involves our encounter with others whose otherness, if we believe Levinas, overflows our ability or capacity to entirely know. In this way our approach to the Other is already a conversation in which we are open to the Other even before any word is spoken or gesture made. This conversation is one where encountering difference we receive the gift of learning, realizing our responsibility involves an urge or working out of a non-allergic relation, a non-wounding or less wounding relation to others. In learning from the Other, people such as educators realize their beliefs, values, thoughts and actions concerning their responsibility are in question and changing. This is a reality where welcoming is the capacity to learn from the other as a teacher (Todd, 2003c), a teacher who teaches us our responsibility.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In the previous chapters I provided a rationale for this research, making reference to the importance of addressing the tensions of ethno-cultural difference in educational settings in Canada's multicultural society, commenting on the difficulty of relying on technical or programmatic approaches in addressing such tension and offering a description of a school setting where a degree of success existed in meeting the needs of students. I offered an explanation about what may be happening in the particular schooling situation my colleagues and I experienced, and suggested that the work of Levinas may be helpful in understanding our response.

The following sections outline the context for how I addressed the research questions, how the research proceeded and how I made sense of the information that results in an articulation concerning if, how and to what extent the responsibility of educators might be understood as a welcoming of the Other, and by implication, if, how and to what extent the notion of welcoming itself, and particularly the thought of Levinas are potentially helpful in understanding the responsibility of educators.

A Context for My Way of Proceeding

The founding motivations and concerns for this research were already present in the establishment of the research topic and the development of a frame of reference, a necessary aspect of research (Kvale, 1996; Seidman, 1998). These emerged from my experience in this particular school, from my reviews of Levinas, Derrida, and Todd, and through the development of a conceptual vocabulary. These were preconditions that I fulfilled before engaging further aspects of the research such as selecting participants, having conversations with participants and interpreting these conversations. My shared

experience with these participants who were my colleagues, in combination with my understanding of Levinas' and related writers' ideas, pushed me beyond the belief that I could rely on a rigidly determinate set of rules or method in carrying out this research—a perhaps misguided belief of a detached objectivity which does not exist (Kvale, 1996; Seidman, 1998). There is an inescapable level of connoisseurship or artfulness in an interpretive approach which Eisner (1991) suggests involves our sensitivity, intuition and creativity as subjectivities that always shape our making of meaning. While I acted on these subjectivities, I also created a procedural framework by developing a conceptual vocabulary for welcoming (see Chapter 2) and an interpretation guide (see Appendix 2) that would allow a degree of consistency and rigour when interpreting the words of participants. I did this hoping to offer an articulation that made sense of participants' words and welcoming in a manner that would be accessible and meaningful for readers.

My research relied on examining educators' understandings of their experience conveyed through their words, descriptions and explanations. These understandings in turn were read alongside the notion of welcoming and from that emerged an interpretation of the extent to which welcoming occurred and may be understood as responsibility. There was a double action to this reliance in which I approached other educators' experiences and my own while relying on Levinas, but also where such understanding was cast back upon Levinas' philosophy in a manner testing or exploring the value, benefit, or advantage of drawing on his writings. In other words, I provide through this dissertation an opportunity to consider educators' enactments of responsibility and their understandings concerning responsibility but also the usefulness or helpfulness of relying on Levinas' work for understanding the experience of these

people working amidst ethno-cultural difference for the purpose of educating children. This provided the strong reading or insightful interpretation that researchers advocate in making sense of human experience and meaning (Blum & McHugh, 1984; van Manen, 2001).

Interviewing in this Research and What Is Meant by Interviewing

Seidman (1998) notes that interviewing covers a wide range of practice from “tightly structured, survey interviews with preset, standardized, normally closed questions” to “open-ended, apparently unstructured” interviews that might be construed more as conversations (p. 9). van Manen suggests that interviewing “can be used as a vehicle to develop conversational relation with a partner (interviewee) about the meaning of an experience” (van Manen, 2001, p. 66), while Kvale (1996) sees research interviewing as conversation where “an interview is literally an *inter view*, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” [his emphasis] (p. 14). He also suggests “the emphasis on conversation as a mode of knowing is particularly strong within postmodern and hermeneutical philosophy” (p. 37). As Ellis and Berger (2003) note, many researchers have moved beyond conceptions of interviews as a data collection of static knowledge held within unchanging people, and present the interview as a highly collaborative interactive meaning-making event where the

interview is conducted more as a conversation between two equals than as a distinctly hierarchical, question-and-answer exchange, and the interviewer tries to tune in to the interactively produced meanings and emotional dynamics with in the interview itself. (p. 162)

This meaning-making event is a reflexive happening where interviewer and interviewee are co-constructors of meaning and dialogue is a process of discovery (Denzin, 1978), where interviewing is an active process which is a “special form of

conversation” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003, p. 67). Some researchers argue that interviewing is a conversational interplay (Ellis & Berger, 2003; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003) between interviewer and interviewee and the meaning-making emerging from this interplay is a move away from “obtaining knowledge primarily through external observation and experimental manipulation of human subjects” (Kvale, 1996, p. 11) and remain suspicious of truth claims (Richardson, 2003).

What is common to such perspectives is that interview participants are not passive vessels containing discrete bits of information, essentially objects of research, but are active subjects who create unique moments of making meaning and unique knowledge (Ellis & Berger, 2003; Richardson, 2003). What these researchers agree upon is the potential for the development of rich and unique meaning that reveal how others understand themselves and their world—an understanding that is neither entirely objective nor entirely subjective. Acting from such a framework there were several reasons I employed interviewing as a primary information and meaning-making approach.

First, by asking people directly about their experience, there was the opportunity to gain a rich rendering of their understanding which was “a powerful way to gain insight into educational issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives constitute education...most consistent with people’s ability to make meaning through language. It affirms the importance of the individual without denigrating the possibility of community and collaboration” (Seidman, 1998, p. 7). This affirmation of the individual in a collaborative undertaking was also part of my effort to maintain an ethical relation with participants in which their knowledge was held in esteem.

Second, the adequacy of a research method depends on the nature and purpose of the questions being asked. Given that this research involved a focus on the subjective understandings of participants, I agree with Seidman (1998) that interviewing in most cases is a productive avenue of inquiry concerning “what their experience is, and what meaning they make out of that experience” (p. 5).

Third, interviewing allowed me to return and build on previous conversations with participants, to explore together more deeply areas of interest to both of us, to clarify understandings about the topics discussed, and provided opportunities for us to move discussion in directions we wish to follow. This flexibility is important because individuals’ understandings of responsibility and their desire to reveal these understandings will be unique to them in both scope and intensity.

Fourth, interviewing established in a brief time through multiple conversations sufficient information to provide starting points and touchstones in undertaking a close reading of Levinas and related writings. This also allowed for the development of a rich articulation of welcoming and responsibility by providing a variety of participants’ understandings in a timely fashion.

Finally, I acted on the suggestions of Gubrium and Holstein (2003) and Kvale (1996), who suggest that interviewing allows for the creation of information and approaches to understanding which move beyond traditional positivistic approaches. These are instances where there is an interactive collaborative meaning-making process that is desirable in research concerning the subjectivity of individuals—processes for understanding that align with more hermeneutic or reflexive approaches to understanding (Denzin, 1978, 1989; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, 2003). In this context issues of validity

as well as reliability and generalizability, based on positivistic perspectives, are backgrounded. Instead, judgments of the value of interviewing, meaning-making and the research as a whole involve questions concerning trustworthiness and credibility (Kvale, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the depth, richness and complexity of interpretation (Richardson, 1994) or inducement to reflection and discussion (Lather, 1991).

In this context the information emerging from interviews acts as an opportunity to create a rich articulation of educators' understandings of their ethical relationship or responsibility with/in the tension of cultural difference. In undertaking the task of interviewing I relied primarily on Kvale (1996) who offers a rigorous yet flexible approach to interviewing which is frequently cited as useful—whether interviewing is framed in more orthodox and empirically-oriented terms (L. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000) or in more postmodern or poststructuralist terms (Ellis & Berger, 2003; Ellwood, 1996; Rosenblatt, 2003). Kvale's ideas concerning qualitative interview research are neither overly technical or closed nor unstructured and vague but offer a balanced and coherent orientation in regards to the philosophical and pragmatic tensions involving interviews. His work along with others', such as Seidman (1998), Richardson (1994; 2003), Gubrium and Holstein (1997; 2003), van Manen (2001), Ellis and Berger (2003), aided and directed me in developing the more pragmatic procedural aspects of this research and provided not only insight into the methodological underpinnings concerning interviewing but also interpretation.

Research Site, Location and Participants

The site of this research is found in the intersection of Levinas' thought and the concerns of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators who come together for the purpose

of educating children. These educators were people acting in a professional capacity as teachers, administrators, school consultants or support staff at a school. They were involved with a school located in the inner city of a major urban center in Western Canada. Students at this school often lived at or near the poverty line and were predominantly of First Nation and Métis heritage.

What Went On

I interviewed seven people who represented a mix of teachers, administrators and community support personnel. Five of these participants were female, with three self-identifying as being of Aboriginal heritage. Our conversations were typically about an hour and one-half in length. I interviewed each person twice, at times and in locations suitable to them. The initial conversations were transcribed and then examined for meaningful statements concerning how educators understood or enacted their responsibility with the purpose of creating questions for a more focused discussion during the second interviews. After I transcribed the second set of interviews, I examined these for statements pertaining to the interviewee's responsibility and the concerns and tensions they experienced. These understandings were examined alongside the interpretive guide in an initial consideration concerning if, how and to what extent aspects of welcoming were evident. I created summaries of participant's understandings and these, along with each person's transcripts, I provided these to participants for feedback and editing in an effort to gain further feedback from participants as well as to check on participants' meaning. Providing summaries to participants for review also allowed individuals to identify and alert me to any unsuitable or sensitive information they did not wish me to use—there were no such requests. Interviewing, transcribing, the creation of summaries

and the delivery of materials to individuals occurred over a six to seven month period starting in the fall and finishing in spring of the next year.

Ethical Issues

In considering how to proceed and in carrying out this research, I relied primarily upon information provided by Kvale (1996), Seidman (1998), Cohen et al (2000), Miles & Huberman (1994) as well as the research ethics guidelines from the University of Victoria. Formal written consent forms were completed by each participant (see Appendix 3). Participants were given a description of how the research would proceed, including that our conversations would be audio-taped and transcribed. I discussed with each participant that copies of transcripts and summaries of their understandings would be made available to them for editing and correction—each received a set of their materials that included both transcripts and a written summary of my understanding of their words. I was the only one with access to the original tapes and transcriptions from conversations.

The participation of educators in this research did not require my observation of them or my involvement in the public venue of their workplace, however, some interviews did occur within certain school facilities in the privacy of participants' classrooms or offices. Given that some participants were still employees of the local public school board and that the information they revealed may have contained sensitive information concerning their students or themselves, I obtained consent from the local school board for holding conversations. Knowing their administrative superiors were aware and supportive of their participation in the research seemed to put the participants at ease, and they appeared to speak freely about the challenges, issues, tensions and

conflicts they experienced. It should be noted I previously worked for several years with all participants as a teaching colleague in the school setting described earlier.

There is always the chance there will be information in this research that may help in identifying certain individuals. However, given that participants worked in this school setting over several years and that other non-participants held similar positions to participants, anonymity is likely secure, as well, several of these educators have moved from this school to work in different education contexts. Nonetheless, in my writing I still attempted to minimize any potential harm to participants resulting from a loss of anonymity by identifying speakers in vague terms, disguising circumstances to some degree, and slightly fictionalizing some experiences—for example, where there are experiences held in common by participants which involved others such as students.

A dilemma arose for me in my use of Levinas' ideas and identifying participants. In the identification of participants, even if presented as fictional characters, there seems already a sense of judgment that perhaps unduly alters who we believe is speaking, our sense of the veracity of their words, and therefore how open we are to what is being said—where perhaps who we believe is speaking shades over our opportunity to be fully attentive to their words.

This posed tension posed a problem for me. Initially, I aligned myself strongly with Levinas who is very concerned with the potential damaging outcomes of how we employ categorization and thematization in our encounter with others—that what we often easily overlook the difference we encounter with others. Levinas talks about how we potentially risk collapsing the difference existing with others through our reliance on categories, a collapse that may distract us or rob us of the deeper wisdom and insights

people offer in the words they utter. Given this concern I had hoped that the readers of this dissertation would be attentive to peoples' words listening closely as Hampton says, "not only to what I say, but how I say it." Initially, I wished to forego speaking the category "administrator," "teacher," "support person," "male" or "female," "Aboriginal" or "non-Aboriginal," hoping that in doing so the words of participants would speak for themselves and generally in what follows I adhere to this. Like Levinas, I desire readers to be attentive to the "saying" of these individuals, though constrained by the said of the written word, to listen less to who we might believe was speaking—a belief perhaps already conditioned by our conceptions of professional role and cultural identity. However, this strategy of not naming participants would no doubt have added difficulty in writing, if only for the simple grammatical matter of making the text accessible to the reader.

Therefore despite my intention to align myself with Levinas' concern, where I would have participants' words appear without the precondition of naming and describing them, I do provide fictitious names to these participants. I will leave it to the reader if they desire, to decipher from participants' words who they believe is speaking whether, persons of Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal heritage, male or female, administrator or teacher, or community support person.

The question of what participants gained by their involvement with this research is important to address. In regards to this participants benefited in various ways. While the interviews were not intended as therapeutic, the interview conversations were opportunities for participants to deepen and create better understandings of their personal and professional lives. As several participants indicated to me during this research in all

their years of teaching they had rarely if ever had the opportunity to discuss in any depth the challenges, tensions and doubts they experienced in this school context. They revealed to me an interesting mix of relief, sadness and desire where they welcomed opportunity to reflect on their experience and commented on how this has aided them in better understanding their teaching contexts and their identity as educators.

Participants: Who, Why and How Many?

This research involved the participation of educators, therefore determining who should be involved and how many people were needed was important. This determination involved, aside from the willingness of participants, a consideration of who may be the best or most suitable participants in creating meaningful conversations relating to the research question or focus (Cohen et al., 2000; Kvale, 1996).

There were approximately fifteen people acting in educational roles in the school when I approached them to participate. Given my intention of gathering information of sufficient quality, attempting to interview fifteen people at least twice presented logistical constraints concerning time and finances, as well as access. Other constraints included the potential volume of information which would be generated through transcribing interviews, re-presenting them to each participant for clarification and extension, as well as analyzing and writing reflections in response to each participant's meanings and undertaking—possibly repeating this process a second and perhaps third time. With the situation of such restraint in mind, a smaller number of participants seemed desirable to accomplish the goal of developing enough quality materials for this research—materials that lend themselves to a strong reading of Levinas. However, having too few participants

ran the risk there may be insufficient information in terms of the quality of interview materials and subsequent materials.

Seidman (1998) suggests erring on the side of more interview subjects rather than fewer, yet what is more or what is less is unclear. He also suggests that interviewing should not involve those you supervise, your students, friends, or acquaintances outside of professional association, yet he is unclear on the issue of interviewing past colleagues. Researchers who discuss qualitative research often hesitate to provide specific numbers of participants for interviewing, citing the difficulty in doing so given the uniqueness of research topics and sites (Cohen et al.; 2000; Kvale, 1996; van Manen, 2001). They suggest only that the research question or topic requires careful consideration in order to arrive at a suitable method and from this emergence of method a suitable number of participants can be determined. Somewhat contrary to Seidman, Kvale (1996) states, “a general impression from current interview studies is that many of them would have profited from having fewer interviews in the study, and from taking more time to prepare the interviews and to analyze them” (p. 103). Again slightly contrary to Seidman, some researchers such as Platt (1981), Segura (1989), and Stanley and Wise (1983) cited in Ellis and Berger (2003), suggest the familiarity of researcher and participant researchers is desirable. They suggest researchers interview peers with whom they have established relationships, making use of the everyday situations in which they are involved and their common experiences. Given the lack of definitive guidelines concerning the suitability and the number of participants to be involved in face-to-face interview research, I attempted to reconcile the differing views of researchers by finding some ‘middle

ground.’ To accomplish, I chose to interview former colleagues whom had worked with me for several years in this school setting.

Other considerations concerning the selection of participants involved the level of disclosure that might be possible between the researcher and participants. While I had conversations with these educators previously, there were several who articulated more clearly and in-depth their experiences, the tensions they felt and their understanding of responsibility. Relying on them further restricted who participated in this research. Given these limits, I finally interviewed seven people, three who self-identified as being of Aboriginal heritage and four of non-Aboriginal heritage. Two were male and five were female. Together they fulfilled three different roles, i.e. teacher, administrator or school support person.

While the research was not intended to be generalizable to other situations, nor to portray participants’ understandings as representative of Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal thought or culture, people did self-identify in ethno-cultural terms and by other measures of identity. Therefore providing the opportunity for these perspectives to be present was important even as I did not directly focus upon ethno-cultural difference and this is evident at times through their words. Given the need to create a meaningful reading of Levinas, as well as the desirability to provide some insight into the pragmatic aspects of these educators experience and involve the perspectives of people from a variety of backgrounds, I felt I must gather information from more than two or three individuals. This prompted me to finally interview seven individuals.

First Interviews

These conversations revealed pertinent background information about participants that led into discussions of their experience amidst ethno-cultural difference. In these conversations I relied upon a set of guide questions (see below) that were open-ended and provided participants with the opportunity to expand the conversation in directions they felt important. Interviews were audio-tape recorded. Transcripts were created and examined as soon as possible after interviews. During the conversations I sometimes made notes concerning future questions. Using these transcripts and listening to the audio tapes, I made notes of situations, expressions and meanings, that as Marshall (1981) and Seidman (1998) suggest, allow for better analysis. These gave me insight into how people understood their responsibilities, duties and what significance they gave these. During the conversations and after, as Rosenblatt (2003) suggests, I made note of further topics to discuss, as well as areas of conversation which perhaps needed further discussion. These questions and topics formed the basis for our continued conversation.

Often with interviewing there are concerns (Seidman, 1998) that questions may inadvertently prompt the respondent to shape their answers in particular ways or offer responses which maybe imprecise or vague. There is a desire in these cases to somehow use interviews as a method to draw out the knowledge of people—where knowledge is treated as somehow static, bounded and readily accessible (L. Cohen et al., 2000). However, Kvale (1996) suggests that when interviews are conceived as conversations they are by their very nature an interpretive dynamic event where people create meaning in the moment—an understanding which does not assume or believe what is said has value only to the degree such information can be understood as somehow discrete and

confined. In this research interviews were approached as a dynamic meaning-making process which elicit people's understandings of responsibility with/in cultural difference, where a consideration of 'how' people expressed their thoughts was as important as what they said in relation to welcoming. To prompt meaning-making I used the following questions in the first interviews. These questions included:

- Has your understanding of First Nation and Métis culture changed during your involvement with this educational community? What has this meant to you personally and professionally?
- Are there tensions you have felt in this community between mainstream culture and Indigenous ways of knowing and approaching things? How do you understand your responsibility to others in these tensions? How have you dealt with such tensions as it regards your beliefs and values, and your role as an educator? How do you see such tensions being resolved in the future and what is your role in regards to this?
- Tell me a story when you felt that you had gone from being an insider to being an outsider, or from an outsider to an insider in this educational community. Did this change your understanding of your responsibility to others? If so, how did it change?
- What do you know now about cultural difference and similarity you did not know before you were involved with this educational community?
- What has the experience of being in this community revealed to you about yourself, as it regards cultural understanding and your relationship and responsibility to others?

- Have your feelings of responsibility for others changed during your involvement in this educational community? What has this meant to you personally and professionally?

Second Interviews

In preparing for the second interview I reviewed the first transcripts to create a list of quotes and statements for each person indicating their sense of responsibility, the tensions they frequently encountered, experiences which evoked particularly strong emotional responses among educators, and frequently used phrases. I created questions and made note of points of interest concerning the specific tensions each person experienced. From these notes that recorded recurrent tensions, phrasings and situations among participants emerged several common points I used for further conversation.

I used these notes during the second set of interviews to explore more deeply these educators' understanding and enactment of responsibility. I asked participants the meaning of such phrases as "getting it," "walking in two worlds" and asked them to expand on what success meant for them. We also discussed tensions concerning how they helped or enabled students, their status as a cultural insider or outsider, their sense of belonging or exclusion, and their understanding of the relationship between the sacred and secular in this school context. Relying directly on ideas in the interpretive guide, when opportunities arose, I asked participants what they learned from others, if and how they felt at risk and vulnerable to others, if and how their way of understanding and acting may have changed or have been interrupted by the difference they encountered in others, and finally, if at times they felt out of place in their accommodation of others' ideas and situations. After transcribing these conversations I returned again to consider

them against the interpretive guide I had developed. This consideration prompted me to further develop a more sophisticated interpretation guide, a guide I realize was continually in refinement. How I approached and made use of this information is outlined below.

Developing Meaning with Participants' Understanding and Notions of Welcoming

Interpretation is an imaginative process where the meaning made does not always emerge as discrete bundles of knowledge which portray some absolute and agreed upon final truth (Gadamer, 1976, 1994). However, despite what this implies concerning the nature of meaning and truth, there is the need to offer to readers, in some consistent and reasoned manner, an articulation or interpretation that allows them the opportunity to make determinations concerning welcoming. In regards to making sense of interview material there are various approaches and methods that typically rely on coding or categorizing information as part of the meaning-making process (Miles & Huberman, 1984, 1994; Silverman, 1993). Yet the very act of coding is open to critique as a naive empirical or positivist undertaking whether one relies on condensation, categorization, narrative or uses ad hoc measures in making meaning (Kvale, 1996). However, this critique seems extreme and unwarranted if not also limiting, for people do build understanding through such measures and these understandings can be useful and enlivening both for themselves and for others. In this research I attempted to find a balance—a balance between understanding meaning as entirely objective or as entirely subjective, where the words of participants speak for themselves even as I employ them as a measure in determining the veracity of welcoming and Levinas' thought.

This search for balance involved attending to two key aspects of this research. The first involved examining how educators understood and enacted responsibility as welcoming while the second concerned examining to what extent the concept of welcoming in itself was helpful in understanding educators' enactment of responsibility. While I differentiate these two aspects, they are intertwined and any attempt to create meaning and an articulation of that meaning involve both. To address these I approached the interview information and related writings on welcoming in the following manner.

In a manner typical with interviews, for each participant I created a set of transcripts from the audio tape recordings along with accompanying notes concerning important aspects of the interview. From each of these I created lists outlining examples of interruption, vulnerability, learning from the Other and hospitality. I placed these examples in a simple data collection table using the four aspects of welcoming as headings (see Appendix 1). The outcomes of this seemingly simple procedure produced several challenges concerning how I would work with data alongside notions of welcoming. These concerns involved how to best handle information and how to articulate my philosophical interpretation of welcoming.

One challenge concerned how to handle participants' particular descriptions or explanations of experience as evidence across the several aspects of welcoming. For example, a participant's understandings would reveal aspects of welcoming as hospitality but also as interruption or learning from the Other. In these situations I was left to decide which words of the participants might be most revealing.

A second challenge involved how my reliance on the interpretive guide, while initially helpful in scrutinizing individuals' words, left me realizing the need for a closer

examination and more explicit rendering of the notion of welcoming. This involved not just a re-consideration of Levinas', Derrida's and Todd's ideas but also of how I might represent both the participants' words and the contributions of these writers. This resulted in examining more closely the key words and ideas of welcoming, where for example, the idea of interruption became more explicit as involving notions of avoiding the domination, surmounting and envelopment of difference. During these closer examinations of the nuances of welcoming, I returned repeatedly to participant's words to reconsider and reselect evidence for if, how and to what extent welcoming as responsibility may be said to be occurring. As my articulation of this research evolved I created a list of quotes and paraphrases for each participant, identified by transcript line number, which later allowed me a relatively quick method of keeping track of related ideas. The lists created revealed a first interpretation of how participants envisioned their responsibility or instances in which they enacted their responsibility. These listings also recorded instances of tension where educators questioned their decisions revealing their uncertainty about what they should or should not do. With this information the task of searching for welcoming among the understandings of participants began. In the meaning-making of this search there were at least three main concerns that made me cautious and helped guide me in my reliance on Levinas—concerns which the reader of this research should be aware.

The first concern involves the difficulty of relying upon translations. The writings of Levinas I employed were translations from French to English and carry with them the difficulties that one may find with translated writings—where the nuance of particular words and phrasings are minimized or skewed, if not sometimes lost or incomplete in

translation. While my moderate familiarity with the French language was helpful, there remained compromises at moments in my understanding of Levinas' exact meaning and intention. Second, Levinas frequently makes use of Greek and German philosophical terminology in ancillary ways that nevertheless bear on how one understands Levinas' intent and meaning. Even with the rigorous translation by Alphonso Lingis in Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* (1961) and *Otherwise than Being* (1981) or in various translations in Hand's work on Levinas (1989) I suspect there is always slippage in what Levinas relates and what the translation is able to provide considering it is an English translation. Yet the message Levinas relays was compelling and this urged me on in considering his ideas. This resulting slippage of meaning was mitigated to some extent because Levinas does not wish his readers to rest comfortably in meaning nor to be too sure they have arrived at some final absolute understanding of what he is saying. This leads to a second difficulty.

While writers such as Derrida, Critchley, Cohen, Todd and others espouse the deep value of considering Levinas writings, there are those less enamoured with his efforts (Badiou, 2001; Ricoeur, 1992; Zizek, 2001). Their criticisms concern issues of logical flow and meanings of self and Other that Levinas employs. They suggest one cannot be a casual reader of Levinas. Whether or not Levinas purposefully means to remain diffuse and indefinite, reading his words can become especially problematic as he presents his writings as a rigorous philosophical argument. These criticisms are warranted and do point to the difficulty in engaging Levinas' work. This situation presented a challenge for me in deciding how to represent Levinas to the reader and, for

the reader who is unfamiliar with Levinas' efforts, a challenge which neither the reader nor I are likely to entirely surmount.

In a manner, Levinas always offers a moving target of meaning that requires vigilance in determining what is intended or what nuance of meaning he is portraying. While Levinas accepts the inevitability and necessity of themes and categories in understanding human experience what concerns him, as Hutchens says, is Western culture's "rational totalization that strips things of their uniqueness and proposes a final synthesis of knowledge" (2004, p. 57). The words and phrases he employs are meant to disrupt readers just when we think we have captured and contained what he proposes. During my work to interpret educators' understandings alongside Levinas' philosophy there was a sense of slipping back and forth or between levels of meaning whether literal, grammatical, metaphorical or philosophical in nature. Dealing with such shifting was a challenge and an opportunity for learning but constituted a constant worry that I may be overstepping what Levinas intended or the readers' patience in dealing with the phrasing and terminology I employed *vis-à-vis* Levinas. As well, as with most philosophers his ideas change over time and this added another dimension to what he was intending to relate.

Emerging from this second challenge is a third. Given Levinas' nuanced writings, it was difficult to bring them alongside participants' understandings in a manner that allow readers easy accessibility to the language and concepts Levinas employs. Levinas, as he admits and his critics repeatedly note, is in struggle with language—a struggle in which there is the attempt to avoid constraining and totalizing our understanding of the Other and the difference constituted in the Other. In representing Levinas' work with

participants words, I faced the challenge of not doing a disservice to Levinas by simplifying or constraining his meaning in ways which undermine his apparent intent, even as I needed to offer readers a clear articulation concerning if, how and to what extent welcoming as educators' responsibility is seen within the participants' words. This was perhaps the most difficult challenge of relying on Levinas, a challenge I would suggest can never be entirely resolved. I addressed this challenge by offering an articulation that was an invitation to make meaning. For myself as researcher and for the reader there is a need to remain mindful of the seductive, constraining and incomplete nature of creating and relying on categories and themes.

However, while keeping such cautions in mind, there existed the need to fashion an articulation concerning welcoming and responsibility. To better accomplish this I provided an introduction to topics using found poems (Richardson, 1994, 2003) or poetic representations (Sparkes, 2002). These poetics were fashioned through selection and compilation of verbatim text from interview transcripts. The poems were an attempt provide insight into the understandings, feelings and thoughts of the educators I interviewed—to give voice to the “saying” of the people and sense something beyond the “said” of their words. These insights and reflections together provide a sense of this groups' consciousness presented in their own words (Seidman, 1998). These poems have a point and counter-point format that attempts to highlight the tension and concern of the participants regarding their understanding and enactment of responsibility. This was done by offering a verbatim statement from participants on the left side of the page that might be read as an initial understanding or belief. This is followed by another verbatim statement on the right side of the page, a statement that illustrates or reveals a more

sophisticated understanding that participants came to realize. In a few places I used a bold font to focus the reader on a particularly important phrase that again points to more profound understandings held by these educators. The use of poetic representations offers several benefits.

First, such representations help retell “experiences in such a way that others can experience and feel them” (p. 197) inviting the reader “into the interpretive realm where the writer (and the reader) make leaps” (Sparkes, 2002, p. 116) in meaning.

Second, such representation is similar to how people actually talk and convey meaning (Richardson, 2003) which allows further accessibility for the reader to the words, descriptions and explanations of these educators.

A third benefit is that the reader receives an alert “that it is the author who is staging and shaping the text” (Sparkes, 2002, p. 116) and in this realization the reader can recognize the writer is offering only a singular interpretation among many possible interpretations. In identifying the singularity of such interpretation there was the opportunity to avoid approaching educator’s experiences as “only technical problems requiring technical solutions” (Jardine, 1998, p. 122) where there is a supposed singular correct approach or interpretation.

With these cautions and reasons for presentation format outlined, this research is an opportunity for readers to consider their situations with new understandings. This opportunity seems all the more important in a time when society, experiencing multiple cultural realities with contending epistemologies, beliefs and values, demands educators to be responsive and act ethically to others with/in the tensions of cultural difference. In articulating this research I hoped to offer readers-as-educators a place to consider their

responsibility, not with an eye to offering prescription or developing some program concerning ethics, but to examining the possibilities and conditions of their own embodiment as ethical beings.

Chapter 4

A Found Poem of 'Success'

There are days where I can be pushed, the kids will push and they will be rotten
They will be mean and I will still have more to give

*"Getting it" is realizing that there are different realities
There are different ideas of success, a number of different realities
To step back and think, "Ok why am I here and what are the reasons?"*

There are days I don't get it. I will just shut it off. "I can't. Today I can't".
And they feel it right away, "What's wrong with you today", she says to me

*There's some things I need to learn, that I don't know, that are important
To acknowledge the true value of human interaction
More than book and human interaction in learning;
To be willing to befriend people from a different culture,
To know who they are in a way that challenges
What you always believed about them*

They feel, in the whole classroom, how you feel, and what you have put in to it
They pull from you so much more energy. They need so much more attention
So much more praise and help and when you don't have it, they feel it

*It's more than just the academic
To be invited into a relationship at a different level,
Making a connection to another individual who was a First Nation
At a family level... a "touch base with family" time
The allowance for the spiritual*

Some people come here and try to shut off all the time, they just don't "get it"
They don't know how to reach the kids, to them it's just like a commodity
"This is what I do for a profession"; that's their role.
There is a separation between them.

*It is about engaging them wholly and completely
Of having a sense of purpose and building a sense of purpose;
Beyond this reality, about the spirit
Helping them to see themselves beyond where they are now
It doesn't follow any straight logic track...the spirit and the soul come into it
That's what "getting it is!"*

Re-envisioning Success, 'Getting It' and the Welcoming of the Other

Notions of success for public secondary schools and determinations of how well schools are doing often focus upon empirical measures of success such as attendance rates, student and class achievement determined by grade point averages, increasing numbers of credits obtained by students, increasing graduation rates, and the number of scholarships and bursaries awarded—where larger percentages or increasing numbers of these accomplishments indicate greater success. This conventional view of success, whether considered in relation to teachers, students or schools, often involves a focus on the timely, efficient and cost-effective delivery of programs, curricula and instruction, where an educator's success might be measured in terms of how well they deliver on the promise of mandated programs, curricula and instruction. Eisner (2001) argues that such measures and indicators rest upon a framework of “rationalization” that he and others such as Hargreaves (2001) and Brady (2000) believe are inadequate.

Educators I interviewed understood the need to fulfill such conventional demands for success, yet also found their notions of success changed in their encounter with the difference of others or the Other. In such change these educators envisioned success in a manner different from more conventional notions of success. They realized the lives of their students embodied a radically different reality from their own. This was a reality these educators of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage described in their own words as “a white, middle-class-dominated society”, a “middle-class European understanding,” or an “oppressive white-dominant cultural realm.” Recognition of this reality appeared to throw into confusion and disarray educators' previous understandings, practice and notions of success.

These educators seemed to believe that conventional understandings of education and educational practice made little allowance for the reality of what transpired in students' lives, the unique challenges students faced, the unique nature of each student. They came to understand that such conventions often devalued students by devaluing the knowledge they possessed and the ways of knowing they enacted. Educators sensed a tension between the educational demands mandated in the discourse of "white middle-class-dominated society" and the reality of events occurring in students' lives. These educators sought to navigate such tension in helping make the educational experience meaningful and worthwhile for both their students and for themselves.

To navigate this tension these educators seemed to seek opportunities to create, participate in situations, or find ways of being that offered students, student's families, the surrounding ethno-cultural community and themselves the opportunity for a less oppressive educational experience; a less coercive situation where the needs of students were met more on the terms of students, their families and involved ethno-cultural community. In other words, to make up for ways that traditional schooling was perhaps failing them. This involved situations where people such as students and their families found they had a voice and a claim for alternatives that moderated or even eliminated the coercing aspects of education.

Responding to the needs of others, educators appeared to question what was meant by success, who was defining success and to what purpose. Educators questioned the nature and purpose of the programs, curricula and instruction they provided, and the meaningfulness of such programs, curricula and instruction for students. They questioned

their role and responsibility and, in doing so, came to re-envision success and their responsibility.

Few of these educators would likely be comfortable with formulating a definitive list of features of success, for they seemed sensitive to what such a listing implied and how it might be used, a use that may be a colonizing or oppressive act where others such as students were controlled and restrained in their learning. For one educator, Blair², this was not merely a possibility but a reality, as they said, “When we first came into the education system they taught us to be in these little boxes, to sit and be quiet and listen.”

Like Blair, the educators I interviewed seemed to sense the possibility of acting oppressively or in finding themselves allied to measures or methods that might be oppressive. They often seemed to be asking of themselves, as one person did, Kerry, if their voice “may be the voice of the oppressor.” This concern was evident in the description and explanations of their experience and these people seemed wary of the possible outcomes of a stringent application or over-reliance on efforts to categorize others. These educators seemed wary about following a stringent application of rules that might undermine their attention to the very real presence of others and potentially dismissive of unique needs of those around them. Many of these educators recognized the unique difference and nature of their students, where as one person, Pat related, “every last individual required something special.”

People seemed wary of actions that attempted to direct or limit what seemed a meaningful response to others, a threat that Levinas (1961) suggests is the collapsing of

² A fictitious name for one of the participants I interviewed who worked at the school. In the following chapters I will use a series of these fictitious names in place of the real names of participants.

the “saying,” or the unique unknowable difference of each person, into the “said” of category, theme or stereotype, where, as Blair suggested, there was a “philosophy for the operation of the school from a management point of view, that of the specific Western approach to education.”

The following section details how these educators re-envisioned success for their students but also for themselves.

Educators’ Transforming Understanding

These educators re-envisioned success for their students but also themselves and while these aspects of success can be discussed separately, they were intimately involved and implicated in each other, with each playing a role in how the people I interviewed re-envisioned and enacted success but also re-envisioned their roles and themselves.

In speaking of students’ success people such as Blair and Pat another educator, maintained a concern for the pursuit of academic success, while realizing that student success existed in ways beyond the academic or “task-oriented” pursuits of schooling. Educators were often hesitant and discomforted when considering how the success of their students was envisioned. They seemed to question whether they could fully know what success meant for their students or if they had the right, despite their authority as educators working within a public school system, to outline in any final fashion the parameters of success for students. The words of one person, Chris, demonstrate this hesitancy:

What are we using to gauge and measure...what has this person actually learnt that isn’t being acknowledged and valued? That is the same in our society, where not recognizing the knowledge of the old people...Elder...that knowledge that they have but is not acknowledged by our society as having real value.

While Lee, a colleague, suggested that,

ideas of success are relative to my position in society. I have white middle-class values and the hardest thing for me was to, on a daily basis, not impose those white middle-class values on the students that really may never experience the same things I do in life, nor will they ever have the same values.

In describing student success, educators considered the context of students' lives beyond the school. For some educators, students' success involved students avoiding the danger of gangs or violence in the neighbourhood and arriving safely in class everyday. These were dangers that at times could be extreme where one person, Kerry, describes a student's recollection of witnessing "her uncle murdering her mom" and goes on to say, "for so many of them it was about survival on a day-to-day basis," where "danger is part of their culture, being aware and ready for it and ready to give your life for someone." Some educators envisioned student success as having students in a good state of health with their basic needs for food, clothing and shelter met. As one participant observed,

If the child was healthy enough to get up and get dressed and get to school, that was "day one" success. For me, "in the building" was the first step in success...I saw it in stages...at least get into the building and then you can do the next one. (Pat)

The educators I interviewed understood that given the challenges students experienced, acting only on conventional notions of success was perhaps not entirely adequate for either understanding how to help students in their lives or help students ultimately fulfill academic success. Given the transience of students and their families, educators frequently talked of students being successful if they sensed they belonged.

Lee suggested success involved students "figuring out their own reasons for being there and having a purpose that belonged to them, where they had ownership for why they came to school". While Kerry saw success existing where students allowed "themselves to enter into school...to be part of this, to risk being there, to risk...for a lot

of them it is a risk stepping out in urban culture. It isn't even just First Nation. I mean you could probably translate this into any urban high school, where there's gangs, where that whole community of gangs...the risk of stepping out of that life and into this life... we will never completely understand." Students' success meant finding "that spark or whatever it is that interests them and... helps them see where it is they are going" (Chris).

These educators envisioned success for students as students gained experience or learned to find their way with the dominant culture but more on student terms, where students developed an ability to navigate a way in the tension and intersection of the different realities they experienced. Like other participants Lee suggested, that these are instances where students gained the ability

to live in two worlds...ways in which they can be successful or more successful in a white middle-class dominated society...that has a lot of systemic racism that doesn't understand the culture of poverty, that doesn't understand First Nations cultural views and worldviews [where] they don't have to rely on drugs and alcohol...they don't have to rely on crime...they don't have to rely on...this is really over generalizing, but rely on gangs as a way to fit in or feel wanted.

Educators re-envisioned success for students as involving strong positive identities and positive relationships through their educational experience where they learned to deal with conflict in positive ways. The need for this and the implication of this as a measure of success is heard in various instances of participants experience and Kerry's words provided one example of what was at stake.

They don't have that solid sense of identity...They had a strong identity as an Indian kid in the stereotypical sense of the word and as a kid living in the 'hood', as a kid living in poverty; that was their identity. So, I wanted to introduce them to people and to situations where they could see themselves in a bigger world and just start understanding some of the good things that come from their First Nations culture, that just wasn't about poverty; wasn't just a perpetuation of the negative stereotypes...I started to see that the missing link that we had was in how we build relationships with people, because this is the one thing these kids lacked the most. They

didn't see positive relationships in their life enough to know what it looked and sounded like and how to do it. And when things went wrong, when there is conflict, how to deal with it in a positive way.

In developing their identities further and in learning to navigate a way with the dominant culture, to “walk in two worlds,” educators understood their students’ success involved an uncovering and deployment of the hidden language and resources of the dominant culture for the student’s advantage. These educators were not advocating any kind of assimilating or colonizing action in this deployment where students are forced to conform to mainstream culture beliefs and values. Instead, educators were concerned that students develop resources to use at the student’s discretion, in their time, to navigate a way with the inescapable reality of mainstream culture and the effects this culture had on students. The need to aid students in the development of such awareness and resources was evident in the words of one participant, Kim, as they said,

in the culture of cheque day³, the culture of welfare, you are not going to learn the middle-class hidden languages. You will know about them and how they oppress you but you are not going to know how to manipulate them; to make them work for them.

Educators did not view helping students develop such awareness and tools as an easy undertaking and appeared to understand that equipping students for the “dominant culture” meant students must build up their emotional and spiritual resources and physical well being, as well as their intellectual resources. These educators understood student success as the growth or development of these capacities and believed this

³ Cheque day was the day that government welfare cheques were issued to families. Often students did not show up during this time, staying home to ensure they received a portion of this money. Otherwise they may miss out on having money to pay for basic necessities.

required students' involvement with their cultural community, with the 'Old people' or Elders, and with cultural celebration and ceremony.

These educators also re-envisioned their success. They frequently used a particular phrase in discussing their success. For these educators the phrase "getting it" typified or indicated how they understood success. But what does "getting it" mean for educators? What might this phrase reveal to us about how these educators understand their responsibility?

While these educators concerned themselves with conventional measures of success for their students such as high grades and achieving credits, like many of their students they experienced a sense of walking in two or even multiple worlds. In this experience there seemed a transformation in how they envisioned success for themselves. This apparent transformation prompted me to ask if there was a deeper level of meaning that might be found in relation to what constituted success for these educators.

In their encounter with the Other or the otherness of others, these educators appeared to express a re-envisioned or transformed understanding of success that involved a willingness to live with the unsettling effects the difference embodied in others elicits. In a fundamental way these people appeared to exhibit the openness and vulnerability Levinas (1961; 1981) discusses. There was an openness that seemed to involve a vulnerability to others, in which there was an acknowledgement of the difference embodied in others and an affirmation of the ascendancy of the needs of others. This understanding of success appeared to involve a teaching where the difference embodied by others taught these educators, bringing to them new understandings of themselves and others. Finally, this understanding of success seemed less rigid and static,

where there was an openness and flexibility as to what counted as success in the ongoing ambiguity generated in this school context. In such encounters educators appeared to experience themselves as hôte or a guest-host who attempt the difficult task of accommodating the difference of others even as this difference threatened their role as host. Educators' understanding of success found expression in the phrase "getting it" and this revealed success as involving a welcoming the Other or the otherness of others that revealed the responsibility of these educators and the pedagogical nature of this responsibility.

Given this context, the following discussion explores the extent to which Levinas' notion of welcoming was understood by these educators as a re-envisioning of success and in doing so attempts to determine the extent to which educators' responsibility might be envisioned as a welcoming of difference arising from the call of the Other. In this discussion there is an opportunity for readers-as-educators to consider their responsibility, not with the intent of offering a prescription for a codification of ethics, but to examine the possibilities and conditions for themselves as expressions of ethicality.

'Getting It'

For educators the phrase "getting it" was heard often enough in conversations to suggest that for them if you are "getting it" you are, in some manner and to some degree, being successful. This suggests questions such as "what does 'getting it' mean?" or "what is involved with 'getting it'?" In other words, what constitutes success?

How these educators envisioned and enacted success was unique to each person. Nonetheless, there seemed common thoughts, feelings and experiences among educators that provide a fuller sense of what success meant for them. These educators seemed to

regard success as concerned less with the proper employment of instructional technique or program implementation and more an affirmation of the need for change. This need involved a questioning of their own understanding and practice, as well as acknowledging, affirming and supporting students in ways meaningful to students, student's families and in meaningful service to the surrounding ethno-cultural community. These educators seemed to sense not only the need to find a way with the demands of the traditional or conventional ways of schooling, but also to transcend this discourse and navigate their way in a manner which better served these others.

For these educators "getting it" involved understanding the importance of relationship and the need to continually acknowledge, affirm and support meaningful and helpful relationships among self and others. Relationships were conceived by the educators I interviewed in a broad manner, and involved colleagues and students and student's families, students' peer relationships, educators' relationships with individuals in the local ethno-cultural community, and students' involvement with others in the local ethno-cultural community. The emphasis on attending to relationship was heard consistently through the words of educators where, as Jordan said, "the importance of the relationships is probably the thing that I have come away...knowing it's the most important" and Kim offered,

If you didn't have a relationship, you couldn't fight through the barriers that there were. Our students were keenly aware of the people who were...whether their heart was available; their heart was there.

Kerry noted,

all of a sudden I am in this school where relationship is far more important than task ...that whole notion of relationship with student is different and unless they've been part of being invited in and recognized that invitation...I think that is what I mean by 'it', the relationship level of

experience...success and the whole notion that is out there right now. It's more than just the academic and how do you measure the relationship?

This awareness and affirmation of the importance of relationship was intimately entwined with educators' belief in the necessity of not only espousing the rhetoric of the unique nature of the student and the need for unique response, of a child-centered education, but of actually pursuing this and pursuing it in situations beyond the classroom or school.

Success for these educators involved a willingness to move beyond conventional understandings of their roles and responsibilities and to involve themselves in ways that went beyond what might typically be expected of an educator in a public school. As Lee related,

You realize you are more than a teacher, you are more than a vice-principal, you are more than a custodian, you are more than an office assistant, you have more responsibility I believe, almost a societal responsibility...you realize that it's just not an average teaching assignment.

This sense of stepping beyond conventional roles was found in conversations where participants talked of seeing themselves in what is perhaps a more familial-like relationship with students. Where as one Kerry said they were more like an "Auntie" or "Kohkum"⁴, a position that "gave me inclusion, that title when they gave it to me, allowed me into their world not as an equal but as a respected part." For others such familial-like relationship seems influenced by gender where, "there was something to do with being female that shaped my responsibility...I was their aunt, not their mother, for I was always respectful of their parents...like 'that's not my child'... so I conducted

⁴ A reference to "Grandmother"; an older person in the community, not necessarily genetically related, who is honored, trusted and respected.

myself as an aunt would from the way that I learned how an auntie would be” (Pat). For one person relationship took on a familial tone as Jordan suggested they were “way more like a parent than anything else. Especially when the kids tell me they live alone and there are five of them living in the house and there are no grown ups.” This importance of relationship was evident to these educators, yet others realized like Kerry that “it takes three years to build the trust, [that] cross-cultural trust”.

Success or “getting it” appeared to involve a willingness on the part of educators to serve directly others in the ethno-cultural community and to educate others, such as colleagues at other schools, who were not yet familiar with the ethno-cultural community. These educators had to learn about relationship and the only way was “to suffer through learning the hard way” to willingly be led into ethno-cultural experiences unforeseen and foreign to them, to be trained by those in the surrounding ethno-cultural community through cultural happenings such as feasts, sweat lodges or, in the case of some educators, their involvement in such events as ‘Sundance’ or ‘Raindance’ or ‘Fire’ ceremonies. This, as Chris described, meant being “sponsored in” to ethno-cultural situations by students and their families or perhaps an Elder. As Kerry related “I would never have gone to powwow if I hadn’t been invited. And it’s that whole idea of being sponsored into a culture. She [a student] sponsored me into her culture.”

“Getting it” meant taking time to be with others to be taught traditions, to be taught about ceremony, perhaps to fast, to participate or aid in ceremony or, for some like Chris and myself, to act as helpers to Elders. In such learning participants expressed an understanding that there was a need to attend to the spiritual realities of self and others. This involved being available or open for such learning where, as Chris related, there was

a never ending pendulum of learning in situations... totally outside of that circumstance [school] yet its so integral. I mean if you are working in a facility that belongs to the public school board, which is 98% First Nation and Métis kids, that come from varied experiences, in terms of their own culture understanding or their own background or whatever their case maybe, that's got to be a really critical part of your own necessary knowledge base.

Involved in such learning emerged a need to question the *status quo* or conventions of schooling and in such questioning educators came to question the notion of success. For many of these educators success involved maintaining a questioning attitude or disposition concerning their ethnicity, their social standing and privilege, that went beyond considerations of instruction, curricula and program. In this self-reflection the educators I interviewed queried themselves concerning their understandings, values and actions. Lee's words were typical of the sensibility of educators at this school, as Lee explained,

[To] have any effect you as a person really have to re-examine what you believe, how your beliefs are different than other peoples, how your ideas of what is successful or not successful, what is important or not important, are totally relative...You need to understand everything is relative. The successes we had there were equally as huge as 80 % of [an elite school] having an A average.

For some, their success involved being a role model for students where they showed a "willing heart" and connected with students on a personal level as someone who helps "the kids if they need assistance in anything, whether it be to just sit and listen or whether to help them out with whatever goes on in their lives and just being a positive role model for them" (Kim).

The educators I interviewed viewed their success as involving a need to probe deeply into the nature of their involvement in schooling, as well as interrogate the larger realities of school or school system. As Pat explained,

I really realized the conflict in the values that allow us to define success the way we do are very different culturally...So that is what we are trying to move to...to be permitted or to be allowed or to be accepted in defining success for the young people that we work with ourselves, and facilitating the parents and community to have that as well.

Such self-reflection and questioning affected how educators provided instruction.

For one educator this led to examination of their notion of success and the idea of a “bright future” for students. This bright future, as Kerry noted, was informed entirely by their middle-class experience. Kerry recounts,

I had to change my language and it wasn't until about the third year that I learned to picture a bright future...I had to change my philosophy of encouragement because even my language of encouragement was very middle-class...it's like 'I've got to get rid of the connotation.' I've got to get, not the connotative definition, but community definition of success...if you don't learn the community's definition, you can't use your own. Or if you do use your own...you have to be very aware of it and is it being perceived as a weapon, or as bragging, as pride, or as oppression because your experience is foreign to somebody else.

This need to be attentive to how students and their families perceived of their success was evident with people such as Kerry, Pat, Lee and others and is reflected in the words of Chris:

We need to do something, we've got to figure out something for the kids, to really get something happening for the kids that is worthwhile, that is valuable to them, that is useful...where we offer work shops, bring in professionals, do stuff with students, a lot of cultural events happening in the school, have a little volleyball tournament, so we cover every mental, physical, emotional, spiritual aspect of our learning.

This concern for providing something that was “worthwhile,” “valuable to them” and “useful” to students and their families confirms a realization that what constitutes success must be attentive to considerations beyond the typical concern for grades and academic achievement. For these educators, such concerns seemed a corrective balancing of a narrow focus on academic pursuits, a corrective balancing that acknowledges the spiritual, emotional and physical well being of students was not divorced from academic

pursuits and required attention. This correction involved more than typical notions of success but went much further in questioning who has a say in defining success, as well as how such success was to be achieved.

The educators I interviewed envisioned their success involving a close attending to students where a student was “Wakan Haji”⁵, a “child standing sacred.” Children had power, were to be respected and honoured. This involved attending to the uniqueness of each student. The following quotes illustrate how some of these educators understood this attending:

Every last individual required something special or they would have not got through...different kinds of interventions...outside of teaching classes or providing extracurricular activities that would help individuals get to their ultimate goal. (Lee)

Really acknowledging...the true richness of an individual within their own cultural experience whatever it may be...acknowledging it and trying to acknowledge it in a way that makes or gives them a sense that their identity...this sort of oppressive white dominant cultural realm in our educational experience...doesn't have to take front row all the time. (Kerry)

Every kid is different, they don't all have the same issues, they are not all suffering from poverty. They are not all suffering from neglect or abuse or lots of them are...you have to find out what it is, and then you deal with that kid a little differently. (Lee)

[Knowing] it is not per se the culture within the person themselves, like you are not really trying to deal with that, you are trying to deal with the person themselves and if you treat them like a person I think you will make more headway than anything. (Blair)

In attending to the difference of their students these educators appeared to believe they were successful, and especially so if they were helping students develop a greater understanding and familiarity, as well as strategies and life skills for dealing with the

⁵ A Dakota phrasing generally meaning “Sacred Human Being”

“dominant culture”; the “middle-class European understanding,” the “white middle-class dominated society” or the “oppressive white dominant cultural realm.” Several of these educators noted their success involved the creation of opportunities for students to experience the dominant culture in a manner that empowered students to somehow deal with the “box.” This box was, as one educator described,

[The] system or society in general. I think the box is just like the paradigm of school. What school is, what success is, what a student should do on a daily basis when they are in school. That is the box. (Lee)

The idea of schooling as a “box” was expressed often by educators in discussion of students existing “in two worlds.” These educators saw themselves as successful if they could manage to help students engage the dominant culture on students terms and in ways that empowered students to make the best choices for themselves; as one educator related:

They need to know middle-class language; that our English curriculum...is very middle-class, and in the culture of cheque day, the culture of welfare, you are not going to learn the middle-class hidden languages. You will know about them and how they oppress you but you are not going to know how to manipulate them to make them work for them. (Kerry)

Success for educators involved creating opportunities for students that often did not concern purely academic matters. Educators envisioned their success as sponsoring students into a range of experience, situations that would not only help students engage the dominant culture more on student terms, but also build students’ capacities in a variety of ways, providing a sense of worth and sense of belonging for students with the school and with their community. This often meant having a willingness to go beyond what may be typical for educators in more mainstream middle-class school contexts. Educators believed they must take action, action that might require significant effort on

their part and the acceptance, not denial, of students' reality beyond school, as one educator explained,

At another school, the kids would show up at the time they are supposed to be there, and having been fed, and their clothes washed and with our kids that doesn't happen. We wash their uniforms. We feed them before every game. They don't go home because they don't come back for a variety of reasons. They may get stuck baby-sitting, they may have to take care of a parent...teachers pick up all the slack, all the extra work and it's so much extra work... there is no one else in their life who does that for them, so in order to function to do the main stream activity, it takes three or four teachers hours and hours and hours a week and it's hard... They just have so many more obstacles. It's so much harder to get where other kids are. (Jordan)

Some educators understood their success involved making strong connections with students allowing them to help students while remaining vigilant that students also have a responsibility to themselves. Aiding students in the development of this self-responsibility founded in relationship was how one educator, Kim, defined their success, as they noted,

If you are just doing it for them then you are enabling them. And I saw examples of that where people would do for them without really making that connection to them as human beings. I think that is the difference, that investment of the relationship, that investment into the relationship. Because it is easy to do it for them but then you get pissed off because your best efforts were not good enough. If that is the case then you have done it for the wrong reasons.

For these educators their attempts to help students be successful, to "walk in two worlds" or deal with the "box" of education and society, was a measure of their success. To accomplish this they accommodated students' needs by altering the time constraints placed on students to complete classwork, made changes to the school year format to allow more opportunities for re-entry for student who left prematurely and changed their thinking that graduation need occur within a four year span.

Despite a variance in how educators described “getting it,” or what success meant for them as educators, their words conveyed a sense of their belief in the necessity of avoiding what some writers describe as pedagogical violence often immanent if not inherent in most contemporary educational settings (Britzman, 1998; Jagodzinski, 2002; Todd, 2001). This is the necessity to ease the demands we place upon others to become what we believe they should become, to avert or minimize coercive aspects of schooling whether these involve instruction, program or curricula. They appeared to understand a need for flexibility in response to students that allowed for the difference they encountered to thrive. Educators seemed to see themselves and the school as successful if they could be adaptable and flexible in helping students find a way to be different in a setting that often demanded a conformity that was beyond the ability of many students. The flexibility in these educators’ encounters with others occurred, for example, when students could not complete class work in the allotted time or semester, or when students were absent for extended periods of time due to challenges they faced beyond school and educators often responded by providing extensions or allowing course work to be carried over into a successive term.

These educators attempted to provide a response fashioned on the unique difference constituted in students’ lives and this did seem to place additional strain on them. Educators seemed to believe success was not in avoiding such demand but in coping with the demand, in not backing away but in persevering and staying with the often difficult circumstances presented to them through students’ lives. These were circumstances where students often faced failure not because of a lack of intellectual

ability or motivation, but because of challenges students faced beyond the classroom that impacted student participation and learning in the school setting.

Re-Envisioning Success as Welcoming

In the following discussion ranging over several chapters, I rely primarily on Levinas' writings, reading them alongside educator's understanding of their experience. In this effort I examine the meaning of welcoming relying upon Derrida (1978; 1999; 2002) and Todd (2001; Todd, 2003c), who expand on Levinas' ideas relating to welcoming, responsibility and the Other. This articulation seeks a closer examination of the meanings that are involved with educator's understanding of success, and eventually offer comment on the existence or extent responsibility might be considered as a welcoming of the Other.

In offering this interpretation I rely on the four aspects of welcoming previously outlined. These aspects include 1) the interruption of people's sense of solidarity of self or sameness by the difference of others, the Other; 2) educators' vulnerability or openness where there is an acceptance and affirmation of the difference, independence and moral ascendancy of the other; 3) peoples' experience of the hôte, where the self experiences both the demand and impossibility of hospitality and the experience of being simultaneously guest and host in one's home or situation; and finally 4) learning from the other where one learns from the Other who brings the gift of learning and teaches us responsibility.

In the following articulation I am searching the "said" of educators' words and explanations for evidence of the four aspects of welcoming but also drawing upon my observations and extended involvement with these educators as their colleague but also

friend. In this searching is an opportunity to sense or catch a glimpse of the “saying” or the fleeting and vulnerable presence of Other—the “essential exposure to the Other without which there would be neither utterance or meaning” (Davis, 1996, p. 75). This fleeting trace of the Other, or the otherness of the Other, involves, as Levinas relates, approaching “the other by breaking through the noema involved in intentionality”(p. 48), in breaking through an understanding of the other as only or merely an object of our thought.

The use of common words such as “saying” and “said” in uncommon ways indicate one challenge among several in relying on Levinas’ thought to make sense of educators’ understandings of responsibility. Another challenge involves the assumption that there is some inherent linearity existing in welcoming that might suggest a progression of causality or some lockstep sequential process in which the aspects of welcoming emerge one after another anticipating some linear causality. The assumption of such linearity may be the outcome of a predilection in which we “can only say the Other in the language of the Same” (Davis, 1996). In other words, the “Same” is our need for technical answers to the human condition in which cause and effect can be detected and clearly outlined; a situation in which we maintain a sensitivity only to what is said. However, while Levinas does not dismiss such linearity and causation he seems to suggest that the realities of our responsibility occur simultaneously and continually and in fact time does not bound them at all in many respects. If we accept this then a person needs to be cautious of thinking of welcoming as a moment of linearity or causality. We perhaps desire this illusion as it involves familiar and comfortable ways of knowing, believing and determining value and these ways of knowing allow us to effect power and

control. There is a danger here, however, for too much attention to this instrumental or technical view of the world is one where we may turn from the real presence and needs of others; moments where we may miss the saying of the said and what we may learn concerning welcoming and responsibility.

In what follows there will be the on going challenge of awakening to the meaning and intent of Levinas' writing when engaging the terms and phrasings Levinas employs. Because of his use of common words that often mean something quite different than what might first be thought I offer explanations of Levinas' writings where such explanations seem necessary to help in framing and clarify the discussion.

Chapter 5

A Found Poem of Interruption

You really feel like you are walking in someone else's world
 A deeper level of that cross-cultural Canadian experience
 That urban post-colonial situation

*That was my 'day one'
 It completely interrupted my way of knowing.
 It was very unexpected for me
 The experience wasn't what I expected
 It was pretty different*

I didn't understand their life. And they knew I didn't understand
 Danger is part of their culture, being aware
 And ready for it and ready to give your life for someone

*I expected kids to come in on time and sit down
 and learn and get up and leave
 That never happened at all I guess
 It just kind of an eye opener for me, totally*

One thing led to the next thing...led to the next thing
 I thought I understood who I was and the way I am

*What I found out is that
 I learned a few things about identity*

How far do you go in whatever it is?
 Every kid is different.
 They don't all have the same issues

*The passion I have
 is not necessarily the passion they have*

And how far do I go?

Welcoming as Interruption

In speaking the word welcome or welcoming Levinas (1961) reveals the indefinite nature of our encounter with others and the interruption which unsettles us, where the

calling into question of the same – which cannot occur within the egoistic spontaneity of the same – is brought about by the other. We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics. The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics. Metaphysics, transcendence, the welcoming of the other by the same, of the Other by me, is concretely produced as the calling into question of the same by the other, that is, as the ethics that accomplishes the critical essence of knowledge. (p. 43)

One of my aims in talking with educators involved the possibility of revealing interruption and the extent to which such “calling into question” was evident in educators’ understandings. Therefore I examined educators’ understandings, seeking to gain some sense of it and to what extent the interruption Levinas discussed might exist in their words; part of a welcoming in which educators re-envisioned success and therefore re-configured their responsibility. Revealed in this exploration was also an opportunity to sense how interruption might occur.

To explore the possibility of interruption I presented evidence where educators’ understandings revealed a sense of challenge to the solidarity or *status quo* of their thought and practice; a sense of challenge that involved an unsettling of self or sameness and where there existed a calling into question of beliefs, values and perhaps identity prompted by the presence of others or the Otherness they encounter. This calling into question of self or unsettling is a crucial aspect of Levinas’ thought concerning what is ethical and highlights an aspect of welcoming.

For Levinas, interruption involves the unsettling of attempts to dominate, envelope, surmount or otherwise neuter the difference of others; attempts in effect that try to deny the Otherness of others. Therefore, to fulfill my purpose, there was a need to gauge if, how and to what extent interruption might exist for the educators I interviewed. This required a search for evidence and examination of this evidence in which educators, whether knowingly or unknowingly, found themselves unsettled in any attempts they might have made to surmount, envelope or dominate the difference of the Other.

Interruption, as an aspect of welcoming, cannot be disentangled from other aspects of welcoming such as vulnerability, hospitality or learning from the Other, so at moments the discussion may touch on these aspects of welcoming even though I separate them to facilitate discussion.

The Face-to-Face

The notion of face is important for Levinas (1961) because he suggests the face-to-face meeting with others constitutes an interruption of the self by the difference represented in the Other. This he suggests is important for in our face-to-face meeting with others there exists a responsibility that is unavoidable, that we cannot escape. Face, however, is not merely the constellation of physical features we might normally consider as the arrangement of eyes, nose and mouth, nor is face limited to some conception of identity affixed to some person with whom we may associate. Face may be these but for Levinas the face of the Other remains illusive and beyond our ability to comprehend and because of this demands our respect, as he says,

the way in which the Other presents himself [sic], exceeding the idea of the other in me, we here name face. This mode does not consist in figuring as a theme under my gaze, in spreading forth as a set of qualities forming

an image. The face of the Other at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me. (Levinas, 1961, p. 50)

The face then is a reality we can never entirely know, understand, or control that “resists possession, resists my powers...turns into total resistance to the grasp” (Levinas, 1961, p. 197) and it is this inability on our part that positions others above us, gives them moral height that we must respond to.

In other words, the face is a point of encounter, one of sensitivity and vulnerability to the world where “the Other is not just the object of my gaze, it looks back at me as both witness and judge (Davis, 1996, p. 134). The interruption Levinas infers that arises in the face-to-face meeting is, therefore, not merely bodily interruption on a physical level, but involves an interruption of our possible conceptions of others as static objects, formulations or members of a category; an event in which the ego encounters the impossibility of “its own closure and contentment” (Levinas, 1981, p. xxii). These are instances where the very real presence of another person, dynamic and insistent, ultimately beyond the limitations of how we can conceive of them demands our attention and our service, in other words our responsibility. For Levinas, the face of the Other is also where one realizes their being.

Interruption and the Difference Embodied in Students' Lives

In speaking of their involvement with students, these educators spoke strongly and emphatically while reflecting on both their own and colleagues' encounters with difference. In the words of some participants there seemed a sense of surprise in their face-to-face encounter with others. In such moments they came to question the nature of their professional and personal involvement with others and the difference embodied in others. In these encounters educators appeared to understand a need to move beyond a

passive acceptance of educational *status quo*, a *status quo* originating in a middle-class European perspective. This perspective often exists, as jagodzinski notes relying on Levinas' writings, where there is "a dialectics of recognition in our schools governed by a logic of 'totality'" (2002, p. 85), a "totality" rooted in our attempts to bring the difference of others in to the sameness of ourselves (Levinas, 1961; 1981). In this dialectic there may exist the totalizing actions of educators and systems that dominate and alienate others, whether student or educator. This is made possible "when schooling conditionally places the pedagogue in an authorial position with the student protected by a system of rights" which "already presupposes that violence exists in the heart of the teacher-student relation" (jagodzinski, 2002, p. 84). This presupposition of violence or coercion resides in schooling, a given of schooling, a situation Levinas might suggest is the passive reality of such situations, which despite what passivity implies is active and felt—an "active passivity" (Levinas, 1981).

For these educators there was evidence such passivity dissolved in the interruption of self by Other; an encounter that Levinas suggests unsettles and challenges the solidarity and sameness of self. Such interruption occurred as Kerry read student journals that were collected as part of student coursework. In this instance Kerry's assumptions concerning students' lives was shaken, as Kerry noted,

It completely interrupted my way of knowing. I just thought I was in an American–Canadian cross-cultural experience; that is unique within its self. But all of a sudden it was a deeper level of that cross-cultural Canadian experience...which turned out to not just be Canadian, it's that urban post-colonial situation.

Writers such as Kaomea (2003), Kumashiro (2000; 2001) and Fine and Weis (1997) outline this urban post-colonial situation and for the educators I interviewed this

was an encounter with difference where realities such as poverty, racism, transience, and personal physical danger highlighted the difference. Kerry explained this further noting,

we are in such a middle-class existence, we go home to our safe neighbourhoods and these kids go to their parties where the reality is knives, people getting drunk, beating each other up; danger. Danger is part of their culture, being aware and ready for it and ready to give your life for someone. Like, [Mercy]⁶ she gave her life for her sister, that's a reality.

Kerry's words conveyed a sense that no preparation of any type, nor application of guidelines or rules of engagement could prepare them for the difference they encountered nor their inability to constrain such difference and this sensibility was frequent with the educators I interviewed. Kerry explained further,

when their journal came in I wasn't prepared for what I was about to read...You can't treat these students like kids. They are really young adults. They have seen more in their short years than I will ever see. And they are mature in ways that other high school kids aren't.

There seemed a sense of unsettlement for Kerry representative of other participants that arose in part from these educators' efforts to engage students in conversations about the challenges and realities students face. Levinas might suggest these educators, in voicing an understanding of difference, were already making an ethical move, an embodiment of ethicality, where such questioning inherently implies these educators are already responsible. This embodiment, Levinas believes, arises from the primacy of our experience of "being with" or "*Mitsein*", where our responsibility is founded in our relationship to the Other (Levinas, 1961).

In describing an understanding of their students' reality, Kerry suggested these are not "kids" but "really young adults." These students were not inexperienced and without

⁶ This is a fictional name for a student murdered while coming between her sister's assailant and her sister during a weekend party at their home.

knowledge, but “have seen more in their short years than I will ever see.” They were not persons lacking ability and maturity, but “are mature in ways that other high school kids aren’t.” Despite showing an understanding of the difference there seemed in Kerry’s words a sense that the difference embodied in students was not containable and perhaps not available to be captured or understood. Kerry’s description reveals a sensibility that the difference that constitutes students’ reality will continue to surprise and evade attempts that endeavour to minimize difference or transform difference into the sameness of this educator’s ideas and action: this sensibility was seen often with the educators I interviewed. The difference embodied by students unsettled the expectations and understandings of these participants and such difference seemed for them neither available for manipulation or dismissal, even as such difference remained available for engagement.

The interruption of the same by the Other, the effort to evade “totalizing” the Other (Levinas, 1961), was seen in Kerry’s description of a visit to a student’s home. In Kerry’s concern to provide a student with missed coursework, Kerry appeared on the doorstep of a student’s darkened home located in a lower socio-economic area in the inner city. Kerry describes what happened.

[I] drive up to Freedom’s⁷ house...none of the lights are on...the front door and the stairs are broken out. I finally...go to the backdoor...it doesn’t look like anybody’s ever used the front door ... it’s pretty dark except for a few lights inside. I knock on the door and then I start to realize the truth of why Freedom is not coming...I can smell [liquor on] mom when she answered the door and yelled for Freedom... an angry yell, ‘Ah it’s for you!’ ... ‘Why did I have to get up?’ It was very unexpected for me... Freedom isn’t missing just because she is sick...I started seeing the bigger picture...‘I am home watching my little sister’...I started getting more of a story from her ... the house experience wasn’t what I expected.

⁷ A fictional name for a student at the school.

The mother's response wasn't what I expected. Freedom being apologetic wasn't what I expected and that was when... I think that was my 'day one' ...getting this idea her experience is really out of my realm.

The brief look in to Kerry's experience, like those of other participants, revealed the unsettling of self that Levinas suggests inhabits all our encounters with others.

Kerry's sense of what was normal, what was expected and what was to be assumed concerning the circumstance they encountered, was unsettled. For Kerry the face-to-face meeting with "mom," the actual reason for Freedom being absent, and the "house experience" "out of my realm" attest to interruption.

If we believe Levinas the revelation of the Other in the face-to-face meeting with others unsettled Kerry's ideas and assumptions, seen perhaps in the words of Lee who noted, "the whole purpose is completely different than any other high school that I had been in" where this purpose is perhaps, the embodiment of ethicality expressed as a nonviolent or non-oppressive pedagogy (Todd, 2001). The words of these educators suggest a re-envisioning of their responsibility and in doing so re-envisioned success for themselves in their role of educator but also as human beings.

The words of another educator revealed the unsettling of their assumptions concerning what students should be doing, how students should behave and, by inference, what the role of educator should entail. This person's idea of what constituted normality, typified by the constancy and sameness of mainstream public education with concerns for attendance and scheduling, was interrupted by the difference embodied in students' lives. The difference of others, the Other, appeared to interrupt and challenge this educator's expectations and values. This was perhaps the beginning of change that emerged from the unsettling of their solidarity and sameness, as the words of Jordan illustrated,

I came in and I expected kids to come in on time and sit down and learn and get up and leave. That never happened at all I guess...

I had to learn a different value system, a different culture. You know the First Nation culture, Métis culture and the culture of poverty; I had to learn. That was totally different for me because I am white middle-class...So it was pretty different.

There exists in Jordan's words a degree of being challenged and unsettled that I found with other participants. Interruption showed its face in the initial frustration of someone like Jordan, where these educators found themselves in a situation that was beyond their control and beyond their ability to contain and perhaps a realization this is often if not always the reality of schooling, as Jordan explained further,

I couldn't get to know the kids because I didn't know...I didn't understand their life. I couldn't accept it. I felt angry...And every kid is different, they don't all have the same issues...Just to be patient was a challenge all the time; to not press my values on them all the time and to maybe be accepting of theirs and maybe see the world a bit differently. I had to adapt.

The interruption of welcoming seems to exist here, but does it? We see Jordan's struggle in the face-to-face encounter with difference, a struggle to accept the difference encountered and this struggle represented a challenge to Jordan's solidarity or sameness of self. The tension of this challenge found expression in Jordan's feelings of anger. There seems a suspicion on Jordan's part of Jordan's potential inability to accept the difference embodied in others. However, this struggle and suspicion appeared to give way to an acceptance that the difference they encountered could not be overcome, that in effect Jordan would have to live with difference.

The attempt to dominate or contain the Other, the difference of others, gave way to a different challenge. This was the challenge "be patient" and "to not press my values on them," a challenge to abide and live with difference. Like other participants, Jordan's

experience represented a giving way that was a partial if not full acceptance that others and the difference they embodied required these educators to “see the world a bit differently...to adapt.” To adapt to disruption and unsettlement in response to difference is to change which, if we believe Levinas, is to welcome the Other.

For some of the educators I interviewed the difference they encountered was difficult to abide, eliciting in them feelings of inability and insufficiency. The ability of some students to persevere in extremely challenging everyday living situations disturbed some educators’ comfortable assumptions concerning their own ability if faced with similar circumstances and complacency concerning the reality of their students’ lives.

The vitality and strength of this difference seemed to interrupt some educators’ sense of sufficiency. Some of these educators were not only unsettled and shaken but fearful, and Jordan’s words illustrated an example of such concern.

I didn’t understand their life. And they knew I didn’t understand...I didn’t know a lot of things and they had been through some scary things that if I had gone through I don’t know if I would have made it and they did. So they were...the kids here are strong, strong, strong people, and I felt like I wasn’t as strong and so I was afraid.

There seemed a looming foreignness constituting a formidable difference for these educators, where even as these educators began to accept if not entirely understand such difference, they still seemed to have felt the safety of their solitude threatened. The threat was not in fear of violence from students but perhaps in the anxiousness of their inability through programs, curricula and instruction or their professional role to meet the challenge of student needs thus calling into question their very being as educators. There was an unsettling where these educators like Jordan realized their inability to constrain, direct or bypass the difference they encountered and in their inability to dismiss such difference.

The students were “strong, strong, strong people” whose experience could not be easily overlooked, nor swept aside. The difference constituted in the lives of students reverberated against educators’ sense of their abilities. Their sense of insecurity, their acknowledgement of their potential inability to cope, to adapt, to get through difficulties and challenges similar to those of students were symptomatic of interruption while being part of what inspired educators to re-envision success and to accommodate difference even as they were unsettled by the difference of others.

Lee’s experience seemed to provide another example of the interruption involved in welcoming of the Other, that was tangible in the experience of these educators, as Lee commented concerning the money students obtained through a school work program:

I guess I went home in shock everyday...the problems that my kids had or our family had were so incredibly trivial.

It was all these epiphanies for me. I remember the first time we brought the kids the cheques and I gave this one to this one guy and the next day it was gone. He had gone to a money exchange and they had taken their 15% or whatever off the top, and he had gone and bought all of his brothers and sisters stuff. Some of it was what I would consider useless stuff and I thought...and I even said to him, ‘you’ve just worked for two weeks and you spent it all in a day? Why didn’t you keep some for you? Why didn’t you go and buy yourself some shoes?’

Lee’s words reveal a moment of how a person’s understanding is unsettled, an unsettling that seemed frequent with these educators. Lee’s anecdote demonstrates a questioning sensibility, a sense of grasping after something not quite understood. There is a sense with Lee like others I interviewed that they are on the verge of collapsing the difference of the Other. In Lee’s case this seemed to mean directing this student to understand what Lee believes is the most desirable, suitable or correct use of money. The phrases “you spent it all in a day?”, “you didn’t keep some for you?” and “why didn’t you go and buy yourself some shoes?” could be indicative of what Lee might have done

if Lee were this student, where money would not have been spent immediately, perhaps being kept some for themselves and purchasing items they deemed worthwhile.

However, later Lee revealed unease that seemed common if not similar to other educators' moments of interruption. This unease occurred in moments or instances where these educators came to question themselves, feeling unsettled by the difference they encountered with others. The impropriety of Lee's need to contain the other seems to be revealed in Lee's questions, "why am I telling him how to spend his money? Why did it matter?" This does not appear a matter of being unconcerned for the welfare of a student but perhaps a realization that their understanding was limited, that the Otherness or reality of the student was beyond their grasp, and so the propensity to dominate the difference they encounter was undermined. Such realization unsettled their belief and in such interruption their understanding changed. There were perhaps in such moments a preference to avoid the imperious demand of control, in effect to say, "I know better" or "you should do as I do." Perhaps for Lee, like other educators I interviewed, this was a moment of realization that difference could not be enveloped or smothered in the surety of one's beliefs or values, and a further realization there was an opportunity to avoid a type of pedagogical violence (Todd, 2001).

The difference embodied in many of the lives of these students involved poverty, racism, a lack of safety and often danger. For one educator, Blair, this difference seemed less foreign and unsettling yet still real and felt. Blair's sense of unsettlement emerged in a different manner and involved assumptions concerning student skills and abilities that were at odds with the norms for Blair's student's age and grade level, as Blair related in talking of a grade nine student,

I really struggle with the fact he can't read. He is at a grade one level, grade one! So I have to think about that one. I haven't figured out quite what to do. Intellectually, like verbally, [he is] smart as a whip...I know you serve each individual differently because of their various learning styles...but here you have one person who is supposed to be in grade nine, but... 'am I supposed to pass you to go on further?'...Are we doing him justice? What will he be able to do in the big picture?

The unsettling of Blair's expectations was evident. This student's reality laid alongside the expectations and standards of program, curriculum and instruction provoked some consternation and questioning for Blair, such discrepancy prompted a questioning evident in Blair's words. As Blair said, "I have to think about that one" and "am I supposed to pass you to go on further?" there seemed a hesitancy to foreclose on difference. There seemed a precariousness where we find Blair waiting, perhaps attempting to determine what constitutes a responsible course of action. There is a wavering balance in such precariousness where Blair seemed unsure and cautious about doing a disservice to the student. A sense of insecurity seemed to exist in Blair's consideration of the challenge that difference offered. Hesitation in the face of difference was evident as Blair said, "I know you serve each individual differently" and was possibly an attempt to avoid passing or covering over difference by immediately invoking standards that would dismiss this student. Perhaps Blair worried that the act of passing a student on to another grade level would be in this instance irresponsible.

Hesitation and precariousness indicative of interruption seemed to exist for Blair evident in Blair's words below,

This one girl came about half way through [the course]...she came once, gone, came again. You know by the time you add it all up...she had missed half the semester...So am I going, "Do I pass her?" And she's the one that needs the grade 12. So what do I do?

Again, Blair is interrupted and challenged in the practical dilemma of addressing “Do I pass her?” This type of situation existed for other educators I interviewed and myself and demonstrated perhaps a more fundamental unsettling and questioning prompted by the difference embodied in the reality of a student’s life. The absenteeism and transience of students constituted a difference that brought Blair and Blair’s colleagues to a point where there was a questioning of their view of themselves and their role as educators, that ultimately involved their questioning of what constituted responsibility and how should they act. The requirements of Blair’s role as an educator and the reality of the student’s position challenged Blair’s notions of what education was for, as well as the purpose of Blair’s role, as their words seemed to suggest,

Now is it my job to prevent them from proceeding or just holding them back and for what, and for what? You know they might learn more when they keep moving on. So what do I do?...Just because she was unable to jump through these hoops that I have set up. Is that education?”

Similar situations occurred with the educators I interviewed where they realized and were interrupted by the incontestable difference of the Other that challenged them in understanding and enacting their responsibility. This incontestability offered a challenge to educators’ complacency concerning their circumstance, situation and setting, a challenge that put into question educators’ understandings of themselves, their role and their duty. This challenge was also expressed in their words concerning their religious, spiritual and ethno-cultural realities highlighting for them the futility of attempting to dominate, envelope or surmount the difference of others.

Interruption and Spiritual, Religious, and Ethno-Cultural Difference

For several of these educators a sense of unsettlement emerged in encounters with the ethno-cultural difference embodied by students, difference evident in the need of

students and their families to involve themselves in ceremony, tradition and spiritual practice. This unsettlement emerged in a realization of the need to make the school experience more relevant to students and their families. For these educators the difference they encountered and the challenge they felt to the solidarity and sameness of their practice, beliefs and values was evident. There was a sense of uncertainty and unsettledness that was perhaps more poignant given the context of public education that typically eschews any approach but intellectual in regards to spirituality, religion or ethno-cultural beliefs and tradition.

However, despite the wariness of educators in such involvement, they could not seem to avoid the tension found in responding to the spiritual, ceremonial and ethno-cultural needs of students and their families despite the secular nature of public schooling. These educators recognized there was a need interwoven within the experience of being a student of First Nation or Métis heritage navigating the reality of an urban setting. This need called for a response that was unsettling for some educators where they contemplated what a proper course of action might be in being responsible. Blair's words once again related this kind of questioning as Blair stated.

The problem I face...as far as the spirituality goes with kids...How far do you go in that area? That's when I really have to watch personally because you have such a variety within the First Nations groups...we have a few that are traditional, a few that have gone Christian, a few that really don't bother. Trying to find a way through there, I try to speak to it as a person, as a human you know. That one I have a real struggle with yet. I think I still have the responsibility...to give them the knowledge, giving them the choice; developing their own system whatever that maybe. I guess I can be a First Nations and still wonder, 'Well should I be teaching it? Is it my job to be doing it?'

Like other participants, Blair sensed a challenge in how to conceive one's role as an educator. There was an acknowledgement of difference, "you have such a variety

within the First Nations groups,” that was recognized by persons of Aboriginal heritage as well as those of non-Aboriginal heritage. Blair emphasized approaching “it as a person...as a human.” Blair seemed to accept the difference implied in the recognition of variability, that reveals on one hand a need to identify oneself as acting from a place of moral sensitivity, attentive to the Other in the face-to-face encounter, but also a consideration for approaching others in a manner that confirms both their own and students’ humanity.

This confirmation incorporated a recognition of the unique nature and difference constituted in others. The phrasing “as a person, as a human” appears to align with Levinas’ concern for the saying, the intangible elusive but profound trace of the Other, found in the face-to-face encounter. For Blair, there seemed evident a same sense of the need to evade or minimize an approach to others such as students that might seek to contain, constrain or coerce the difference of these other people. However, like other participants, Blair’s evasive action was not undertaken to avoid responsibility but perhaps to ward against complicity in denying the choice of others and to aid others in developing “their own system whatever that may be.”

For another educator the difference embodied in First Nation and Métis reality was encountered in a different manner. For Kerry the encounter with difference unsettled their previous understanding of self and Other, prompting a sense of anxiety, guilt and perhaps even fear. Acting on an invitation from a student to attend a powwow, Kerry’s words revealed an unsettledness hinting at a crisis in Kerry’s thinking, where as Kerry explained.

The spiritual aspect was another thing. Easter holiday, was a very sacred holiday in my upbringing and I was stepping into another culture on a

sacred weekend. For me that meant something completely different from the spiritual Grand Entry of powwow... And realizing that this was a sacred time for other cultures...announcing the sacredness of spring looks different in another culture. At first I felt guilty being there, because of this spiritual side of things and this is a spiritually dark thing...I had to start to understand to my own Christian filter...One by one the families start coming in getting their kids ready to go dance on the floor...I watched them combing hair and putting their regalia on and the gentle pride...just watching this love of people, getting ready with their regalia and the gentleness and very intimate preparation for Grand Entry.

The guilt Kerry experienced through an association with a “spiritually dark thing” emerged in the apparent conflict of their “Christian” beliefs and values of “another culture.” Interruption appeared here unsettling Kerry’s beliefs where Kerry realized certain assumptions, expectations and knowledge were deficient or insufficient. There seemed a realization that there was no manner in which Kerry could force, contain or move beyond the difference encountered in this situation. Kerry seemed to realize there could be no totalizing of the difference being encountered because what Kerry believed or understood as a “spiritually dark thing,” gave way to an understanding of the “love of people...the gentleness.”

There was a transformation for Kerry where an acceptance of what was alien or foreign could not let Kerry maintain a self-same solidarity of belief. Kerry was interrupted in a fundamental way and perceived the “filter” of one’s understanding as erroneous and misguided. Perhaps like Blair who spoke to the difference of others they encountered “as a person, as a human.” Kerry also seemed aware of the need to move from a totalizing frame of the correctness of one set of religious beliefs to focus on the saying of the face-to-face meeting with the Other that allowed for a fuller understanding of the world. Both Kerry and Blairs’ experiences showed the attentiveness to the trace of

the other that honours and respects the very real human presence of an other (Bogert-O'Brien, 2000).

To rely on Kerry further, while Kerry recognized the difference embodied in others who experience a different ethno-cultural and sometimes economic reality, there existed in the words of Kerry a sense of their emerging responsibility. From unsettledness emerged Kerry's acknowledgment and affirmation of the gentleness and love of people that became irreconcilable with Kerry's previous assumptions about the "spiritually dark" nature of the event of the powwow. Levinas might suggest that this educator, by voicing an understanding of the incontestability of difference, was extending an already existent responsibility where there was already the enactment of responsibility in the living breathing body of an educator like Kerry or for that matter any of these educators. Levinas believes this embodiment arises from the primacy of our experience of not just being-with others but of being-for the Other as a founding reality of responsibility (Levinas, 1981).

Interruption and unsettledness occurred for other educators I interviewed in the tension of decisions concerning school protocol and how they were to respect and affirm others in their self identification as ethno-cultural others. This tension was seen clearly as one educator, Lee said,

I struggled with lots of different things. I won't explain a million of them but flags [Treaty flag, National flag] that should be flying outside of the school. What was the protocol at an assembly or at a graduation? Is it First Nations Honour song or is it O Canada. What is the protocol there? Am I going to offend somebody if I play O Canada before a drum group plays an Honour song?

The act of voicing such considerations again appeared evidential of an encounter with the difference embodied in others, an encounter that interrupted their original

understanding of self and others. Lee seemed to eschew the domination of difference wherein a person might ignore or look past the needs associated with such difference, by resisting the temptation to look past the difference one encountered, in effect to say, “we are all the same” or perhaps “you should understand this as I do.” In Lee’s words seems the attempt to withstand the totalizing urge to render the Other impotent or non-existent.

The encounter with difference and reality of interruption seemed evident across multiple instances with another participant. In this instance Pat’s involvement with students, colleagues and people in the local community, there seemed confusion concerning the complexity of identity and categorization but also an acceptance of the ambiguity of such circumstance. Pat seemed to accept the ambiguity and constant tension that seemed to exist with the Other but also within oneself, as Pat noted.

To my massive confusion...Everyday changed. The floor was always shifting. [In thinking of the school] I went over the people that shaped the relationships and connections. I went through each person and how it was to work with them, what prices I paid for being “too white”...and what price I paid for being “too First Nations”...And where were they coming from, that was their reality...I just always...I never put a name to if it was racial or gender or physical size, like shortness, all the ways you can be different than other people.

Their words illustrate an understanding that their encounter with the Other was a shifting, changing reality, where they were sensitive to attempts to constrain the difference they encountered. Pat’s concern about being “too white” or “too First Nation”, seemed ultimately a response to the difference encountered with others by Pat, that for other participants as well seemed a response that saw them attempting to accommodate the Other. Pat’s words “all the ways you can be different than other people” hint at interruption in a realization that ultimately we in our roles as educators or

as persons cannot control, dominate or surmount the difference of others, in other words the Other is always beyond our grasp.

For Pat interruption happened in another manner. In speaking of colleagues' demands for resolution, like other educators I interviewed, there was a sense of unsettlement prompted by others who

wanted to know... "Give me an answer." But the cultural value was to show 'I honour your question by thinking about it. I will come back to you and answer later'...Where from my perspective if I gave the answer right away, yes or no, I was flippant. I hadn't thought about it...I was supposed to know...."Just tell me the answer yes or no."

Again, there was a sense of being disturbed and unsettled by the demands of others who in Pat's case demand immediate action, demands that emerge in part from assumptions concerning Pat's role. Pat sought to honour others' questions by taking "enough time to think" and to avoid being "flippant" yet was unsettled by this.

Interruption was evident and this interruption involved a challenge where the "cultural value" Pat possessed of honouring the questions of others, questions that constitute a face-to-face encounter with the Other where this person would "get back" and "answer later," were unsettling. In a manner this demand, this imperative of others to provide the answer "right away, yes or no," was an invitation by others for Pat to act expeditiously, efficiently and perhaps in manner that may have been totalizing. Paradoxically, this encounter was one where there seemed an invitation for Pat to look past the difference of others, perhaps to undertake the totalizing event that Levinas outlines as unethical, though Levinas offers no set of guidelines or prescription for what may be ethical.

In this instance Pat encountered difference but seemed to sense the subtle call latent in the demand for immediate action and resolution and attempted to resist this call. What is important about this resistance is that the encounter with difference, while

unsettling and disruptive, did not necessarily mean for Pat that there would necessarily be compliance with the desires or needs of others such as colleagues or students. Levinas does not suggest that interruption leads to blind capitulation to the desires of others, but that the difference of others we encounter if we are seeking to act ethically and to determine the form of our responsibility must be acknowledged, affirmed and aided. There must be some acknowledgment displayed in our thought or action confirming that the Other is beyond our grasp to control, beyond our ability to extinguish by envelopment within our sameness or in ignoring or surmounting or looking past the difference we encounter. The unsettling nature of difference embodied by others was felt by these educators and demonstrated to some extent in the examples I have brought forward to this point through which we can witness their interruption by the Other.

Though many of the educators I interviewed possessed significant experience and knowledge of First Nation and Métis ceremonial, spiritual and ethno-cultural matters, for some interruption occurred in these familiar contexts with familiar others in relation to spiritual, ethno-cultural and community realities of the surrounding First Nation community. Individuals like Chris found themselves challenged and unsettled during events such as cultural ceremony where in Chris' case Chris' actions were incongruous with what was expected though Chris did not realize this in the moment. Chris became unsettled and anxious, feeling "really bad, clearly, and I am supposed to have been...to have gained a fair amount of knowledge already." This unsettlement and surprise suggests interruption as Chris' words revealed.

You will sit back, you won't participate partially because you don't know, partially because you're unsure, partially because you don't want to offend, partially because...all these different kinds of things...you don't

want to make a mistake, you don't want to cause someone to say, "Oh! No!"

Chris's encounter with, "all these different kinds of things," involved an unsettling of understanding that brought into question and prompted hesitation, a hesitation where there was seen an inability to contain the difference they encountered. The words of Chris reveal the unsettling nature of an encounter where "you don't know," where the Other surprises and disturbs you, and where "you're unsure" of the nature of the difference knowing "you don't want to offend." This hesitation, we will see later, constitutes in part what Levinas suggests is our openness and vulnerability to the Other, our vulnerability to the alterity of others. The hesitation is an openness and vulnerability where we realize our being emerges in the independence and moral ascendancy of the Other.

The previous discussion presented evidence that interruption occurred among these educators. However, the interruption of self, of the unsettling of these educator's sameness or solidarity by the difference constituted in others and their inability to dominate, envelop or surmount the difference seems to emerge in another form in this educational setting. In closing off the discussion concerning interruption the following discussion explores the transformative reality of interruption as educators encounter the difference of what was formerly aspects of their own sameness. The interruption was in a manner a re-interruption, where former beliefs, thought and action now represented a foreignness that unsettled and disrupted what they had come to understand about themselves and others.

Leaving Interruption

The understandings of these educators through their words, descriptions and explanations provide evidence that the difference embodied in others interrupted educators' thinking regarding self and others in fundamental ways. Through this interruption these educators recognized a pervasive lack of opportunity and privilege for students that often highlighted and contrasted their own relative abundance. Previous statements quoted such as, "I went home in shock everyday," or "it completely interrupted my way of knowing," revealed the surprise and unsettling of self that provided evidence for the interruption of which Levinas speaks.

For some educators interruption emerged because others had "a different value system, a different culture" while for others difference emerged within tensions they experienced concerning their sense of responsibility for aiding students in developing their own sense of identity and belonging. Despite their ethno-cultural identification with students, for some educators this was no assurance their encounter with others in ethno-cultural tradition, ceremony and spiritual contexts would not find them again unsettled and interrupted. The acknowledgement of such difference was evidence for re-interruption as Blair considered the nature and extent of responsibility and asked "I can be a First Nations and still wonder, 'Well should I be teaching it? Is it my job to be doing it?'"

While through the words of these educators we can see examples that are in many ways explicit examples of interruption, the words, descriptions and explanations of educators also revealed a more fundamental or sophisticated experience or understanding of interruption. We can trace a deeper understanding of interruption that suggests the

transformation of these educators or at least an affirmation of the need for a sensitivity to and aversion to attempts to dominate, envelope or surmount the difference they encounter with others. The educators I interviewed seemed to understand they could not control the difference embodied in others' understanding because, as Levinas suggests, there ultimately can be no collapse of the Other into the sameness of educators' beliefs, values or thought. While each person's particular situation was unique there were similarities in their experience among these participants that suggested the surprise of encountering difference that highlights interruption.

The words, descriptions and explanations of educators seemed to suggest that these individuals experienced the fundamental and sophisticated interruption that, as Neve Gordon notes in reference to Levinas, is "the epiphany of the face that appears before me...defies my intention to possess it...undermines imperialist inclinations that desire to appropriate the other to the same," where "I cannot dominate the other in its totality, because its totality is infinite and as such exceeds me and my power" (Gordon, 2004, p. 111). These educators seemed to realize the difference of the Other was a challenge to any "imperialist inclinations" they might possess, and they acknowledged and affirmed the difference of others by moderating or bringing into question their attempts to dominate, envelope or surmount the difference of others.

There was a sense with these educators that such acts or orientations were repugnant as well as futile. However, this sense of futility in commanding difference did not mean these educators turned from their engagement with others or avoided challenging students to learn despite their difference, but with an understanding that

perhaps they must engage others in a new manner, where for example, these educators and their students re-envisioned success.

These educators seemed to understand, while never completely or without hesitation, that their encounter with the difference of others meant searching or enacting a relationship with others that was less coercive. Their words demonstrate a struggle to avoid grasping after the difference they encounter and transform difference into sameness and solidarity of their thoughts and ways of acting—whether this transformation might have better suited fulfilling the demands of program, curriculum or instructions or satisfied their own beliefs and values. These educators seemed to understand in a fundamental manner that such attempts to transform difference possessed the possibility of a pedagogical violence (Jagodzinski, 2002; Todd, 2001), an oppressive undertaking that would leave them complicit in enacting forms of colonizing thought and practice. Interruption appeared to involve moments of such tacit realization where as Levinas says, “conscience welcomes the Other” and one experiences a “revelation of a resistance to my powers that does not counter them as a greater force, but calls into question the naïve right of my powers, my glorious spontaneity as a living being” (1961, p. 84)

With these educators there seemed an implicit acknowledgement that difference existed in a manner that circumvented educators’ attempts to manage and control. This understanding involved challenges to how educators understood themselves and their roles of eliciting change that perhaps involved a letting go of ideas where they could exercise control over the difference of others. This letting go did not mean educators gave up trying to understand and serve others, frustrated perhaps with the incontestability of the difference they encountered, they just appeared to realize the futility and

inadvisability of such holding tight to the notion they could remake the Other into themselves. Even in the confusion, tension and anxiety their understandings reveal about their encounter with the Other, these persons remained aware and attentive to difference, they endured the uncertainty and ambiguity that difference elicits for the self.

Eschewing totalizing attempts through domination, these educators seemed to also to understand there could be no envelopment of the Other, where they might possibly enshroud the difference they encounter, covering it over and allowing them to continue with the *status quo* where there was little change in their beliefs, values or practice.

In the interruption of the face-to-face encounter educators also seemed to understand they could not cover over difference. There existed ultimately no way any veil or mask of their beliefs or values or practice could be laid over the difference of others, the Other, stifling the voice and hiding the face of the Other. In the surprise and shock of interruption any such covering would be rent or torn by the difference of the Other where, as Levinas says, “the face of the Other at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me” (1961, p. 51).

In the interruption these educators experienced, they appeared to embody an understanding that their success lay in remaining open to the difference of others. They seemed to understand they could not encapsulate or enclose the difficulty and difference of such realities, embodied, for example, in students’ lives, abilities, or knowledge. They sensed they could engage and learn from others but these educators realized they could not contain the difference they encountered. The difference these educators encounter demanded a response and this demand is an aspect of the surprise and shock they felt.

The educators I interviewed seemed to realize they do not have enough time, nor energy, nor facility to surround and cover over the difference they encountered and even if they did this would remain impossible for, as Levinas suggests, “It is not the insufficiency of the I that prevents totalization, but the Infinity of the Other” (1961, p. 80). This recognition of the supremacy of the “Infinity of the Other” was perhaps part of what shocked and surprised the educators I interviewed. Despite such lack these educators did not appear to turn from others as if to hide their face and attempt to evade what interruption prompts. Instead they seemed to understand that success for themselves as educators involved remaining in proximity with the Other and abiding with difference. These educators seemed to realize the necessity of remaining available, face-to-face with difference, responsive to difference embodied in others, and in maintaining such proximity educators believe they were successful as educators. In other words, they were being responsible.

This response to others finds a continuance in a re-interruption of educators’ emerging understanding by aspects of their former sameness. This sameness was constituted in the roles and undertakings typical of a mainstream, middle-class, educational setting which hold a steady focus on fulfilling the demands of program, curricula and instruction where measures of success are often conceived of in strictly academic terms—most typically high grades, numbers of credits achieved and numbers of students graduating. The participants’ experience interruption by the difference of their current students and their re-envisioning of success, left them changed. This changed seemed to involve a re-interruption where these educators found themselves aligned and identifying to some degree with the difference embodied in the lives of their current

students and families. These educators did not come to embody the difference of others such as their students but by their intimate association with others become an Other in view of colleagues at other schools, as Lee explained in the wake of working at this school, “you almost don’t feel the same as other teachers...I always felt like I am not quite the same.” While not embodying the difference of students or those in the surrounding ethno-cultural community, for some educators there was a sense of commonality or inclusion that suggested a shared experience of Otherness, where as one person related, “They have included you into their existence but you don’t really belong to their world. You are part of their big story and you are allowed in their story, but I won’t completely belong to that whole story.” The sense of being Other in relation to their shared school experience relative to more mainstream educational situations within the same school system was strongly felt by these educators. What was once their solidarity and sameness with more mainstream educational realities was now an Other than interrupted what they had come to know, challenging the new knowledge and understanding they had developed.

The evidence I have presented offers one interpretation concerning the extent to which educators’ understandings revealed interruption where there was an unsettling of one’s sense of security or comfort with self and where the difference embodied in others could not be dominated, enveloped or surmounted. The words, explanations and descriptions of these educators revealed the unique understanding each person embodied that is neither identical in how this understanding played out nor in how keenly felt. There were moments in the making sense of the “said”, the words, descriptions and explanations of educators, where we can glimpse the interruption of these educators. If

we believe Levinas, this interruption is a “manifestation of saying out of the said” (1981, p. 46), where the unique presence and difference of others prompts us to speak and thus give birth to our subjectivity where “the Other does not affect us as what must be surmounted, enveloped, dominated, but as other, independent of us: behind every relation we could sustain with him, an absolute upsurge” (1961, p. 89).

I believe we can see this upsurge of the Other that interrupts these educators, however, this hints at other aspects of welcoming that also warrant examination. Among these is the notion of vulnerability where we might find if these educators are open and vulnerable to the difference of others or the Other. Accompanying their interruption, is the vulnerability Levinas talks of present? Do these educators accept and affirm the independence of the difference embodied in others and the moral ascendancy or height of others? This is explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

A Found Poem of Vulnerability

Cree, Salteaux...first generation middle-class First Nation
 Cycle of generational poverty
 Whatever face they carried
 A woman who had been raped taking power for her life
 A boy who had survived being beaten into his gang
 The dynamics for each kid were so unique

*You look out for their best interests
 You praise them and encourage them
 You help them
 There's no technical preparation for that
 There's no admin classes or admin seminars
 There's nothing that can prepare you for that*

I prided myself - a straight arrow, a rule follower
 Follow the rules - Don't break the rules!

*But darn it! The responsibility just kicked in
 It taught me
 Sometimes you just have to go around!
 Following the rules stopped mattering as much
 We didn't ask permission
 We did the right thing
 We had to do those things
 We had too!*

I still found myself in situations where I often felt quite vulnerable
 Though we were in a very autonomous working circumstance
 We still didn't have any sense of empowerment to do anything

*If you maintain the perspective
 That this is the parameter of power and educational structure
 and you have to fit in that parameter
 and that is the way I am going to approach it
 Then you are not really
 I should say
 You are probably doing a disservice to that student
 And to real actual learning*

I would always say 'just come on in'
 I was trying to be more attentive to them than to the rules
 Though the rules are still there to guide you.

*Immediately throw away any kind of expectation that you have
Of what you think you are going into
Of what you are coming from
It's a really hard thing to do
But you kind of have to wipe the slate clean and get there and just understand*

That whole idea of having to get through school in four years
All of us had let that go

*Any other school John would have never made it past grade nine
Never ever!
John would have been a high school drop out
He would never be in university
I am so proud of him
You could see over the years John becoming the John that is obviously
The John he is right now.*

The bottom line is/was how do we help them succeed
Within the time that **they choose** to participate

*We came together even through our differences
And the different people that we are in our personal lives
That there's fundamental shared common beliefs
About teaching and learning about kids*

Those experiences were intense and life changing
Your action speaks louder than your words

*I thought my relationship and responsibility to them
As a teacher has never ended
Because I am not in the building does not mean I no longer know you
Or have a relationship*

My relationship and responsibility to them has never ended
Our relationship continues

Welcoming as Vulnerability

In the previous discussion concerning interruption I presented evidence concerning how there was an unsettling of educators' sense of solidarity or sameness where individuals realized an aversion to efforts that totalized the difference of others. In this aversion these educators sought to eschew the domination, envelopment or surmounting of difference they encountered and in doing so fulfill their responsibility. The following discussion extends the previous one concerning interruption by considering the possibility of vulnerability.

Levinas suggests that our encounter with others involves an openness and vulnerability where "to welcome the Other is to put into question my freedom" (1961, p. 85) where freedom is not found in an individual's ability to turn from others but concerns our choice of response "which is incumbent upon me without any escape possible (1981, p. 13). Levinas argues that we are always in response, always responsible, and freedom is not to be understood as a freedom from responsibility or even a denial of responsibility. This belief in freedom as the denial of responsibility, Levinas argues, is fundamental to Western philosophies that place Being before responsibility (Heidegger, 1962). Levinas instead suggests that our freedom exists in our choice of action and in how we serve others, not in the denial of such service because responsibility is otherwise than Being (Levinas, 1981).

In the following discussion I provide an opportunity to consider the words, descriptions and explanations of educators to sense the "one-for-the-other" that Levinas suggests constitutes our responsibility. This is an encounter that Levinas suggests emerges before the solidarity of the "for-one's-self" where our responsibility begins

before “ontological finality and of mathematical functionalism, which, in the main traditions of Western philosophy, supply the norms of intelligibility and of sense” (1981, pp. 90, 95). The general thrust of Levinas’ thought bears repeating, for Levinas seeks to envision our responsibility in ways which are not rooted in a Western philosophy of Being, a perspective that he suggests perhaps too easily allows us to lose sight of the very real presence of others as we indulge our subjectivity, ego, or self. To lose sight of the Other is an indulgence emerging from a supposed disconnectedness of being which gives rise to our ultimate isolation from others. Levinas suggests our subjectivity, sensibility and responsibility emerge not from the solidarity of Being, which Heidegger argues comes from an awareness of our mortality and the singularity and solitary nature of death, but our subjectivity emerges from our awareness of others and their Otherness or alterity, that provides an entirely different basis upon which to consider responsibility (Botwinick, 2006).

If we are to accept to any extent that educators understand their responsibility as involving a welcoming arising from the call of the Other, then supporting such a claim involves searching for evidence of vulnerability as one aspect of welcoming. Evidence needs to be found where we can sense or trace vulnerability in the saying of the words, descriptions and explanations of educators, or as Levinas says, “to awaken in the said the saying which is absorbed in it” (1981, p. 43). The following discussion seeks to explore if, how and to what extent vulnerability as an aspect of responsibility is evident in the understandings of educators.

Substitution and the Moral Height of the Other

There were tensions for the participants that revealed their vulnerability. These tensions involved not only educators' desire for students' academic success and the need to fulfill program, curricula and instructional goals but also the need to help students and their families experience school more on their terms. This meant acting on notions of success that included but also transcended concerns for academic success. Previously I suggested how educators viewed their success as involving a close attention to the unique nature of their students, responding to the particular needs and concerns of students. In examining educators' ideas concerning success we witnessed a deepening of educators' understanding of their responsibility where they understood the need, for instance, in going beyond the norms or conventions of policies, procedures and program.

This involved some disregard of norms, conventions or the *status quo* of schooling in relation to the expectations or role of educators that seems evident in educators' understandings and experience, both within the immediate school context and in settings beyond the school. There was a "one-for-the-other" instance that speaks to the concern for engaging persons as unique individual human beings, leaving as secondary an approach or perspective that frames persons as objects in the category "student." This may seem a mundane statement to offer as evidence of vulnerability, given the prevalence of educational discourse found in schools and curricula which frequently espouse notions of child-centered programming and curricula or student-centered learning that are imbued with rhetoric which pronounce the desirability of attending closely to the individual needs and concerns of students. However, while such public stories are frequent in pronouncements of school systems and in curriculum documents,

often the more private stories of schools, learners and educational programming and instruction perhaps do not match the rhetoric of such public stories.

However, the need for coherence between the public and private stories seems necessary if students, schools systems and others are to benefit by better understanding responsibility. This need for coherence was not lost on the educators I interviewed, where as Kerry noted regarding the importance of relationships and trust during the development of curricula grounded in First Nation and Métis perspectives, “at least make your public story be true...I brought that up at our very first Elders’ meeting. That our private story better match our public story if it’s going to work.” In such private stories there seemed to be the necessity of close attention to the face-to-face encounter with others seen in their concerns and needs, where educators displayed the openness and vulnerability found in the “one-for-the-other.”

These participants seemed to sense the imperative of responding to the humanness and unique difference embodied in students, their families and community, foregrounding the demands of the face-to-face encounter with another human being against the demands of school context and protocol, where perhaps there was a back grounding of perspectives which approach others as “it” (Buber, 1958; 1965; 1966; 1970; 1972), who exist as a member of the category called student which is understood as an object available for manipulation.

This sense of the “one-for-the-other’ was hinted at earlier in the words of educators but is seen clearly in Kerry’s words in talking about the inability to these educators to use their definitions of success, where Kerry said,

I had to change my philosophy of encouragement because even my language of encouragement was very middle-class...it’s like ‘I’ve got to

get rid of the connotation.' I've got to get, not the connotative definition, but community definition of success.

Apparent in these words is a responsiveness to the moral height of the Other whose concerns and needs, as Levinas (Levinas, 1961) suggests are fore-grounded and pre-eminent over our own for the Other gives rise to our very being.

This fore-grounding and responsiveness was seen with other educators such as Kim who said,

There were many, many times when kids would come and they would need to just sit quietly with someone that just took them for who they were...It was a different way of saying, 'I recognize that you need to sit here for a moment and get your bearings before you can go in and function within the structure of the classroom'...There were lots of times I didn't know if everyone [colleagues and community] understood...It always felt like it's always on our, the teacher's terms or on the school's ..."

What is revealed in the words of these educators? Their words seemed to reveal the "one-for-the-other" that shows concern for others in which others' needs are substituted for one's own concerns. In Kim's instance they believed a person was not primarily "a student" who must fit in "the teachers' terms or on the school's" terms but a person whose concerns and needs transcended the category of student. The student was perceived as a person who needed "to just sit quietly with someone" who would take "them for who they were." This taking "them for who they were" suggests an understanding of responsibility that relied first on the notion of person-as-student to "function within the structure of the classroom" and that this approach required a reworking or re-envisioning of the structure and process of schooling where "the teacher's terms" or the school's terms were primarily there to aid students.

The previous discussion concerning the notion of "getting it" and re-envisioning success where these educators emphasized the importance of relationship spoke directly

to the experience of educators like Kerry and Kim and their sense of vulnerability. This vulnerability was evident in the acknowledgement and enactment of the moral height of the other where they re-think the meaning and measure of success. The existence of vulnerability was seen in these educator's description of students' experience of schooling where as Kim continued,

You always feel confined by these restrictions and these rules and these things that are applied onto you, that have never taken into consideration who you are and that is exactly what I see kids butting up against in school... I mean they bust the door down and they leave. And then we stand scratching our heads wondering how we can get them back and why they left in the first place.

In the words of this educator there was a call to substitute one's concerns for those of others where they take into account the "who you are" perhaps hoping students will avoid the "restrictions and these rules and these things that are applied on to you." This educator's words seem to carry in them Levinas' suggestion that to be responsible is to replace the "for-oneself" by the "one-for-the-other," to attend to the Other before claims of self, subjectivity or ego. For Levinas this is crucial and offers the grounds for responsibility that initially is not a response where we objectify others in their difference, categorizing and containing them as prelude to manipulation through rules, regulations or codes of conduct. It is rather a moment of affirmation and recognition of the unconquerable difference of other human beings where we learn our responsibility in our attentiveness to their unique difference.

However, even if we do not accept entirely the extremity of this claim, Kim's experience as one example of the experiences of the educators I interviewed seemed to speak to a desperate need to attend to the very real presence of another human being by

being attentive and putting the concerns of others before one's own. For Levinas this is vulnerability, an already existent state of being for us as human beings.

There seemed with these educators such an embodiment of responsibility where the vulnerability of welcoming existed, where they implicitly if not consciously sensed the moral height of the Other. Among these educators there seemed a willingness to move beyond what might have been safe, comfortable, and prescribed in response to the needs of others such as their students. However one measures or gauges the boundaries of such responsibility, the vulnerability Levinas suggests exists in our face-to-face encounter with the Other seemed evident with the educators I interviewed.

Risk and Sacrifice, Helping or Enabling

If we follow Levinas' thought, to be vulnerable suggests that one's ego, psyche perhaps even body, are at risk in some manner in responding to the needs of the Other. In other words, in the face-to-face encounter with others change occurs that may unsettle a person's role, identity or the conventions one participates within—the potential loss of one's sameness and solidarity. The risk these educators faced in enacting their responsibility was found in part in the possible conflict with colleagues in tensions concerning whether or not to conform or adhere to formal or informal school rules, procedure or protocol, and other potentially contentious issues.

The need to be attentive to students was a responsibility Kim recognized some colleagues may not have realized, as Kim noted, "I didn't know if everyone understood." These educators understood there was a risk they themselves might be only enabling and not truly helping students, their families and perhaps even the surrounding community realizing they may be complicit in continuing processes or following conventions that

might undermine the independence, solidarity and efficacy of students. Such situations invoked, for example, questions about whether programs were too flexible, if expectations were not sufficiently rigorous or if and to what extent programs might be modified or altered in response to the particular challenges students may face. In such situations the educators I interviewed seemed to realize there were no set or premeditated courses of action that could alleviate their doubt or concern and this brought on some anxiety that their sense of uncertainty and the ambiguity were indicative of irresponsibility. Educators' were concerned that to help students "walk in two worlds," but suspected having too narrow a focus on academic achievement, even as they understood the necessity of such achievement, was perhaps in the long run to intensify the risk for students' in gaining socio-economic and ethno-cultural capacity.

The tension these educators felt concerning their enactment of responsibility and whether they were truly helping students and not merely enabling students was indicative of vulnerability, of a concern for being in proper relationship to students, as Levinas suggested, in being-for-the-Other. These educators seemed concerned they may be doing do too much for students, taking too much care with them, not requiring enough from them and therefore subverting students' opportunities for developing knowledge, for self-affirmation, for taking personal responsibility for their efforts and learning to "walk in two worlds." However, if we believe Levinas the existence of this concern is a being-for-the-Other that Levinas might suggest establishes the vulnerability of these educators.

These educators wondered at moments how to negotiate their way with enabling and helping as Kim's words further relate,

part of our relationship with them was to be intuitive enough to say, 'how can I support you so you can move on?' And not 'how can I do it for

you?’ but how can I support you so you can be strong enough and have the courage within you to go to the next step.

In an earlier quote used to indicate the presence of interruption I quoted Blair in a discussion of what Blair might do in regards to a particular grade nine student. This quote can also serve to illustrate tensions that Blair and other educators felt as they struggled with whether they were helping or merely students, as Blair explained,

I have a grade nine student I have to teach English. I just found out that student cannot read. How did he get to grade nine?...I am struggling with that right now...I really struggle with the fact he can't read. He is at a grade one level, grade one! So I have to think about that one. I haven't figured out quite what to do. Intellectually, like verbally, he is smart as whip, smart as a whip... I was thinking I could get books on tape and he can just respond back on tape, but can he read? Are we doing him justice? What will he be able to do in the big picture? I still think he would be able to survive though. I think he could do it. He's been doing it for nine years now in the school system. Do you think he won't find a way to do it in the work system? Oh yes he will. So do you hold him back? I don't think so. I am just trying to figure out my answer.

The tension of helping or enabling others that Blair felt involved the struggle to know the form and process their responsibility might take with the implicit question, “Is this the best outcome for this person?” This tension hints at the non-prescriptive nature of responsibility that Levinas comments upon, and embodies the beginning of the question of what to do. In this tension of enabling or helping there is also a sense of the largeness of one's responsibility where we can see with Blair and with these educators a looking past the conventions of schooling in determining their actions. The questions of justice, of “in the big picture,” “courage,” “strength” and “moving on” perhaps indicated these educators' sense of the expansiveness of the moral height of the Other, of the pressing moral demand that others such as students placed upon them, and how this expansiveness challenged them in their understanding and embodiment of responsibility.

For another educator, Lee, the difficulty of knowing if one is acting responsibly was evident in a concern about whether school staff were at times too lenient or too accommodating for students who for a variety of reasons were transient, absent or had not completed their course work in the allotted time. In this instance there was a questioning and concern about the flexibility of response, where as Lee explained,

I think we did try...almost to a fault we changed with the students. We were so malleable because of seeing...well because of what we didn't think was successful... maybe we needed to stick with a few things to see over time if they would make a difference. But I don't know if that is a fault or not a fault....But there were those lines you had to draw. There was the, "Am I enabling them or am I helping them?...It goes back to that fine line between helping and enabling.

While there was tension for these educators in such concerns, the sense of Levinas' "one-for-the-other" that signifies the moral height or needs of others came to the foreground and was evident in another person's efforts to help students find lodging in an inner city neighbourhood. This activity was perhaps beyond their role as an educator, but here again we find Kim being vulnerable in the demand of the Other, as Kim stated,

They [students] would try to go and get a place and they couldn't get an apartment to rent, they couldn't get a house to rent. The stuff that was shown to them was absolute garbage and so I began to make that part of my responsibility to help kids find a decent place to live.

Like the other educators I interviewed, Kim seemed to understand students were persons with unique and pressing needs that required attention. Kim demonstrated responsibility through a demonstration of vulnerability to the needs of others, a response that appeared to go beyond the norm for an educator where Kim is actually out in the community helping students find "a decent place to live."

There were in the words and actions of Kim and the other participants, a realization of what Levinas suggests is the ongoing and non-diminishing nature of the

moral height of others that demands a response from us that is never-ending. A continual response, as Kim continued, where “you can really burn yourself out...because there is just so much need.”

Vulnerability was evident with other participants as they provided a unique opportunity for a student to learn to drive an automobile. In one instance Kerry provided an opportunity for a student who might otherwise have had no opportunity to gain expertise and experience in order to attain their driver’s license; a situation as Kerry explained where,

He asked me if he could get practice driving and it was our brand new van. We had gone, in our personal situational poverty...that was our first real vehicle in a long time because I finally had a job and real paycheck. And here I am letting a student drive it... I wanted him to have that experience... I let him drive, for there was no way he had a prayer of getting practice driving so he could get his driver’s license.

Kerry’s concern for a student was evident, “I wanted him to have that experience.” Why? For “there was no way he had a prayer of getting practice driving so he could get his drivers license.” Again I would suggest the sense of Levinas’ one-for-the-other, vulnerability, existed with Kerry as with other participants where the needs of others came before one’s concerns. These were moments where risk was alive and pregnant with consequence. Kerry realized the existence of such risk and described this circumstance as, “a huge risk, for my insurance, my personal risk.... But where else are they going to get practice?” Kerry understood this action was “hugely breaking the rules,” yet sought to meet the need of this student in a circumstance that went beyond their formal role as an educator. While Kerry’s actions seemed beyond what might be considered acceptable regarding school policy, guidelines or perhaps the law, whether or

not one agrees with Kerry's actions there remains a sense of the "for-the-other" that signifies vulnerability and responsibility.

One might ask how deep vulnerability existed for these educators? In the previous discussion concerning interruption I offered a story concerning Kerry's visitation to the home of a student named Freedom. In the story was a description where interruption seemed evident. This story also carried echoes of vulnerability or the "one-for-the-other" that Levinas discusses exists in our face-to-face encounter with the Other. In Kerry's visit to Freedom's house, there was uncertainty and the possibility of Kerry's assumptions being challenged and changed. Kerry was not bound by any rule or protocol that demanded there be a visitation to this home yet undertakes this journey acting on a concern for Freedom's welfare, hoping aid to aid Freedom in experiencing academic success. However, this instance opens to another story that involved Freedom, an episode that perhaps reveals in a fundamental manner an example of the extent that the educators I interviewed were "one-for-the-other" and where the depth of their vulnerability and sense of responsibility is poignantly displayed. Tragically, Freedom died during a violent altercation while at a local house party. Freedom in defending another person, stood between a knife-wielding assailant and the intended victim. In this bold act of being "one-for-the-other" Freedom was murdered. Recalling feelings and thoughts in the aftermath of Freedom's death Kerry explained,

I should have done more! She came to my class three days before, that Thursday before that weekend [when she died]. And she said, "I have to be home to take care of mom, because mom is off the wagon again." But she also said, "I need to be involved, I need to get out. What can I do?" And I said, "Can you help me with the one act plays?" and she was thrilled. She was going to start that Monday and that Saturday she was killed...

This sounds stupid but later that Christmas I was visiting my sister watching a show called “Frequency”⁸; where all of a sudden he [the main character] talks to his dad back in time and was able to tell his dad to save his life. And I hadn’t cried for Freedom yet...here I am hundreds of miles away from the scene, and I just burst into tears because I wanted Freedom not to go to the party. You can’t take things back, that’s not realistic but it’s those kinds of moments where you can’t regain them back.

Levinas would likely find nothing “stupid” about this educator’s sense of anxiety and concern and Kerry’s forlorn hope, a desire that conveys a deep sense of commitment. The words of Kerry reveal the expansiveness of their sense of responsibility borne in a vulnerability to the Other; “I should have done more.” Derrida says of such concern,

When someone dies (when I mourn him, that is to say, when it is someone whom I am supposed to love, whom I am supposed to hold dear, someone close or one of my own, in all the senses of these words), then my sadness and my guilt signify that I am responsible for this death. (2002, p. 384)

The sense of responsibility in Kerry’s words are not unlike those of other participants, where they are concerned for an other despite the passage of time, even past the point of death and this illustrates Levinas’ notion of the unending nature of responsibility where the moral height of others calls us to respond. The needs and concern for Freedom continued to call out to Kerry prompting a response that demonstrated Kerry’s ethical embodiment of being “one-for-the-other,” vulnerable to the Other, where the concerns for a person replaced their own—a substitution of oneself for another.

How deep does this vulnerability exist? Kerry’s vulnerability continues even after Freedom’s death, where as Kerry believed “I should have done more,” a sense of responsibility that suggested what seems impossible, that responsibility transcends death.

⁸ A science fiction movie where a father and son get connected across time through an old radio, the son in the present and the father in the past. Their connection causes changes in the future, which they try to resolve.

What Kerry might have done for Freedom, if anything, might be debated, however, despite Freedom's absence, her literal death, Kerry remained vulnerable to the moral height of Freedom, substituting in place of their own concern what appears as a never ending concern for Freedom. Kerry's words appear to give substance to Levinas' thought that suggests that distance, time nor death cannot relieve us of responsibility. Kerry wished to call back events, to call to Freedom, still seeking some other outcome even though Kerry knows the harsh reality "you can't take things back." Even the death of a student could not relieve an educator such as Kerry of responsibility and this is indicative of the vulnerability Levinas suggests inhabits our relations with others whether we acknowledge this vulnerability or not.

Jordan also displayed evidence of vulnerability, a vulnerability that was deeply felt. In this instance Jordan sought to locate a student after school hours who was somewhere in the local neighbourhood and throughout the inconvenience, disruption, discomfort and possibility of violence Jordan experienced there seemed evident the substitution of "the-one-for-the-other" that typifies vulnerability. This was a situation as Jordan explained where,

I go by myself to some place they might be and I am knocking on the door in the morning...I arrive at the house and the screen door has no screen or glass in it. There's been a party in this house and you can tell. There is stuff everywhere and there is loud music still... It looked like a place someone like me shouldn't be knocking on the door by themselves. But I did anyway. I yelled in there...I said to her, "get in the car" and off we went. It was a little frightening...

I was asking myself that the whole time [if I should be there] but I had been on the phone with the kid's mom and she said, "I think this is where she is", and "I can't control her." Mom's at her wits end with this kid. I am like, "Ok, Mom needs help" and I care about this kid and I am going to find her and pull her out from where ever she happens to be.

Jordan's response suggests the affirmation of the moral height of the Other where the "one-for-the-other" or substitution draws Jordan beyond themselves. Jordan literally substituted one place for another place by searching for another person on unfamiliar grounds, in a situation that was foreign and threatening to Jordan. There was a substitution of Jordan's concerns for the concerns of others both in terms of how Jordan attended to the needs of a student and this student's mother. Risk existed here that could not be disentangled from the "one-for-the-other." What confronted Jordan as with Kerry and other educators I interviewed was a demand that challenged them, putting them at risk, positioning them to question not only what they might do but what constituted their relation and responsibility to others. Jordan's words provided a sense of the unending responsibility that Levinas suggests typifies the "one-for-the-other."

Their vulnerability seemed to propel these educators into action that took them beyond their classrooms at school, beyond the school, and beyond hesitations to involve themselves in the lives of students. Jordan commented further regarding the action of some educators and stated, "you see teachers who feel their responsibility is to be here at 8:30 and leave at 3:15, and they stand in front of the class and teach the class and fair enough. If that is what they do, that is what they do, but that's not what I do. I couldn't do it." There is in Jordan's words a sense of the unending demand of the Other, that Levinas refers to, where the difference of others continually and ceaselessly calls us to respond and whose calling is inescapable and constant. The unending nature of the call of the Other involving the "one-for-the-other," the substitution of one's need by the Other's seemed evident in the words of the educators I interviewed typified as Jordan stated in

the need to “know that I could do everything I could do for everybody that I met. So that if that means dragging a kid out of a crack house I guess I will do it.”

For these participants vulnerability possessed a tension that emerged in the dilemma of the incessant call to be responsible and their inability to entirely fulfill the demands of this call. In talking of peoples’ responsibility to others Levinas suggests, “the more I answer the more I am responsible; the more I approach the neighbor with which I am encharged the further away I am” (1981, p.93). What might Levinas mean by this and what might this tell us about the experience of these educators and responsibility?

While perhaps appearing cryptic and paradoxical, the meaning Levinas intends focuses on the endless demand that the Other or difference of others place upon us, where we find our best efforts are continually incomplete and imperfect. This incompleteness and imperfection was revealed in the words of Lee who explained,

I even shudder to say this. Maybe the need is greater than what we can provide... Maybe the other reality of life in north central supercedes what a school can do.... I mean it’s not to say that what we did wasn’t effective, it was just not effective to combat everything.

There seemed in Lee’s words a sense of the unquenchable need of the Other. Lee acknowledges the need and the attempt to meet such need but also seemed to recognize an irresolvable situation that elicited a sense of inability, implied as Lee said, “I even shudder to say this. Maybe the need is greater than we can provide.” Lee seemed to understand that despite the limitations of educators at this school there was no end to responsibility and no escape. There seemed an understanding of the impossibility of fulfilling one’s responsibility, yet there remained the ever pressing demand to do so. In a manner this understanding aligns with Levinas’ suggestion that despite the imperfection and incompleteness of our response this does not relieve us of the incessant demand

others place upon us nor of the reality that “I am summoned as one irreplaceable” (1981, p. 114). As a group these educators seemed to sense their irreplaceability, that they are there to be “oneself-for-another.” Lee’s words, like those of the other educators I interviewed seemed to contain a realization of the infinity of the other and of continual demand, a demand constituted in the difference of the Other, who as Levinas suggests is always beyond our grasp but to whom we must still respond.

Contravention

While contravention may have been hinted at previously in the words of educators, contravention as an aspect of vulnerability warrants closer examination for such examination may better show how these educators enacted their responsibility and the depth of their response. Vulnerability seemed to be seen with these educators in situations that prompted change not only in terms of how they acted, but that educators defied, ran counter to, or disregarded the conventions of schooling and even societal norms in seeking to be responsible to students and their families.

For Pat, one person I interviewed, contravention was seen in their response to the needs of community members. For example, Pat allowed access to the school for community Elders, families and other community members to engage in cultural ceremonies, prayer and feasts in response to the death of family member. Pat described this situation:

They had four feasts. Their sister was killed and they promised to have four feasts for her. I remember one was very close to Christmas and Christmas holidays and I had to sneak and open up the school...sneak a hundred people into the gym. We had to sneak to hide the garbage, we had to sneak to find the brooms to sweep the floor in the gym. The whole time thinking who’s going to come back to the school and find all these people?

Despite the risk of being caught and perhaps ‘disciplined’ by school board authorities Pat disregarded the secular nature and policies of this public school and allowed people to enter the school over a weekend and hold what amounted to religious ceremonies. In doing so Pat disregarded the norms of their own role and their status within the larger educational community. This was problematic as Pat explained,

I prided myself on being a straight arrow, follow the rules, be ethical, don't break the rules of central office, but darn it after a couple of years of being a rule follower the responsibility just kicked in and it taught me sometimes you just have to go around and that was a challenge in itself because I was constantly reminded that I was being evaluated. I was being assessed.

We can witness in Pat's words a contravention that involved not only concerns for the practical aspects of providing access to resources for people, but also involved a disregard of the possible outcomes of their own professional evaluation and assessment. In instances such as Pat's we can again witness the “for-the-other” that typifies Levinas' discussion concerning vulnerability which finds someone like Pat who prided themselves on “being a straight arrow” going around the rules, regulations and conventions of schooling in response to the needs of others.

Such contravention can be seen in the actions of all the educators I interviewed, but Kerry's experience again offers an insightful example of vulnerability enacted as contravention. Kerry had been working with a small group of female students of Aboriginal heritage who faced disciplinary action from a school administrator who was new to the school. After attempting to intervene on behalf of these students, Kerry believing this administrative colleague's disciplinary actions were ill-advised and likely not beneficial to these students, attempted to alert this colleague to how such disciplinary action might be deleterious to these students and ultimately his/her role as an

administrator. The apparently negative outcomes for students resulting from this administrators' actions were for Kerry partly a lack of understanding concerning this colleagues' privilege and power as someone in a position of authority over impoverished female students of Aboriginal heritage. Kerry urged their colleague to "please slow down. You've got to figure out the culture of the school before you start doing that and especially with the girls," and in doing Kerry believes this colleague has been offended.

Kerry in a manner contravened the *status quo*, a contravention that arguably involved notions of not questioning administrative decisions, of unquestioningly going along with colleagues and administrative protocols of the school, and of not prompting discussion, however well intended; discussion that questioned a colleagues' perspectives concerning issues of culture, gender or wealth. Contravention seemed apparent in Kerry's circumstance as Kerry explained,

I kind of crossed a couple of lines there because I am pointing out his whiteness, I am pointing out his maleness, I am pointing out all the things he takes for granted and when you point out things that people take for granted you are breaking a rule. You are trying to get that person to think beyond *status quo*.

While the immediate focus for Kerry concerned students and their need to remain in school, Kerry was also trying to respond to the possible need of their colleague who may not have sensed the impropriety of their approach. This need involved developing a sensitivity to difference that existed in this school context, a difference that appeared to require a person to re-examine or re-consider their beliefs, values and experience. In defying this colleague Kerry risked being misunderstood and potentially alienated from this colleague and others. The risk this individual took and the outcomes of such risk were clear to this person as they said,

He didn't understand what I was trying to say to him...[he was thinking] that I was criticizing his role and when that happened, all of sudden for the rest of the year...I was like, not going to be taken seriously. I was like "bad" news.

The contravention exhibited in the experiences of the educators I interviewed revealed that at moments they disputed, countered or disregarded the norms of schooling. There was a bending of rules or convention in response to the moral height of the other. Contravention appeared to involve a transformation or perhaps a transcendence of self in which fundamental and personal change occurred. In such change fundamental aspects of these educators' identities and in their understanding of their roles seemed altered. Coincidentally, there seemed to exist along with contravention another aspect of vulnerability that was transformative in nature, a transformation where perhaps, as Levinas suggests, "all my inwardness is invested in the form of a despite-me, for – another...it is the very fact of finding oneself while losing oneself" (Levinas, 1981, p. 11). However, what might Levinas mean by "finding oneself while losing oneself" and how is this involved with the vulnerability as responsibility of these educators?

Transformation

For Levinas (1981) to be vulnerable involves exposure—a term he uses in an atypical way to refer to how we are open and responsive to the approach of others or the difference of others, the Other. Exposure, as Levinas suggests, is more than a reference to the vulnerability of the physicality of our being but speaks to a condition that exists before being, or at least where our subjectivity emerges in the intangibility of saying which gives rise to the said of language and being. This exposure involves

a sense radically different from thematization. The one is exposed to the other as a skin is exposed to what wounds it, as a cheek is offered to the smiter...prior to the said, saying uncovers the one that speaks, not as an object disclosed by theory, but in the sense that one discloses oneself by

neglecting one's defenses, leaving a shelter, exposing oneself to outrage, to insults and wounding. (Levinas, 1981, p. 49)

Using such language Levinas suggests that there is a condition where we are constantly open and without protection to the presence and demands of the Other, a condition prompted by the moral height of the Other. However, while the substitution, risk and sacrifice, helping or enabling and contravention of these educators involved the "one-for-the-other," exposure when most acute perhaps involved a re-constitution of self or sameness where there seemed a fundamental reconstitution of beliefs, values, identity and a re-enactment of self. This re-enactment or reconstitution I refer to as transformation.

I believe such transformation was seen with several participants. However, for one person, Chris, such transformation was especially profound and begins with their initial struggle to meet the needs of students. In their initial teaching assignment at this school Chris dealt with students who seemed uninterested and unfulfilled by their school experience. As Chris said in a quote I used previously, "we need to do something, we've got to figure out something for the kids, to really get something happening for the kids that is worthwhile, that is valuable to them, that is useful." In such searching and service Chris was drawn deeply into the lives of people in the surrounding ethno-cultural community. Chris embarked on a journey suffused with risk, sacrifice and personal change and where Chris not only experienced contravention and a rethinking of the role of educator, but a significant re-envisioning, reconstitution and re-enactment of self. This journey began as Chris described,

[When the schools'] Native counselor...started to share some things with me. He sort of acknowledged stuff I was doing...he told me, 'now John [a helper for a local Elder, an oskapewis] will be able to really guide you.' Almost like it was an intended next step and that was the circumstance

where he sat me down and he began to explain all those things to me and clarify a lot of things to me. That is part of what he does as head oskapewis that was his responsibility primarily in the Sundance and the spiritual life. In that beginning time of learning I had been involved with doing projects with kids and so on. He recommended that it would be a real important thing for me to go and fast. And part of the reason for that was because of the things we were asking for in doing the projects that we were doing and part of it was for my own increased understanding...It was called training. You were being trained. The same as he actually helped people who were given pipes, he helped train them, how to use the pipes.

In the words of Chris there is evidence of the exposure Levinas discusses or perhaps at least the hint of such evidence, where Chris leaves “the shelter” of what was familiar and safe and departs to where there was a “neglecting one’s defenses” of cultural sameness and constancy “to go and fast” that in a manner offering up Chris’ beliefs, values and perspective as Levinas suggests “to outrage, to insults and wounds” where Chris’ understandings are challenged. This perhaps was transformation or the beginning of transformation—a transformation that involved embarkation on a path of learning, Chris noted, “called training” where there was a reconstitution of self and re-enactment of responsibility. This transformation seemed evident with Chris but occurred with other educators such as Kerry through Kerry’s experience of the powwow and Pat’s self revelation of change concerning being a rule follower. In the case of Chris there seemed a deepening involvement with others in the practical realities of the local ethno-cultural community, as Chris commented,

I was told that I was to be there and I was to be there before dawn on the final day and prepared with the gifts I wanted to bring because there was going to be a naming ceremony. So I even brought my children with me and I was just reflecting on this the other day actually. During the naming ceremony I received my name from the Elder. He prayed for that. From that time I went through a number of different experiences over the next few years. During that year I attended lots of rain dances, sun dances just because I was kind of following John to see what he did. Part of the reason was to be there to help him, which I did. I kind of helped him whenever I went around.

The degree of response and involvement with individuals of the surrounding cultural community by Chris, as well as Chris' participation in the social, cultural and ceremonial events of these communities demonstrated a significant transformation. This transformation represented a life altering change that occurred on intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual levels. The extent of such transformation was apparent as Chris related one interaction with a well-meaning colleague who was wondering about Chris' deepening involvement with the surrounding cultural community, as Chris related,

She said, "Why are you doing these things?" I said, "This is my life!", and not as negative. I didn't see it as much as a job as an integral part of my life. You know that is how I viewed it.

When I reflect back on those experiences and those things I have gone through and things. That I have the opportunity to experience and be given trust for....It was because it was something I was supposed to do. I was being led that way for those reasons that way. I guess when I think about...I always reflect back on the circumstances of the school. It's like the truest experience in my heart of how I would proceed with the reality of working and being part of the community in your occupation.

The words and experience of Chris convey a sense of transformation that was evident for several of these educators. Despite differences in how transformation occurred and to what extent, transformation was evident with the educators I interviewed; change happened. There was change, for example, to these participants beliefs and values concerning self and Other, in their relationship with the local ethno-cultural communities related to the school, in their understanding of their participation in cultural ceremony within and beyond the school, and on emotional and spiritual levels. Their collective experience of change attested to the presence of transformation in their lives of these educators stemming from their vulnerability to the Other. Without denying the difficulties and challenges that their students faced, nor denying the difficulty in responding in a helpful manner to the needs of others, transformation existed for these educators and also

a sense of inspiration where, perhaps as Levinas (1981) exclaims, “I exist through the other and for the other without this being alienation: I am inspired” (p. 114).

Leaving Vulnerability

The previous discussion presented evidence concerning if, how and to what extent Levinas’ notion of vulnerability might be found in the words of educators, this was an attempt to hear the saying of vulnerability in the said of educators’ words. In the words and descriptions of these educators there did seem evident the vulnerability that Levinas identifies as intimately involved in responsibility existing as the substitution of the “one-for-the-other” prompted by the moral height of the Other, our moral exposure to the Other that involves responsibility. While I employ the words of particular participants to highlight specific aspects of vulnerability, I would offer that in each of these participants’ words we did witness the aspects of risk and sacrifice, the tensions and questioning around whether they were helping or merely enabling students, a disposition for the contravention of the norms or conventions of schooling in service to others, and the transformation of one’s understanding of self in the face of difference. However, there is more to say concerning the aspects of vulnerability that seem evident with the educators I interviewed that may be helpful in regards to understanding the vulnerability and responsibility of these educators.

If we trace back along the arc of the possible intent of educators’ words, we might gain some sense of the beginnings of their responsibility. The beginnings of responsibility, if we follow Levinas thought, involves the relationship with the difference of others, where substitution exists as “an experience and as an a priori to all experience” (Lingis, p. xxviii, in the forward to Levinas’ 1981). In these educators experience of

“being-for-the-Other” this does not necessarily mean “temporarily assuming someone else’s perspective on Being” borne from a Western perspective of ethics and responsibility, but this “being-for-the-Other” exists in the “disruption of Being...an awareness of alterity” (Botwinick, 2006, p. 104). This, if we believe Levinas, is the origin of responsibility wherein lie the tensions of risk and sacrifice, helping or enabling, contravention, and personal transformation.

What is crucial here, if we believe Levinas, is that substitution does not involve bartering one’s responsibility with others such as students, in some sort of mutual trade or commerce. I believe that we did not witness this reciprocity in the words of the educators I interviewed. If we follow Levinas’ thought, the moral height of the Other suggests there is no such reciprocity, instead, we find ourselves as it seemed with these participants, seeking to fulfill a moral debt to others. Our debt to these others that gives rise to the moral height of the Other exists, if we believe Levinas, because in speaking to us or in the face-to-face encounter the Other gives birth to our Being in their address to us.

For these educators, like ourselves, there are likely moments where we maybe under the illusion that moral reciprocity exists, however, the words of the people I interviewed did not seem to carry this sense of reciprocity in any strong manner. These educators supplied for the wants of others, they gave to the Other of themselves. This supply or gift Levinas suggests “is not a gift of the heart but of the bread from one’s own mouth, of one’s own mouthful of bread” (1981, p. 74) that moved these educators toward the Other with the expectation of little or nothing in return. These educators gave because they were indebted to the Other not because the Other promised anything in return. The experience of these educators as I have presented them seemed to demonstrate the depth

of this one-way and asymmetrical response that Levinas' suggests involves the giving "one's own mouthful of bread" to sustain others such as students, to affirm the needs of others but also act on their need, to being willing to risk and sacrifice in being "one-for-the-other"; all instances where little or nothing was expected in return.

The response of these educators, as I have tried to show, seemed to involve a degree of risk and sacrifice on part of these educators where we could trace in their overt actions and in their tacit attentiveness the vulnerability that Levinas speaks of. However faintly, substitution and the acknowledgement of the moral height of the Other existed for these educators and vulnerability was present in the risk and sacrifice of these educators.

These educators offered themselves up leaving themselves open to rejection and even possible alienation from colleagues and ethno-cultural communities. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the undertakings of these people or whether one deems risk and sacrifice as greater or less, the educators I interviewed did risk and did sacrifice not only the material resources they had at hand, but more importantly their assumptions and ideas concerning themselves and others. These educators in facing unknown outcomes on personal and professional levels risked themselves, sacrificed, were vulnerable and therefore were, if we believe Levinas, responsible.

Earlier I attempted to portray the sense of anxiety or worry of the educators I interviewed concerning if they were truly helping students or were merely enabling them. Their anxiety over enabling or helping demonstrated their concern they might diminish the necessary challenge and expectations learners require in response to their abilities that leads to deep and meaningful learning (Caine & Caine, 1994; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) that would allow students to successfully walk in two worlds (Battiste, 2000; Battiste &

Barman, 1995). In other words, the people I interviewed seemed aware of the need to find a meaningful balance between the learning challenge they offered students, and the need to match this with the ability and resources students possessed.

In suggesting that contravention was involved with the substitution and vulnerability of the educators I interviewed, we might ask what else positions these educators for such contravention. I offered evidence of educators' contravening various norms or breaking with the *status quo* in their roles as administrators, teachers or support staff. Contravention seemed a response to the Other that was both an outcome and catalyst for changes to these educators' beliefs, values and identity the impetus of which we can trace back to these educators' sense of substitution, of "being-for-the-other." Levinas suggests that in the substitution of the "for-one's-self" by the "one-for-the-other" we are held hostage by the moral imperative of others and the words of these educators seemed support this sense of being hostage. Here we find vulnerability that, as Lingis says in his forward to Levinas (1981), is "prior to all experience...under a bond, commanded, contested, having to answer to another for what one does and for what one is." (p. xxviii)

If one looks back on the words of these educators there seems almost an inevitability concerning their response to others. In various moments, perhaps Pat's response to help the local community or in Jordan's visit to a "crack house" there seems a sensibility they were help captive by the pressing need of others such as students and their families, instances where these educators were taken beyond themselves and the norm of schooling in acting on the behalf of others.

These educators found both their relationship with others and their identities and understanding of self changed in their encounter with others. This suggests there was a transformative experience that these individuals underwent that occurs, if we believe Levinas, if they were open and available for such change. In other words, a transformation that would only happen if they were diverted from their concerns and their efforts to solidify their own experience. Chris' experience is strong testament to this transformative experience but this can be seen within the words of other educators such as Jordan, Kim, Pat and Kerry. In looking away these educators encountered the face of the Other, who Levinas suggests, by the Other's presence demands our "being-for-the-other." The transformative experience of these educators therefore signified or was involved in this "being-for-the-other," that is vulnerability where responsibility exists. These educators showed their transformation, vulnerability and therefore responsibility through moments of involvement in such activities as such as healing and talking circles, feasts, prayer and ceremony, and their visitations of students and their families.

There seemed another aspect to vulnerability that existed in the experience of these educators. This aspect involved a sensibility that may be integral to responsibility and I believe exists with vulnerability and therefore responsibility as a welcoming of the Other. In the substitution of "the-one-for-the-other" prompted by the moral height of the other, these educators seem to embody a certain wildness that was not a controlled push against boundaries but perhaps an urge to shake off constraints placed upon them as realized the absolute neediness of some students, their families and the local community. This wildness seemed to also involve a suspicion of themes or categories that may restrict the boundary or duration of responsibility, providing a false sense that one has fulfilled

their responsibility. Themes such as teacher, student, school, success, parent or cultural, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, seemed to exist in ways that proscribed boundaries and suggested prescriptions for thought and action that were not entirely respected by educators. This wildness involved a certain anarchistic capacity, which was not unordered or without form and not disconnected from the Other, but desired to leap beyond confinement—to be freer in responding to the need that emerged in this school and community setting. There seemed to exist with the educators I interviewed a desire, tacit or not, to resist the bridle of convention, of the norm or status quo, of how others may wish them to approach the Other.

This wildness involved with vulnerability, to rely on Levinas, might be our proximity to the Other, that “appears as the relationship with the other, who cannot be resolved into ‘images’ or be exposed in a theme” and where “what is essential is a refusal to allow one’s self to be tamed or domesticated by a theme” (1981, p. 100). This refusal or aversion to be tamed or domesticated, this wildness, seemed evident with the people I interviewed and involved an effort to not give into stereotypes and assumptions concerning others; to not totalize, attenuate or confine the difference of the Other into the sameness of self. In this wildness involving vulnerability and responsibility people such as the educators I interviewed seemed averse to unreflectively adhering to guidelines, policies or rules. They seemed to be aware of how their responsibility might be constrained and showed a willingness, a vulnerability, to let the bridle and bit of the *status quo* fall from them. While this wildness seemed an aspect of the vulnerability of welcoming that involves the responsibility of these educators, there existed for educators

another reality shaping their conscious and unconscious attempts to “not be tamed or domesticated by a theme.”

In these moments as educators welcomed others such as students, the educators I interviewed seemed to receive the Other, the difference of others, as a guest or visitor with liberty and goodwill making an attempt to accommodate the difference they encountered. In other words, they seemed to offer a place to the stranger, to something foreign and different. These educators appeared to be engaged with the task of being a host, but a host involved with maintaining a degree of control, power and decision that was at odds with accommodating or giving over control, power and decision to others. This tension between guest and host, where the host is under threat of becoming a guest in their home or solidarity is central to the notion of welcoming. The following section discusses the nature of hospitality in relation to the experience of the educators I interviewed where I further articulate how educators understood their responsibility as a welcoming arising from the call of the Other.

Chapter 7

A Found Poem of Hospitality

Who did I want to be and need to be credible to?
 What kind of Indian was I to give up the sacred place for children?

*Saying that out loud sounds bizarre
 Being half and half - it's always a tension
 Damned if you do and damned if you don't*

Kids will ask me if I am Métis

*They think maybe I belong - I tell them I am not
 It was really bizarre because I wanted to say, 'Yes!'
 I wanted them to go 'She fits'*

What did I do first? Panicked! I was lost

*It was supposed to be
 Everybody showed up - I taught - we left
 They came back homework done - We went on to the next thing
 That doesn't happen*

I can be a First Nations and still wonder,
 as far as the spirituality goes
 Is it my job to be doing it or is it an Elder's job?

*You have such a variety within the First Nations
 Traditional, Christian, a few that really don't bother
 I really have to watch
 I can't force them to believe or to value the things that I do
 I try to speak to it as a person, as a human you know*

I will go home and say something to my spouse
 And he looks at me and says, 'Who are you?'

*Well I don't know
 I have been here long enough I have soaked it all in*

I always felt like I am not quite the same, you know?

*You almost don't feel the same as other teachers
 You are not as accepted
 There was always the fight that we are legitimate.
 It's a bizarre dynamic.*

Whose value system is that then?
 We need to change the way of educating

*As First Nation's people we have to fit into the norm of the society I know
 Nothing has really changed only they have put us in their spots
 We are really doing it to ourselves
 We are doing their work for them now and they have made us...
 I shouldn't say 'they', it's like who are 'they'?*

There is such a greater requirement of giving, you stop and think
 What am I doing this for?
 Am I enabling them or am I helping them?

*There were those lines you had to draw
 Part of our relationship with them was to be intuitive enough to say
 'How can I support you so you can move on?' - Not 'how can I do it for you?'
 To be patient...to not press my values on them
 To maybe be accepting of theirs and maybe see the world a bit differently*

The Elder completely stripped away all of the guilt and the shame I was feeling

*It was a very strange day - It was very stressful day.
 I realized where the stress was coming from
 It was all part of that European mindset of everything has to go as planned
 That was a huge contrast day for me of two cultures and accepting the unexpected*

Welcoming as Hospitality

The word “hospitality” here translates, brings to the fore, re-produces... a sort of periphrasis, a series of metonymies that bespeak hospitality, the face, welcome; tending toward the other, attentive intention, *yes* to the other. Intentionality, attention to speech, welcome of the face, hospitality—all these are the same as the welcoming of the other, there where the other withdraws from the theme. (Derrida, 1999, p. 22)

Derrida’s words remind us that welcoming has several expressions that coincide, overlap and are indistinguishable. One of these ‘faces’ of welcoming is hospitality. In the previous discussion concerning vulnerability we heard in participants’ words the substitution of their concerns for those of others, “*yes to the other*” seen in the quote above. We also witnessed the withdrawal of others from thematization where the difference of others interrupted participants and could not be contained by them, not dominated, enveloped, surmounted or erased. Educators voiced their experience of risking and sacrificing for others, of struggling with questions concerning whether they were only enabling or truly helping others, of contravening norms in response to the needs of others, and of undergoing personal and professional transformation that originated in the substitution of the “for-one’s-self” by the “one-for-the-other.” This was their reality, a reality that Levinas suggests arises from our response to the moral height of the Other and that exists as evidence of the welcoming of the Other. These seemed moments, as Levinas argues, that involve not only our responsibility but our very subjectivity. In these moments we saw educators’ receptivity to the Other, which Derrida suggests is synonymous with welcoming. This was the reception of the Other or welcoming [*accueil*], where he notes that Levinas “has put his mark upon it, having first reinvented it, in those places where he invites us—that is, gives us to think—what is called “hospitality”” (1999, p. 16). Derrida believes Levinas offers an “immense treatise

of hospitality” that “becomes the very name of what opens itself to the face, or, more precisely, of what “welcomes” and asks, “how is one to interpret this hospitality in the name of Levinas?” (1999, p. 21)

I address this question here, exploring the possibility of hospitality in consideration of, how and to what extent educators understand their responsibility as a welcoming of the Other. The following section therefore discusses what Derrida suggests is the central aspect of hospitality, the experience of the *hôte*.

Hospitality and the Hôte

For Derrida hospitality involves tensions between a person’s enactment and embodiment as a host who is simultaneously a guest. To be a host or to be hospitable involves considerations of the limits of our actions and sense of self or identity. There is a burden for the host in being hospitable where the guest or the one being received whether invited or arriving without notice, impinges or pushes on the boundaries of the host. The host, being hospitable defers to the guest, seeking to accommodate the guest yet finding at some point they are no longer the host but become a guest in their own home as a result of the demands made upon them. This is the experience of the *hôte*. Ruitenbergh (2005) offers helpful insight into how we might understand hospitality, offering that hospitality exists not only “in the common and literal sense of a welcoming of flesh-and-blood guests and strangers, but also, in a more abstract and metaphorical sense, as a welcoming of intangible guests and strangers” (p. 15) who leave our own identity “ajar” or in flux.

Though neither Levinas nor Derrida frequently use terms such as accommodation or accommodating in their discussion, this notion exists as they speak of making room or

making a place for the stranger or giving shelter to the stranger. Therefore, to speak of accommodating and deferring seems appropriate, suitable and even central in discussing hospitality and the *hôte*.

In accommodating and deferring to others or the Other there is a dilemma for the host where “the head of the household, the master of the house, is already a *received hôte*, already a *guest* in his own home” (Derrida, 1999, p.42). So the primacy of the *hôte* in hospitality is crucial, for the *hôte* is the

implacable law of hospitality: the *hôte* who receives (the host), the one who welcomes the invited or received *hôte* (the guest), the welcoming *hôte* who considers himself the owner of the place, is in truth a *hôte* received in his own home. He receives the hospitality that he offers *in* his own home; he receives it *from* his own home-which, in the end, does not belong to him. The *hôte* as host is a guest. (Derrida, 1999, p. 41)

If to witness the *hôte* is to sense what is often contrary, impossible and irresolvable in a person’s deference to others or the Other in their attempts to accommodate difference, then there is a need to examine this more closely in relation to an educational context. The following section offers this discussion, providing further insight into the nature of the *hôte*.

The Experience of the Hôte

We might envision education as a series of hospitable acts in which educators create the circumstance and opportunity for others to participate. Schools, classrooms and educators wait for others to enter, to cross the threshold of the educator’s domain, their dwelling or circumstance, and engage in teaching and learning. Others, typically students, are received and accommodated by educators and here educators become hosts. A host has a sense of place and ownership, and for educators this involves their classroom, program and activities, where there is a sense “that one is at home here, that one knows

what it means to be at home, and that at home one receives, invites, or offers hospitality, thus appropriating for oneself a place to *welcome* [*accueillir*] the other” (Derrida, 1999, p. 15-16). In this appropriation and in this giving over or making room for the Other there are tensions and maneuverings by the host. These are moments where making strict claims or trying to border off the difference offers a subversion of the reception and accommodation of others and in a manner a violation of the welcoming of the Other.

To have a place, to be in place or perhaps to own a place, implies there are boundaries, that give rise to a sense of place both literally in our emplacement as physical beings and also in how we understand self and our ego or identity (Casey, 1993). If one is to remain a host certain boundaries must remain intact. However, there is difficulty for the host who finds themselves in the struggle of recognizing where such borders exist, how fluid these maybe, in sensing what has to be given over to others and what is to be withheld in maintaining the status of the ‘receiving hôte’ or host. In the confusion and lack of certainty where the host defers to and accommodates others, we can catch glimpses of the hôte.

In educational contexts hospitality and the experience of the hôte might involve the more pragmatic teaching-learning situations of how a classroom and program unfold. These may be moments, for example, of the ordering and arrangement of desks, of the proffering of suitable materials for special needs students, or of attending to the cultural and ethnic realities of students and their families. As hosts, educators prepare a place, resources and themselves to welcome others and in doing so they embody power and judgment, making determinations concerning the experience of others, programs,

curricula and instruction. In this manner educators appear, to some extent, to control and direct the experience of others who enter their domains, their ‘home’.

However, as the ‘receiving hôte’ educators are constrained by larger and more encompassing frames of reference, in a manner they are a guest—the ‘received hôte’—invited into the process and procedure of school, school board policy, community norms and a role. In this way educators are not entirely “the master of the house” (Derrida, 1999, p. 42), open to act perhaps as an unfettered inconsiderate host at times who might act with impunity with regards to the resources and opportunities in accommodating others, where others must conform to the educators’ role, or their belief in the stringency of rules and regulations. Instead educators might be considered as being guests who are hosts, who while inviting others are also invited into the Other’s circumstance living simultaneously the constraints of guest and host, the hôte.

Tensions exist for the hôte that are subtle and intense, moments where the ‘for-onself’, subjectivity or “places of gathered interiority, of recollection” (Derrida, 1999, p. 36) are all synonymous with a person’s sameness, sense of self or identity. These involve moments where our subjectivity or self are besieged or held hostage by the difference embodied in others, held hostage by the Other, where as Ruitenbergh (2005) noted as we receive others we find challenges to notions of identity and sameness in accommodating and deferring to others.

In other words, an educator as hôte lives with a meaningful but irresolvable tension within themselves concerning who they believe themselves to be and how they understand their identity related to who they are in the role of educator and who they are beyond that role. This is a tension borne in the deference to and accommodation of the

Other, within our thoughts, emotion and psyche where we make room for the Other within our sense of self, giving shelter to the Otherness we encounter. A challenge and contention resides here where there is “an impossible possibility toward which we are hurried...The contending of a “He [Il] in the depth of You [Tu]”” (Derrida, 1999, p. 60). These are moments in our recognition of the Other where we negotiate who we are as educators as we stand alongside the difference constituted in others. This is the experience of the hôte, who being vulnerable to the moral height of the Other, is simultaneously giving over or making room for the Other, but also resisting the Other who makes claims upon us concerning their identity while also challenging our sense of self. In other words, the hôte faces the disruption of self in accommodating and deferring to the Other. However, if this disruption is severe then welcoming becomes impossible for the self is no longer the ‘receiving hôte’, but is out of place, discomforted and dis-accommodated.

If the experience of the hôte is the “implacable law of hospitality” and hospitality constitutes an aspect of educators’ responsibility as a welcoming of the Other, then we should sense or hear in the words of educators the experience of hôte. The following section provides a sense of if, how and to what extent the experience of the educators I interviewed understood their responsibility as hôte.

Educators’ Embodiment of the Hôte

In the earlier discussion of interruption and vulnerability the words of educators offered glimmers of the experience of the hôte. In their understanding of success and how they re-envisioned success, we could see the accommodation and deference of educators to the Other. Educators’ words displayed the struggle of the hôte in the moments where

they changed and re-formulated their conceptions of success. They came to understand the need to act in different ways to engage students' needs and accommodate their beliefs and values where for example Jordan enters a "crack house" to retrieve a student. They envisioned themselves as more than their roles, whether teacher, administrator or support person. They acted on the notion of the child standing sacred, not merely voicing platitudes, and they worked outside the "box" of school norms. In these instances of accommodating others, educators made claims for themselves and their identity but also gave ground or made way for cultural and religious beliefs and values of others. To an extent this involved negotiating a way with the school and their relationships with others relating to spiritual or sacred experiences in the secular context of public schooling. The experience of the *hôte* seemed evident in educators' concerns for how to proceed with secular school protocol involved with First Nation and Métis ceremony or in questioning themselves and their role with students' in discussing traditional and spiritual First Nation and Métis teachings.

For one educator, Pat, evidence of the *hôte* was evident in a decision to convert the school's First Nations culture room into a support centre for early childhood learning. Pat's words revealed the tension felt in attempting to accommodate others, accommodations that left Pat questioning not only to what extent their actions were correct and just, but also raised questions concerning Pat's identity and role. The culture room was blessed by Elders and was a sacred place. In this place students learned about, affirmed and celebrated their First Nations' heritage not only intellectually but also emotionally and spiritually through participation in ceremony. However, this person felt a sense of discomfort in accommodating the needs of people who required a place for early

childhood learning. There was an uneasiness concerning their understanding of themselves as others questioned their intent, actions and identity, as Pat described,

You know something like that culture room for example. I am just the best friend of the early childhood learning support; support for students in giving up the culture room to the toddler centre. But because it was blessed for a certain use, Jack and Jean⁹ and all the First Nations staff felt, ‘What kind of Indian was I if I was going to give up the sacred place for children?’ and even saying that out loud, that sounds bizarre.

There is a sense of unease in this person’s words suggesting this accommodation does not come easily and the boldness of their actions and explanation of their decision appeared “bizarre” even to themselves. In this instance we see their efforts to act hospitably and there was the hope of accommodating others, but at the same time there is a sense of unease concerning what they may be relinquishing not only in terms of a place devoted to affirming and advancing First Nations’ life but also within themselves.

Pat holds the power to make decisions. They were in charge of creating order and a context for learning and therefore were responsible for the consequences of their decisions. The disposition of the culture room was not a simple decision for Pat involving a detached, technical and objective expediency, but involved serious considerations of the values and beliefs Pat embodied and brought into question their sense of self or identity. The use of the term “bizarre” signals the uneasiness of someone who was not entirely at home with what they have done wondering at the reconciliation of differing sense of selves. In a manner they became a guest within themselves, someone who was welcomed by the Other as a guest in their own home.

To be a host means to assume a perspective or place that rests on claims concerning one’s role and sense of self and in this instance part of such claims involved

⁹ Fictional names for two educators who work at the school.

Pat's role as part of a member of a secular or public school system, a system fundamentally Eurocentric. The sense of *hôte* was present in this person's welcoming of others in the context of this system. These values associated with Pat's role influences Pat's understanding of self yet seemed at odds with other aspects of Pat's self concept. The tension of the *hôte* appeared in their self-identification as someone of First Nation heritage fulfilling a role where Pat asked, "what kind of Indian was I if I was going to give up the sacred place for children?" There was a questioning of values and perspectives by Pat relating to how as an administrator should utilize their judgment, power and decision making capacity. In the practical realities of providing school space and resources Pat sought to accommodate others and their beliefs and values, yet in considering the various beliefs and values embodied in the needs of others there was also an accommodation occurring within Pat's identity. In this accommodation we witness the guest-host dilemma that is the experience of the *hôte*.

Embodied within Pat's experience of the *hôte* is heard the accommodation of varying conceptions of self, as administrator and "Indian," the administrator hosting the Otherness of Indian and the Indian hosting the Otherness of administrator. This sense of the *hôte* involved an uneasiness concerning their credibility as an educator and how they would be judged, evident as Pat said,

Who did I want to be and need to be credible too? What it took me to be credible to the school board office was way different than what it took me to be credible with the staff in the building and the students and way different than the community as well.

This concern for credibility involving the experience as *hôte* was evident in Pat's accommodation of the difference constituted in the Otherness of others. There was a vying for position in this case that involved the beliefs and values of Others, or as Derrida

relates, where one senses the “He in the depth of You” (1999, p. 60), the Other in oneself. There was a sense of self and Other as a somewhat fluid reality, not entirely cohesive or homogeneous where the notions of what constituted self and Other extended and retracted in the experience of *hôte*, the “implacable law of hospitality.”

In another instance Pat sought to accommodate students who were troubled by the death of a school friend. Students were wary of returning to school believing the spirit of the student remained in the school and arrangements were made for an Elder and helpers to bless the school. For Pat this experience was “intense and life-changing because by facilitating that it entrenched me deeper in my First Nations identity.” This accommodation of others was complex in regards to how Pat envisioned their role in providing access to the school for prayer and ceremony undertaken in the secular context of a public school. There was a sense of deeper meaning but also caution in undertaking these activities because, as Pat related,

being half and half it’s always a tension that exists; damned if you do and damned if you don’t. Either you’re too much an Indian or too much a White. It depends who you are dancing with at that particular time what answer you are going to give I think.

Hospitality existed in these moments where there was no permanent resolution, just an ongoing negotiation with Otherness within this person’s sense of self, where the Other finds a place alongside the subjectivity of one’s self. The *hôte* existed in this tension where this person felt “damned if you do and damned if you don’t” where there was a sense of being “welcomed as a guest in one’s own home.”

The notion of dancing further nuanced this sense of the *hôte* where there was a desire to accommodate and defer, to move with others and their difference, to respond to their lead and needs yet not entirely relinquish control. There was a giving way and

resistance in this relationship where the firmness of this person's self as host resisted the Other—a resistance to the presence of Otherness operating alongside the dynamics of one's identity and understanding of their role.

The experience and embodiment of hospitality as *hôte* was evident in the experience of Jordan in teaching a wellness program. Faced with the challenge of teaching students who lacked resources and in accommodating such lack Jordan responded by regularly providing clean suitable clothing for students providing, as Jordan noted, “bins of sweat pants and stuff that I lend to them and then I wash them. I do lots of laundry.” This example, while perhaps mundane, demonstrates the accommodating nature of hospitality that involves addressing the needs of others and represents an instance where this educator goes beyond the norms of schooling. There was a making room for the Other where Jordan moved aside, giving up or giving over their energy, time and resources. Even if only in a minor way, Jordan became somewhat of a stranger to the role of teacher where the demands of the Other displaced their intentions and assumptions yet where Jordan could not entirely give over power and place.

In another moment we hear in Jordan's words the strangeness or foreignness of a person who was suddenly out of place, unsure and uncertain. This was perhaps an instance, where as Derrida says, “The master of the house, is already a *received hôte*, already a *guest* in his own home” (Derrida, 1999, p. 42), where as Jordan said,

What did I do first? Panicked! I was lost for the first little while. I didn't know what to do...It was supposed to be everybody showed up and I taught what I had to teach and we left and they came back the next day with their home work done and we went on to the next thing; that doesn't happen.

In the panic of being lost, in being out of place without their bearings where their sense of normality concerning the role and responsibility of a teacher slipped away, we

witness the tension of someone existing as *hôte*. There was a struggle to find their place in the difference and strangeness they encountered among the familiarity of school processes, expectations and role of educator. Educators typically show up, teach others, provide assignments and wait for students to complete their work, yet for Jordan there was a sense of uneasiness where expectations were undermined. The sense of being at home in practical or pragmatic terms or in the sense of ease and comfort within oneself was less evident with Jordan. What Jordan offered to students and what Jordan believed concerning the role and responsibility of a teacher as someone hosting the learning of others, of the Other, gives way to a realization that,

I couldn't teach the way I had learned how to teach. You can't stand up and lecture, you can't give homework. You have to go back and fill in gaps all the time. They don't know what they are supposed to know because they have been in 10 different schools and they missed a lot of things. I had to learn to be flexible and give them lots of time [with what] I thought should take a short amount of time. (Jordan)

Each instance where Jordan “can't stand up and lecture,” “can't give homework” and needs to “go back and fill in gaps,” signaled the beginning of an accommodation of others and the giving over to the needs of the Other. Such moments indicated the disruption of Jordan's plans and expectations that in turn involved an unsettling of their beliefs about their role. These instances illustrate a sense of disruption, of being out of place and of being unprepared for the type and intensity of difference and need that visits them. Jordan has invited others to learn on Jordan's terms, to meet demands and outcomes laid before students, their families and even culture. These were claims and demands against which the measure of both student and educator success were to be measured. However, this invitation becomes the visitation of difference that leaves Jordan, like other participants I interviewed, discomfited and uncertain how to

understand or proceed in accommodating the Other, how to be hospitable in the dispossession of their expectations and plans. These were moments where the ‘master’ is the one mastered, overtaken by the Otherness of others (Derrida, 2002). Here, claims of ownership of identity and one’s sense of self meet resistance. For Jordan and other participants these seemed moments where the one “who considers himself [sic] the owner of the place, is in truth a hôte received in his [sic] own home...which in the end, does not belong to him [sic]” (Derrida, 1999, p. 41).

There appeared a certain sense of uneasiness shared by educator and student in this school setting. In a manner students were guests in an experience that in many aspects were not comfortable for them, not their domain or home, where the comfort, support and nurturing of one at home with themselves and others was sometimes not evident. Jordan, the dispossession and experience as hôte, shared with students and their families a sense of being the stranger within demands of curricula and program, and within the measures of success and the hegemony of Eurocentric educational system.

In this discomfort there remained for Jordan a search to accommodate others evident as Jordan said.

Everything [was] individualized, but [I] still do a variety of teaching techniques...So for the kids who were coming in and could be here more regularly, you know, I did things like labs and activities and group projects and things like that. But in some classes that stuff never works, because you never get the same ten kids any day.

Jordan had to,

be patient...to not press my values on them all the time and to maybe be accepting of theirs and maybe see the world a bit differently. I had to adapt...I had to learn to be flexible and give them lots of time.

The deference to others where Jordan seeks to not “press my values on them all the time” and was “maybe be accepting of theirs” involved a stepping aside or a making

place for the Other that signified accommodation. There was also a reserve or holding back where Jordan maintained a sense of place, hinted at in their words “maybe accepting” and “maybe see the world a bit differently.” Jordan’s willingness to “be accepting” suggests the hospitable nature of the hôte and the tension of the hôte appeared to exist in questions concerning their beliefs, values and sense of self.

Finally, for Jordan the experience of the hôte was heard in a reservation, that other participants also possessed, concerning the limits to which they might teach those of Aboriginal heritage by involving and integrating First Nation knowledge and cultural perspectives. In talking of this Jordan said,

It’s tough because some parents want their kids to do it [learn First Nation knowledge and perspectives] and some parents don’t and we try teaching it in wellness. I know that we are allowed to teach what we have been taught. That’s the rule. So I am allowed to explain about art, and I have some books and some things that I was told this was ok to do. You know talk about the medicine wheel and the four areas and incorporate that into wellness. We do lots of that kind of stuff and try to do First Nations perspective on things. They enjoy it and they respond, but I am always afraid I am teaching something I am not supposed to.

Jordan was tasked with integrating First Nation perspectives and knowledge in their teaching. However, even in Jordan’s familiarity with the pedagogical processes, culture of schooling and skill as an educator, Jordan remains as a guest in the circumstance of First Nation content and perspective creating and living within both a dilemma and a paradox. Though Jordan relied on teaching only what Jordan had been taught by people such as Elders, other colleagues and cultural workers of First Nation heritage (“we are allowed to teach what we have been taught”), there remained questions and anxiety for Jordan concerning their involvement with this knowledge and wisdom, instances where Jordan remained “afraid I am teaching something I am not supposed to.” In the familiar and comfortable situation of their teaching Jordan, like the other

educator's I interviewed, was displaced through the Other's visitation constituted in the cultural difference of "the Stranger who disturbs the being at home with oneself [le chez soi]" (Levinas, 1961, p. 39).

There was a sense of anxiety for this person concerning their sense of self that touched on issues of belonging, similar in a manner to Pat's concern about being "too white" or "too Indian." This tension of belonging involved moments where the sense of being both a guest and host within one's sense of self revealing the experience of the hôte. The origin of such anxiety is perhaps rooted in senses of self which are dynamic and changing, yet constitute an "I" where "the I is not a being that always remains the same, but is the being whose existing consists in identifying itself, in recovering its identity throughout all that happens to it" (Levinas, 1961, p. 36). In this identity through recovery is evident a desire for the Other, a seeking to accommodate the Other within themselves heard as Jordan explained

The longer I have been here the more the kids will ask me if I am Métis. Before they would just assume I was White but now they don't. Now they think maybe I belong somehow and they want to know how and even when I tell them I am not, they are 'ok' with that. I didn't know what to say the first time. It was really bizarre because I wanted to say yes! I wanted them to go, 'Oh! Ok she fits in then.' So even in the adults you want that, just to belong. It's not just the kids.

What existed in this desire to say 'yes' to the experience of others and to belong and to fit in? Perhaps this was part of accommodating the Other where a person in saying yes to the Other, in deferring to their needs sought to adapt and adjust to others? Levinas suggests the longing or desire for the Other is hospitality and a sense of the Other or their Otherness exists within one's psyche, not assimilated nor dissolved into one's sense of self or sameness of an "I," but nevertheless existing within oneself. The Other resides within us unconquered, besieging us, holding us hostage to their needs and difference.

We defer and accommodate the reality of the Other and in this way are guests in our own home. This longing for the Other involves a need to be identified with the Other in which we say yes to the Other even as we realize the impossibility and bizarre proposition of being the Other. This desire for identification was heard in the words of these people, where as Jordan related, “I was an outsider a long time. I feel like an insider now I guess. I am not sure how that happened.”

To feel inclusion is perhaps to recognize the Other within oneself yet to know the infinite difference constituted in others leaves an understanding that oneself is not the Other, yet includes the Other. In Jordan’s words “I guess” which suggestive a tentativeness and uncertainty concerning the status of oneself, the sensation of guest-host is heard. Jordan was not the Other, was not identical to the Other, and as Levinas suggests, could never be the Other or even identical to the Other, but stands closely embracing difference and simultaneously knowing they are not this Other. The desire for the Other remains, as Levinas suggests, because this desire defines us. The sense of the Other accompanied Jordan, later becoming apparent to someone familiar and intimate with Jordan, as the words of Jordan revealed,

I will go home and say something to my spouse and he looks at me and says, like, “Who are you?” Well I don’t know...I have been here [in the culture of school and community] long enough I have soaked it all in.

In the question “who are you?” and in Jordan’s response resides *hôte*. Jordan knows who they are yet responds “I don’t know.” What has Jordan “soaked” in, and to what extent, if not the Otherness they accommodated and recognized within themselves, that leaves them like other educators I interviewed, uncertain of themselves? In such instances we see the tension of the I, who in being at home with oneself, becomes a guest through the visitation of the Other—an instance where the receiving *hôte* (host) is

received by the received hôte (guest) who is already present and awaiting them. This, if we believe Derrida, is the strange and impossible experience of the guest-host—an impossible reality as Ruitenberg (2005) notes that exists but nevertheless signifies hospitality.

Tensions involving inclusion or exclusion and belonging or not belonging were seen with other educators. Such tensions again involved considerations of one's sense of self and the desire to accommodate others. Such tensions were evident in Kerry's thoughts and feelings where Kerry related,

I had finally started to be considered an insider. The kids were calling me Kokum and you know what an honour that is. To go from...well the first couple of years you are an outsider and I always will be because I am white, with blue eyes, and I don't have the deep history that goes into this province, this land. As long as you don't have that you are always an outsider. You have to be invited to be on the inside.

Kokum gave me inclusion, that title when they gave it to me, allowed me into their world not as an equal but as a respected part. I don't know how to explain what I am saying.

I know I truly don't truly ever completely belong to First Nation culture...inclusion will be extended to me or not extended to me and when it is extended to me I feel like I belong.

Kerry has a sense of self that begins with literally being a stranger or guest in the broader landscape, history and culture of those Kerry welcomes, an association with others and their beliefs, values and experience where Kerry might find inclusion but never belonging. Kerry was an insider who lived as an outsider, negotiating the tension of educating students of First Nation and Métis heritage and serving the needs of the local community culture, yet remained someone who was "white, with blue eyes" not having "the deep history that goes into this province, this land."

Like other participants, Kerry's experience originates in a familiarity with and sense of being at home in mainstream schooling that is a situation Kerry described as involving the "dominant experience...of middle-class European understanding."

However, Kerry felt out of place in their teaching situation and not entirely at home in the disruption of their imagined pedagogy. Kerry encountered the difference of others that interrupted one's solidarity, an Other who awaited Kerry signified in Kerry's phrasing "urban post-colonial situation" and "First Nations culture." In the encounter with difference the norms of Kerry's pedagogy was discomforted and in the tension of this displacement *hôte* existed.

However, the uneasiness of the *hôte* was seen in other ways with these participants. There was the belief as Kerry noted that "I feel like I belong" to First Nation and Métis culture but also there was the acknowledgement "I know I truly, don't truly, ever completely belong." Kerry's words revealed a tension between the feeling of one's desire to belong and an intellectual understanding that one can never belong demonstrating that only inclusion is possible. The desire for belonging and the understanding that only inclusion was possible, competed with each other in Kerry and in this sense of dislocation and discrepancy there was a sense of *hôte*.

Experiences among students, colleagues and community involving this school setting, such as feasts, powwows and prayers, drew people together on emotional levels in shared experiences where there was a sense of belonging. Kerry's use of the words belong and include were revealing. To belong suggests "to be connected within various relations...to be a native or inhabitant of a place...to be one of a generation or time" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989) and there seems a sense of being on equal footing, of

having full membership. Inclusion, however, possesses a sense of limitation, to be a “subordinate element, corollary or secondary feature,” shut in and enclosed (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989). The notion of inclusion fits with hospitality whereas belonging may be less suitable. With inclusion there is a sense of being subordinate, contained within the other and this aligns with the asymmetry Levinas identifies as the moral height the Other where the needs of others take precedence over our needs.

How one chooses to employ the notions of belonging and inclusion, or if the designation of Kokum for Kerry allowed belonging or inclusion, there remained an underlying tension for participants such as Kerry, Pat and Jordan that involved their sense of self and their role in accommodating others where the experience of hôte was evident.

Examining Kerry’s experience provides a further glimpse into the experience of hôte for these educators. In this case Kerry organized and facilitated a large student project over several months culminating in a permanent display of art work and literature in the school related to First Nation and Métis symbols and stories. This project and the subsequent dedication ceremony involved an Elder and the project itself met with some initial difficulty and resistance by administrators who were more recent to the school. However, while the culminating dedication and blessings for this project eventually took place this involved a sense of discomfort and displacement as Kerry recounted,

I remember we waited all morning and she [the Elder] didn’t come until the afternoon or later. I was really upset because it changed the flow of the schedule. The administrators were a little upset that we weren’t so organized asking ‘what’s wrong with you people?’ Then she [the Elder] walks in and she says, ‘you know every thing has a reason’ and she was so gracious. She said, ‘I was able to come and on the way I saw a blue heron and just imagine if I had come on time I would have not seen that blue heron.’ So she completely stripped away all of the guilt and the shame I was feeling because I hadn’t done the task according to the European context. She stripped it away and made it all ok and everything worked out

asking ‘why was I so uptight?’ She said, ‘Just relax, it’s ok.’ She gave me permission to relax and I still ultimately had to answer to our administrators who decided to make a big issue of how unorganized I was and what a poor department head I was. But I was thinking ‘the day went well.’ But that was part of their evaluation to me in my face and I am like, ‘Ok! If that is all you choose to remember about that day I am going to choose to remember what the Elder shared with me.’

That was a huge contrast day for me of two cultures and accepting the unexpected. It was a very strange day. It was very stressful day to. I booked off the next day because I was so stressed. I was exhausted from being stressed and when I realized where the stress was coming from, it was all part of that European mindset of everything has to go as planned.

What do we see of *hôte* in this person’s words? In seeking to accommodate First Nation and Métis reality through this project and in the involvement of an Elder, Kerry attempted to accommodate these realities in “the European context” of a public school. Evident with Kerry was the receiving *hôte*, the one who was at home and welcomed the difference constituted in others. Kerry’s effort involved a creative project that sought to welcome First Nation and Métis reality in a European-influenced context. However, this individual found themselves estranged, dislocated and out of place. The support and affirmation of administrative colleagues, that arguably should background the activity where Kerry might feel at ease and secure in a sense of self and a role as an educator doing important teaching, was undermined. The Elder was an invited guest. Kerry was the receiving *hôte*, a person who was welcomed yet through their difference constituted a challenge to school scheduling and organization, a visitation of difference. In meeting the challenge of the Elder’s late arrival, Kerry suffered through anxiety and concern brought on by the questioning and judgment of administrative colleagues. Whether intended or not, a significant outcome for Kerry in accommodating the project and this Elder left Kerry with a sense of shame and guilt. These feelings emerged in efforts to make room or

to make a place for the Other in the reality of school, an accommodation that left Kerry somewhat alienated from the school administration's norms.

Kerry like other participants at times found themselves discomforted by the scrutiny and judgment of colleagues who were relying on the conventions of schooling with roots still firmly planted in "European" values. In a manner Kerry became an Other, dispossessed and under threat, and became a guest in their circumstance, besieged by what was formerly familiar and supportive. Kerry now was perhaps an unwelcome guest.

Yet the Elder seemed more at home than Kerry as Kerry struggled with the demands made by the conventions of schooling experiencing a disconcerting sense of inadequacy. The Elder affirmed Kerry by drawing upon wisdom, beliefs and values that were not of the "European mindset," yet Kerry finds a place with such wisdom. Kerry seemed at home, accommodated by the Other who was already there welcoming Kerry in their Kerry's home, whether literally or in Kerry's sense of self. Kerry's expectation that administrative colleagues would be supportive, non-judgmental and constructive in their criticism seems unfulfilled as Kerry sought to make room for the difference of others, the reality of First Nation and Métis expression and belief and in welcoming the Elder.

In another circumstance we can witness anxiety concerning the limits of a person's role in teaching First Nation and Métis knowledge. For another participant, Blair, tensions arose concerning the teaching of the Cree language, which led Blair to question and to wonder what should or should not happen concerning First Nation and Métis cultural and spiritual realities in the context of a secular school experience. Despite Blair's self-identification as a person of First Nation heritage, raised in a Traditional community, and working with students who often identified themselves as

Aboriginal, there was anxiety for Blair in the role of teacher. This anxiety did not immediately involve discrepancies between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal reality, but involved how Blair understood himself as a person of a First Nation identity and what this meant for their teaching in a secular context. For Blair language and culture were interwoven therefore teaching a language involved learning about culture and perhaps unavoidably involved considerations of First Nation and Métis identity, spirituality and tradition. Blair understood that the teaching and guidance of others in relation to spiritual matters, cultural knowledge and tradition most often was the domain of the old people or Elders. This created some anxiety as Blair considered the role of teacher in a secular setting, as Blair explained,

I think one of the other big struggles I find is how far you go. Like I teach Cree. Well how far do I go with [teaching] the traditional life style; you know the way of life. Because it is different now and I think that all that stuff and the “circle,” like is it my job to do that? I don’t feel like I am qualified to do that because that is a whole new teaching. I still struggle with that...I guess I can be a First Nations and still wonder, ‘Well should I be teaching it? Is it my job to be doing it? You know?’ Or is it an Elder’s job?

With Blair there seemed a sense of being out of place, of not being at home with one’s self as an educator fulfilling the role of a secular teacher. Blair seemed drawn into teaching students First Nation and Métis traditional knowledge and this meant going beyond gaining purely intellectual knowledge where Blair could not avoid matters involving heritage, culture and spirit, regardless that human intellectual, mental, spiritual and physical realities are inseparable. Like other participants Blair sensed the students’ need for something more than what was required by mandated curricula or programming.

However, to be First Nations did not automatically position Blair to teach or guide others concerning spiritual and cultural matters. There was a dis-accommodation Blair

experienced as a receiving hôte as they assumed the role of teacher acting on behalf of a Eurocentric educational system, even as Blair attempted to find a place within themselves as the receiving hôte who sought to accommodate others' needs for cultural knowledge, wisdom and tradition. Blair was brought up in more traditional Aboriginal ways in a small northern western Canadian Indigenous community but has lived in a southern Canadian urban setting for many years. In more traditional settings the role of Elder and teacher might perhaps more seamlessly flow one into the other, but as Blair noted concerning contemporary teaching contexts and the needs of students, "it is different now." What was different that revealed the hôte?

What was different perhaps was a sense of uncertainty heard in the questioning nature of Blair's accommodation of others. Blair identified with students as others who were like Blair, First Nation, yet at the same Blair recognized as them as different, as Blair wondered,

the problem I face is to what extent, as far as the spirituality goes with kids. How far do you go in that area?... I really have to watch personally because you have such a variety within the First Nations groups... we have a few that are Traditional, a few that have gone Christian, a few that really don't bother.

In this instance was evident the anxiety of the hôte in Blair's concern about the role of teacher and the accommodation of the difference encountered, but also perhaps unspoken questions pertaining to Blair's personal beliefs and values and how these affected others. Blair's words hint at such questions when Blair asked "how far do you go in that area?" This was not a concern for negotiating one's sense of self with others or with concerns of being "too white" or "too Indian" as seen with Pat earlier, but concerns for an understanding of self and other within the borders of First Nation reality. Issues of belonging and inclusion were seen, the struggle of the hôte, but in a manner different than

other participants' considerations of Aboriginal or not Aboriginal, Indigenous or not Indigenous that were evident, for example, with Kerry and Jordan.

Blair understood others could be First Nation yet also be Christian or be one of a "few that really don't bother", some of these students being individuals less concerned perhaps with tradition yet identifying as First Nation. There was an identification of others as being as themselves yet not them, where if we believe Derrida and Levinas, the Otherness of others exists with the "I" or along side our sense of self. What is important here is not resolving demarcations concerning what maybe Aboriginal or Indigenous and what may not, but whether there existed a tension where we can sense *hôte* in this person's accommodation of the Other.

To experience this tension is to sense the Other within oneself, or the "He [I] in the depth of You [Tu]" (Derrida, 1999, p. 60). This is a making-room for the otherness of others within one's understanding of self, where perhaps a concern for the difference of individuals fluctuates with a sense of others as singularly cultural beings and to an extent this seemed apparent with participants like Blair. The uneasiness of the *hôte* seemed apparent in Blair's words, where Blair encountered the difference of the Other within oneself, as Blair's words indicated,

To find a way through there. I try to speak to it as a person, as a human, you know. That one I have a real struggle with but yet I think I still have the responsibility...to give them the knowledge, giving them the choice; developing their own system whatever that may be.

I struggle with placing my values on others. You know I really have to watch and you know how I said, 'I treat them like a family?' I have to be able to stop and say, 'No! They are not really my family.' I can't force them to believe the way I do or to value the things that I do. So it's like, its kind of give and take situation there that I have to watch.

In this “give and take,” in the struggle of an “I” avoiding the placement of values on “others” and in trying to “speak to it as a person, as a human you know” there was the struggle and tension of *hôte*. This speaking “to it” was both a speaking to the Other as a person, as a human, and also a speaking as a person, “a human.” This person had a role and a function as teacher and was a role model for students, a person who in a sense embodied First Nation reality. Yet Blair’s words demonstrated Blair was not a singular embodiment of a culture any more than any one else. Blair approached others as “a human you know” and this focus on the humanity of others contended at times with their sense of who they might be as a role model and public school teacher.

The anxiety and tension of *hôte* was heard in another instant as Blair drew boundaries and laid claims concerning the nature of Blair’s relationship with others. These others were students who Blair considered family but not family, where as Blair explained, “I treat them like family” yet “they are not really my family.” There was a sense of being at home with others who belong to an “us” and to whom we belong. Family signifies a kinship, sameness or common identity in where others lay claims that guests cannot, where others in the intimacy of family are us and comprise home. Yet for Blair these others “are not really family”, and what constitutes Blair’s sense of comfort and familiarity, of being at home with one’s self, was disrupted by the presence of guests and what was valued was not necessarily always shared. There was a guardedness heard in Blair’s words, “I have to watch” for “it’s kind of a give and take situation”, that showed the tension of a receiving *hôte* who was not entirely familiar, nor comfortable with difference of others or others’ claims or Blair’s own claim to solidarity.

Blair's experience of *hôte* was evident in another moment. Blair possessed a passion for teaching Cree and maintaining this culture, that revealed a deep concern and suspicion not only regarding the school system and processes but also their complicity in that system.

Everybody goes somewhere if they have lost their language. They can go somewhere else but where do we go? ... and if you think about it, the Elders now that have the old language, its disappearing. And so even people of my generation a lot of us don't speak and we are not really, really one hundred percent fluent. I know I am not. I can talk but I am not 100 % fluent as in the Elders. (Blair)

Blair's words revealed an anxiety and concern, that leads Blair to discuss an experience with language teachers and support people during a conference meeting on teaching the Cree language. This discussion focused on the lack of progress made in public schooling regarding language development and retention, where as Blair offered,

We have been talking about this for so many years; nothing has been really happening. We are still in the same situation. Yes! There's more resources and stuff like that but these are not helping. You do not have a high retention of speakers yet.

There was a stasis to this circumstance that was frustrating and where there was a sense nothing has changed despite "more resources" and effort. This recognition of intransigence where "nothing has been really happening," and the anxiety and frustration of this inactivity, show the beginning of a tension that reveals *hôte* and culminates in a statement regarding the teaching of Cree in a public school system and Blair's existence as a person of First Nation heritage.

You need to have more immersion going on there especially in the younger children. But think about this.

When we first came into the education system they taught us to be in these little boxes, to sit and be quiet and listen. We are still doing it (frustrated laughter). We are still doing it. It isn't working. You know we need to change the way of educating.

So the value system on the whole, what's that then? Because really whose value system is that then? I know to get along with the major society you have to do things like that and as First Nation's people we have to do certain things to fit into the norm of the society I know, but still...

We were put in residential schools and now we are doing it to ourselves. We are really doing it to ourselves, we are still...nothing has really changed only they have put us in their spots. We are doing their work for them now and they have made us think...I shouldn't say "they" (laughing). It's like who are "they"? (laughing). (Blair)

Blair's words reveal a fundamental appreciation of mainstream education as an Other with values and perspectives that are foreign. With this Other there remained the expectation for students "to be in these little boxes, to sit and be quiet and listen" where "we are still doing it." In other words, the teaching-learning situation was one of containment and control where one passively accepted what is happening, that is in effect to find little hospitality and less accommodation, therefore little welcoming. In the certainty and strength of Blair's words is a certainty of what maybe the inhospitable, disruptive and incapable nature of the major societal education system. This is a situation where not only has there been little change, in Blair's view, but "they have put us in their spots. We are doing their work for them now." In other words Blair, perhaps like other educators claiming First Nation heritage, has become an Other doing the work of the Other to subvert the solidarity of the same, yet Blair immediately and laughingly adds, "I shouldn't say they. It's like who are they?"

In Blair's words we can sense the uncertainty of a person who hears in the "they" the Other who they have accommodated within themselves—"the Other within the depth of you." For Blair there seemed in this moment a certainty of "us" and "we" that shows the solidarity of an "I" or identity, yet there was also a withdrawal of certainty as to what constitutes "they." Here, if we believe Derrida and Levinas, the self accommodates the

Other and in this accommodating people are on the verge of, if not becoming the Other, then being totally overrun by the Other in their hospitality. The tension of accommodation and dis-accommodation of self and Other exists. This is hôte, the impossible circumstance (Ruitenbergh, 2005), where a person finds themselves a guest in their own home even as they remain the host.

Leaving Hospitality

Hôte is the central experience of hospitality and this experience was evident with the educators I interviewed, yet for these people there was variation regarding the extent to which we could witness their embodiment as hôte. The experience of participants was sophisticated and multi-dimensional where we witnessed the questioning, anxious and uncertain hôte but were not bound to a singular instance or issue. We witnessed hospitality but also hôte's companions, interruption and vulnerability. These were revealed to us in stories such as Pat and the culture room, Jordan's experience of a wellness program, Kerry's literacy and art project involving an Elder, and Blair's involvement with teaching the Cree language. These were practical instances that confirmed the existence of the experience of hôte and the impossible struggle of hospitality but also lay open avenues for a further consideration of hospitality.

We saw with these educators an openness and vulnerability in their encounter with the Other and witnessed the tensions and anxiety of hôte as they straddled the boundary between giving over too much and not giving enough. These were moments that involved the practical workings of schooling, but more tellingly involved the interiority of themselves, their identity or self of self and how they felt and thought about their responsibility. On one hand we witnessed with participants how they were masters of

themselves and their circumstance, where the “I against the “other” of the world consists in *sojourning*, in *identifying oneself* by existing here *at home with oneself* [*chez soi*]” (Levinas, 1961, p. 37). Yet these educators became guests in their own home, in a manner mastered by the Other. These were instances, to quote Derrida, where “the one who receives is received, receiving hospitality in what he takes to be his own home” (1999, p. 42). These educators found the difference of others already awaiting them amidst the norms of their expectations, routine and identity, dis-accommodating them, as Derrida suggested when he asks, “Is not hospitality an interruption of the self?” (1999, p. 51).

The words of these educators showed the struggle, questioning and anxiety of a shifting sense of self or ‘I’ as they recognized the Other within themselves, not as an Otherness that dissolves into the sameness of self, but as an interruption of the self. In their questions concerning belonging and inclusion, seen in Pat’s words “too much a White” or “too much an Indian” or in Jordan’s spouse’s question “who are you?” or a language teacher’s “who are ‘they’?” or in the realization of the “bizarre” nature of Pat’s experience, we witnessed the Other alongside the self in the shelter of the ‘I’. We witnessed, as Derrida suggests, the fundamental experience of hospitality where

One will understand nothing about hospitality if one does not understand what “interrupting oneself” might mean, the interruption of the self by the self as other. (1999, p. 52)

Here, as with vulnerability, we found interruption folding into hospitality. We witnessed the “calling into question of the same” (Levinas, 1961, p. 43), interruption, and the substitution of the ‘for-oneself’ where there exists both deference and the accommodation of the Other. There was a struggle for the educators I interviewed that involved working out their responsibility for enacting the role of teacher, administrator or support person. This struggle occurred on both practical and personal levels, overtly and

covertly, where comfort with their role and expectations for themselves and others gave way to a questioning and anxiety as they found themselves uncomfortable and feeling out of place. In the struggle of these educators there resided a sense of dispossession or dislocation who, in meeting the demands of public schooling, found a lack in schooling in meeting the needs of the Otherness of others.

The words of participants allowed us to witness them putting aside their needs in favour of the needs of others in moments where they relinquished power and judgment even as they attempted to fulfill their roles and maintain their sense of self. We witnessed through the words of the educators I interviewed them offering up their time, energy and resources to others in a manner that transcended the norms and conventions of schooling, where for some they give over the right of determination concerning what is valuable and what is worthy for self and other. We witnessed their vulnerability and the risk of rejection and non-inclusion in their attempts to accommodate the Other. This giving over to the Other, a receptivity to change, to alteration to practice but also to their understandings of themselves, was seen earlier as educators' re-envisioned success. These instances are indicative of the deference to others that constitute hospitality even as educators did not entirely defer and continued to make claims and establish borders concerning their practice and sense of self.

The words of these educators provided instances where we witnessed the offering of shelter to the Other, where a place was offered to the stranger as someone Other who enters our situation, and in a manner, moves us aside but not entirely. In such moments individuals adapted and adjusted and we witnessed the accommodation of the Other that signifies hospitality.

There was a sense of being under siege or beset by the Other indicative of hospitality, where, as Derrida says, “The host [*hôte*] is a hostage insofar as he is a subject put into question, obsessed (and thus besieged), persecuted, in the very place where he takes place.” (1999, p. 56) and where Levinas suggests “the self, a hostage, is already substituted for the others. “I am an other,”...outside of any place, in myself...impassively undergoing the weight of the other, thereby called to uniqueness.” (1981, p. 118) This uniqueness, if we believe Levinas, seems the singular and inescapable responsibility of a human being that is always contextual, always in the making where we can find no relief by blindly following a role, a protocol or conception of identity. In other words, the difference we invite into our presence or that visits itself upon us demands from us a unique response, where adhering to roles, protocols or even notions of identity while helpful are always insufficient in meeting the ethical demand placed upon us.

In the pressing issues and questions we witnessed with the educators I interviewed that involved, for example, inclusion, belonging, identity, the secular versus the sacred, how best to serve others or what is best to do for another, we can sense the challenge difference presents to educators, a challenge where they find themselves obsessed and under siege as they defer to and attempt to accommodate the Other. What Levinas and Derrida seem to suggest in reference to ourselves as *hôte* who are also hostages, is not merely of the physical reality of the demands others place upon us, that for these educators concerned in part the mundane and practical demands of school procedure and practice, but of a fundamental disposition in peoples’ experience. The hostage is not only someone held surrounded by demands and expectations, but also pledged to another, substituted for an Other. The hostage is on an indeclinable parole, released under oath or

on a word of honour with the promise of good behaviour, of fulfilling the Other, of being available to address the needs of the Other when requested by the presence of others, and this sense of an indeclinable parole seemed evident with these participants.

Hospitality involves the exchange of the ‘for-oneself’ by the ‘one-for-the-other’ and in this replacement or re-implication (Casey, 1993) we gain a sense of these educators as hôte and hostage where “someone irreplaceable... The non-interchangeable par excellence, the I, the unique one, substitutes itself for others” (Levinas, 1981, p. 114). While this sense of irreplaceability was perhaps less obvious with some of these educators, substitution existed as they gave shelter to the Other that required a making of room for the Other. In a manner, each person was on parole from their self interest, pledged uniquely and irreplaceably to the Other with a responsibility that was singularly their own. These educators showed a sense of responsibility that was irreplaceable and unique though they may not have explicitly stated this understanding. They offered hospitality to others or the Other and, if we believe Levinas, this involved an already existent incontrovertible passivity where the “self is through and through a hostage, older than ego, prior to principles” (1981, p. 117).

Educators’ responsibility as the hôte was a struggle not only to accommodate others in pragmatic terms but also a struggle with their belief and values. This struggle was evident, for example, in the desire of others and themselves for cultural knowledge and wisdom, a concern for pursuing spiritual matters, a pursuit that is not usually congruent with the norms of a secular public school. At the root of this response was a fundamental orientation to others, as Levinas noted, that emerges before ego or before a reliance on systems, rules or guidelines. A response where people try, as one person said

“to speak to it” or speak to the Other, “as a person, as a human you know.” This speaking was hospitality and involved deference and accommodation that “opens the way to the humanity of the human” (Derrida, 1999, p.72) avoiding “the neutralization of the other who becomes a theme or object...reduction to the same” (Levinas, 1961, p. 43). The experience of these educators involved hospitality where they attempted to guard against losing sight of the unique trace of the Other who we cannot conceive nor treat simply as an image or icon, a theme or category.

In avoiding this “neutralization” these educators attempted to avoid being entirely captured and controlled by the reality of school rules, regulations, processes and roles and the habits of their own sameness. All of these realities carried with them, through expectation, limitation and demand, the possibility of being inhospitable where there is “the refusal or forgetting of the face,” where there is the “forgetting of the transcendence of the Other” (Derrida, 1999, p. 49, 95). Whether a conscious act or not these educators attempted to avoid such neutralization or thematization. They attempted to be and were hospitable in their refusal, as Levinas says,

to recognize the role I would play in a drama of which I would not be author or whose outcome another would know before me; I refuse to figure in a drama of salvation or damnation that would be enacted in spite of me and that would make a game of me. (1961, p. 79)

There was a strong sense of responsibility with these educators who seemed to understand that what occurred with students and their immediate families were truly matters of ‘salvation’ or ‘damnation,’ matters of hope for much better lives or despair, of societal affirmation and acceptance or dismissal, of even of life or death. There was a refusal by the educators I interviewed to play the game of school, to be complicit in situations that would make a game of their responsibility. These educators in their

perseverance as hôte, in their anxiety, uncertainty and questioning, kept open “the way to the humanity of the human”, an opening that is the welcoming of the Other for whom I am responsible and who always surpasses my understanding and control.

To keep open the way to the humanity of the human is to be responsible but that also means to express desire. This is the desire to do what is proper by accommodating the Other. However, before all else, this desire is not a desire for the pragmatic and the practical “like bread I eat, the land in which I dwell, the landscape I contemplate” where “I can ‘feed’ on these realities and to a very great extent satisfy myself” (Levinas, 1961, p. 33), but a metaphysical desire, where “desire is desire for the absolutely other... a desire without satisfaction which, precisely, *understands* [*entend*] the remoteness, the alterity, and the exteriority of the other” (Levinas, 1961, p. 34). Such desire seemed to exist with these educators and grounded their experience as hôte where with hospitality there “is a contradiction between two neighboring but incompatible values: *visitation and invitation*...simultaneously in competition and incompatible” (Derrida, 2002, p. 362).

In welcoming others these educators invited others to learn. They invited them into their situation, a place already prepared and familiar to themselves. This place formed in their expectations, beliefs, values, routines and their understanding of difference and the role of others. Their invitation, if we believe Derrida, offered a hospitality that was already some what inhospitable for the invitation was extended to those one already believed they knew, in a manner they desired, to one they recognized in advance, where “because I expect the coming of the hôte as invited, there is no hospitality (Derrida, 2002, p. 362). There was a struggle here for educators that, to present an invitation to the Other assumed these educators already knew who they were

inviting. An invitation where these educators might have sat others down in a “guest’s chair,” constricting others such as students, and forcing them to wait to be served in a manner suitable to the host who offers what they have already chosen before hand at the time they appointed, believing they know already what is good for others such as students. The tension of inviting the Other shows the impossibility of hospitality and this seemed evident with participants, for in this invitation they were visited by the Other whose difference overtook any idea or expectation they may have possessed concerning the Other. This is the radical, impossible and inevitable nature of hospitality, the flux of hospitality, that I believe existed in the words of educators where hospitality

would have to consist, in *receiving without invitation*, beyond or before invitation....to let oneself be overtaken [*surprendre*], *to be ready to not be ready*, if such is possible, to let oneself be overtaken, to not even *let* oneself be overtaken, to be surprised...precisely where one is not ready to receive—and not only *not yet ready* but *not ready, unprepared* in a mode that is not even that of the “not yet.” (Derrida, 2002, p. 361)

These educators were surprised by the difference of others and in their anxiety and their questioning concerning the accommodation of the Other there was the shock of visitation. There was the anxiety and uncertainty of people who were overtaken and are never quite ready for the difference they encountered. This was evident by participants frequent questioning and wonderment about their roles and their sense of self in relation to the Other. Even as they invited the Other to enter and learn, they were unprepared and overtaken by difference, ready to receive the Other but “*not yet ready*,” instances that signified their hospitality. In their embodiment as *hôte* these educators realized hospitality where “if there is any—must, would have to, open itself to an other that is not mine, my *hôte*, my other, not even my neighbour or my brother (Derrida, 2002, p. 363).

To a greater or lesser extent, the experience of these educators shows the realization of hospitality, that seems to fulfill Derrida's and Levinas' notions that to be hospitable is to be hôte. These educators seemed simultaneously guest and host, the '*received hôte*' and the '*receiving hôte*,' who lived both a constant tension concerning what to give up or what to retain in the accommodation of the Other. Each person appeared to embody an irreplaceable and unique responsibility to others that was unavoidable and defined their sense of self or subjectivity. The uncertainty and anxiety about hospitality seemed evident and educators sought to avoid particular outcomes and legacies of systems, rules and forms that might have closed the way for the "humanity of the human." They sought to avoid what would make a game of responsibility and their relation to the Other.

This struggle bespoke hospitality and in the educators' words we see the desire for the Other that Levinas suggests is a desire for the absolutely Other who we seek to welcome. Emerging from this desire was a sense of knowing with an inescapable certainty that the Other would evade their invitations and would overtake them as an unexpected visitor, a visitation that constituted a continual challenge concerning the boundaries of self and the ethicality of their thought and action. For each person there was the recognition of the Other within themselves where there existed the offer of shelter to the Other and where they understood the Other was already awaiting them, displacing them, as the Other "within the depths of You." They were held hostage as someone pledged to the Other where there was a substituting of the '*one-for-itself*' with the '*one-for-the-other*.' They were surrounded and besieged by the difference of the Other. In their experience we witnessed the encounter with the Other who has already

breached the walls of their self and sameness, welcoming them in their own place, within themselves, and bringing the gift of freedom to act on behalf of the Other.

If we reposition Levinas' thought slightly, then this freedom also brings the gift of learning, where we receive from the Other a learning that the Other, by the difference they embody, instructs us concerning our responsibility. The following chapter explores the meaning of this gift of learning from the Other that exists in the many examples of these participants' experience and words. In this learning from the Other that is a gift, we are taught by the Other and our learning is a magisterial learning where we welcome the Other who reveals our responsibility.

Chapter 8

Welcoming as Learning From the Other

To approach the Other in conversation is to welcome his [sic] expression, in which at each instant he [sic] overflows the idea a thought [sic] would carry away from it. It is therefore to *receive* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity. But this also means: to be taught. The relation with the Other, or Conversation, is a non-allergic relation, an ethical relation; but inasmuch as it is welcomed this conversation is a teaching [*enseignement*]. Teaching is not reducible to maieutics; it comes from the exterior and brings me more than I contain. (Levinas, 1961, p.51)

Our responsibility to the Other involves a conversation where we welcome the Other who exceeds any limitations of conceptualization that we may attempt to place upon them. In this conversation the Other teaches us and we receive a gift of learning that reveals our responsibility to the Other. In considering the words and experience of the educators I interviewed, what might this conversation and teaching involve and more specifically what might this notion reveal to us concerning these educators' understanding of responsibility as they existed amidst ethno-cultural difference?

Todd (2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2003c) is perhaps foremost among recent writers who undertake a close reading of Levinas in an attempt to understand the possibilities for an ethical pedagogy. She suggests that education is a site of implied ethics that involves a 'becoming' where teachers and learners are continually under the demand 'to become' someone Other through the experience of school. Weaving in work by Castoriadis (1991), Britzman (1998) and Bauman (1993) alongside Levinas, Todd explores the concern that inherent in the demand 'to become' a student or an educator there resides a degree of coercion or violence. Todd describes this reference to violence neither as metaphorical or relating to specific acts such as neglect, humiliation, torture or abuse but moments "where the social environment exacts a traumatic price from the psyche" and

where “education, by its very socializing function and by its mission to change how people think and relate to the world, enacts a violence that is necessary to the formation of the subject” (2003c, p. 19, 20). While Todd notes that such becoming is a necessary condition of subjectivity, she also suggests that the question around the demand to become is not “so much whether education wounds or not through its impulse to socialize, but whether it wounds excessively and how we (as teachers) might open our selves to less coercive or pressuring interactions or nonviolent possibilities in our pedagogical encounters” (2003c, p. 20). This need to avoid wounding excessively seems especially poignant in situations where often disadvantaged others face significant life challenges that may hamper or harm them emotionally or psychically, and where there exists perhaps for students and their families less resiliency or capacity to deal with the difficulties of such challenges, difficulty and lack that may severely hamper students’ efforts to succeed in school and in life.

The desire to avoid this hampering, harm or excessive wounding occurs in our encounter with the Other who in their Otherness teach us responsibility, an encounter where educators search for the possibility of a “non-allergic relation, an ethical relation” in welcoming the Other. The need to avoid excessively wounding the Other involves a gift of learning which Todd (2003c) suggests is

a psychical event, one caught up in the interplay between what lies outside and inside the subject, what lies interior and exterior, so that the encounter with otherness becomes the necessary precondition for meaning and understanding....altering the very parameters of self-perception and one’s place in the world, and risks losing, therefore, one’s bearings and conventions. (pp. 10-11)

In the discussions concerning interruption, vulnerability and hospitality, one witnesses in participants’ words their struggle to understand their circumstance or place

in relation to students and students' families amidst ethno-cultural difference. We witness changes in their self-perception and struggles to gain their bearings in serving others as they realized themselves as ethical beings.

While in the previous discussions I employed the words of participants in creating a reading of ideas involved with welcoming, in the following discussion I shift this close reading of others' experiences to focus more on my experience of working amidst the ethno-cultural difference I shared with the educators I interviewed. I make this move for two basic reasons.

First, there is no way I can remove my perceptions and bias from how I interpret Levinas and articulate the idea of welcoming. In offering what I hope is a more intimate and focused rendition of learning from the Other that includes my experience I am hoping the reader can gain a better grasp concerning the context and motivations that affect my earlier interpretation of participants' re-envisioning of success, interpretation, vulnerability and hospitality as welcoming.

Second, by offering a more personal articulation I hope to provide an opportunity for the reader to develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of the tensions and conflicts shared by myself and the participants that were involved in seeking a less wounding pedagogy. To accomplish this I rely on Levinas and Todd's interpretations of Levinas' writings and also, in part, ideas from Britzman, Castoriadis and Bauman to discuss to what extent learning from the Other may exist for myself and others, in the attempt to better understand welcoming the Other as learning from the Other. This discussion initiates and frames a later discussion concerning the implications of

educators' pursuit of a less wounding pedagogy where they seek to realize their responsibility.

Encountering an Other

When I consider my experience of working in an inner city school encountering students whose difference is poignant and visible, there was no escaping the sensation of interruption and vulnerability Levinas suggests exists in our encounter with other persons. There were moments, like those of Pat, Kerry, Jordan and Blair that I have already mentioned, where there existed an anxious tension that emerged in deferring and accommodating the difference of others, in finding oneself interrupted and vulnerable. In such moments I was left me to wonder and question what was ethical. In other words, like them I was left to consider the nature and scope of my responsibility and like them this involved a struggle with notions of my role as a professional, and my identity and place on more personal levels.

What seemed at the core of this shared struggle as Chris said is that “we’ve got to figure out something for the kids, to really get something happening for the kids that is worthwhile, that is valuable to them, that is useful” and a desire to avoid offending or disadvantaging others while undertaking such pursuits. For my part, this search involved like Kerry, not only questioning my motives and actions, but like Kerry and others, questioning the institutional roles one played, the regulations, and routines that were to be followed and the very purpose of schooling.

Negotiating the demand to become (Todd, 2003c) for myself as a teacher and for others such as students or colleagues seemed neither straightforward nor free of concern. There was in my encounter with others such as students and their families a strong sense

of the necessity to be fair, just and responsible but often not understanding what was involved with this and uncertainty enacting responsibility. The following story relates my involvement in such a search, a search similar to that of the educators I interviewed and that their words reveal, as I tried to find my way as a compassionate person in helping a student while fulfilling my responsibility.

Decision

John was a humorous young man who reveled in the outdoor adventure of year-end school trips. He has accompanied me on trips for several years. His extended family was well known in the neighbourhood for their toughness. A tall figure with black hair, dark eyes and dark complexion during moments where we would joke and laugh together I would find myself envisioning a younger version of my brother. Colleagues, several of those I interviewed for this research, had commented on John's sensitivity and intelligence, traits he possessed that often belied people's first impressions of him. Naïvely perhaps, I listened to him talk hopefully of his prospects even as his life stories challenged my notions of normality and what the future may actually hold for him. He would sometimes share with me his uncertainty about his life, where he would talk of showing too much intelligence and sensitivity beyond school situations "in the hood," admissions that might bring risks he would rather avoid. He often joked with and teased those around him in a playful way, offering some statement punctuated with a 'dead pan' expression, waiting to see if his humour was understood and appreciated. He had progressed slowly through school, not through a lack of intelligence, but perhaps as other colleagues believed, because he did not want to leave the school as it seemed a place of safety for him. There were instances that attested to his reluctance to leave. In such a

moment, after successfully completing the requirements of class work, he does not show for a final examination. In another instance he rips up a final exam after completing it, ensuring his failure but also ensuring he will return. Despite his ability, there seemed a specter of self-imposed defeat that at moments overtakes him or perhaps this was a type of victory, where his actions were actually a statement of his independence, a statement of that he is in charge of himself doing what he liked when he liked.

The school year was ending and I asked John to provide me with his last major assignment for a course. The assignment was a requirement for successful completion of this course that would lead finally to his high school graduation. His project required some modest additions and was near completion. Yet as I inquired of him when I might expect to have his final project, he tells me somewhat casually he will not be submitting one. I find this disheartening but hold my tongue letting this moment pass. He seems engaged in some sort of self-sabotage and my anxiety for him surges. He is capable yet incapable. He is on the verge of success and it is a success that he has previously told me he desires. Achieving such success will shape his life in what I hope will be positive and powerful ways. Over the next several days I gently inquired if he would like to come and complete the materials but he was non-committal. I wondered what else, if anything, I should do.

I was left to wonder if it was my responsibility to pursue him with continued attempts to complete this work or to frame arguments in an attempt to convince him of what I believed was best for him? Should I have spoken to him in a manner that might be considered overbearing demanding his conformity, an attempt that in a manner might be to vanquish his own agency, leaving him to admit the validity of what I know about him?

Is such an attempt ethical? If I did not accept this, how otherwise might I have approached him? Was there something I should be listening for, something I was not hearing or attending to concerning John needs? Or should I have simply applied the requirements for successful course completion and relieved myself of my concern for John and the burden of pursuit? In other words, John seemed to have made a decision, the course work was incomplete and therefore he would fail. I wondered again about my place in this situation? What if this were my younger brother, what would I desire a teacher to do for him? Perhaps I knew too much about John, had been too close to him, had done too much with him to not be entirely for him.

John seemed somehow stalled, unable to act in a manner that ensured his academic success and I was caught unsure of what to do. I experienced a sense of intransigence in wondering what course of action might be best. In some moments I felt a temptation to overlook what remained for the completion of his project and pass him on, but this left me to wondering what message this may send to others as well as John regarding what was responsible or fair to oneself and others. I felt an unsettledness and anxiety that inhabited me before as I considered whether my actions would be helpful, sustaining and strengthening John or merely enabling, undermining capacities he has already developed.

Prohibiting him from the year-end trip he has attended each and every year since he began attending the school crossed my mind. This had been a highlight of his school experience but I was uneasy about facing John with such an ultimatum. Such an ultimatum was a possibility, yet for me this seemed potentially misguided, and perhaps more tellingly, I felt uncomfortable with the possibility of the coercion that might reside

within such ultimatums even in what may be my well-intentioned attempt to persuade. I was unsure where the boundaries between coercion and persuasion existed in this situation, where one might turn into the other and whether my actions might actually help or merely enable him in what seemed to be self-sabotage.

Educators sometimes discuss logical consequences with students and this might be helpful, yet this might also be a misguided undertaking. I sensed a danger in believing I could fulfill my responsibility by tagging John with a need to see what I believed was desirable, no matter how much sense this made to me or how strongly I felt his situation warranted this. Presenting arguments to John was a possibility, yet I felt like I was intruding upon him in some manner that was coercive and pressuring.

I have rarely approached John or other students with ultimatums hoping, as we talked with each other and shared our stories, they would come to find their own reasons for participating. In listening I was hopeful they would give voice to their own hopes and desires and discover their own reasons for what they attempted. Regardless of their success in class work, whether they were late for a class or sometimes were absent, I tried to keep open an opportunity alive for their participation. I was averse to disallowing their participation in extra-curricular activities because they may not be successful with class work or because their presence in class at times was inconsistent. This seemed to hold true for other educators in this school, the participants I interviewed in this research. Perhaps others, like myself, recognized the necessity of these activities as positive events in the lives of students where students would come to understand regardless of circumstance that they were fundamentally accepted, liked and even loved. There seemed

something unethical in approaching extra-curricular access in terms of punishment and reward or where I might try to convince students with arguments based on punishment.

Using such leverage seemed an attempt to overcome them, in a sense to conquer them, to bring them to believe what I believed even if I embarked on this with the best of intentions. There were moments perhaps that warranted such leveraging, yet there was a sense for myself and I suspect my colleagues that such ‘convincing’ emerged from an abuse of authority, not perhaps by a student’s realization motivated by deeper understandings of their own responsibility and well-being. For me there always seemed a question concerning if we could or more importantly if we should, in schooling, be attempting to force others into acting responsibly for their own well-being. Are such the actions actually disrespectful of the difference of others? Notions of forcing, even when well-intended, seem misplaced perhaps because this seemed an excessive demand, a potentially wounding demand that might may alienate others such as students from opportunities to learn as there may be little or no accommodation of their difference.

To slip into coercion under the guise of offering logical consequences seemed to run the risk of violating John in some manner. Yet it was not a lack of intellectual understanding that seemed to prompt John’s inaction. The more I encountered John the more I realized that his world was beyond me. Even though we shared some commonalities, he was different from me, he viewed his circumstance differently than me, and possessed capacities different than mine. I could not have presumed to make any strong claim that I knew what was best for him, yet I faced a decision that involved that very question. I worried I was doing him a disservice in hesitating, by not insisting he comply to my demand he finish his work, for I know he would likely continue to face

such demands whether at school or in society. How else would he get “strong” or know how to “play the game.” Perhaps if he failed that would be a lesson that would serve him in the future? Despite my anxiety perhaps my responsibility was to allow him the opportunity for failure.

There was a gravity and seriousness to this situation that I rarely encountered in my experience with students in more mainstream schooling situations. How I was to proceed in serving John and others in similar situations seemed to carry more dire outcomes or consequences. The stakes seemed so much higher. The success of students, how ever conceived, seemed increasingly to involve how they would orient themselves and navigate a way with the demands to live in not just the two worlds of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, but in multiple realities. Yet their ability to engage these demands, to fulfill them to some extent in a manner in which they could live productively and meaningfully, rested in part in how they negotiated the demands of schooling. In my experience of serving John and others there was a tension that prompted me to question my actions, my place, and to question whether I truly had anything to offer for their benefit. Again, I was left to wonder if I was being responsible or doing him harm.

What was I to do? Simply follow the rules and routines of evaluation laid out previously, then stand by as John fails to complete a class he once seemed sure to pass? Or should I have overlooked those standards at this point and pass him on with the rationalization that he has other class work that I might “count,” ignoring the requirements for a successful project? Would this be fair to others? Would this be fair to John? Would to pass him this way perhaps only have enabled him where I removed his opportunity to realize the consequences of his decisions? How would my decision help

him in the long view of his life or was my only concern with his performance in my class at this time? Such questions left me pondering whether I was on the brink of enacting a type of coercion or perhaps oppression or violence to him in accepting his inaction or non-commitment.

The last day of class was nearing and John's project was not complete. I was hoping somehow, whether through the strength of our relationship, through listening and being attentive to him, the desire to succeed he had shown, some self-realized logic or all of these, that he would decide to complete his project and in turn participate in the years end trip but also graduate.

Attending to the Other: Searching for a Less-Violent or Less-Coercive Pedagogy

In the interruption that John brought me, as well as in the struggle of the educators I interviewed such as Pat, Kerry, Jordan and others, where they contravened the narrative of schooling as they re-envisioned success, there was no escape from the very real presence of other human beings. Their presence brought a gift of learning for myself and these educators as we realized that the infinite demand the Other placed upon us a demand for proper relationship with the Other that would likely exhaust our resources and abilities, even as we found no relief from the call of the Other. These seemed moments when our encounter with difference of others taught us the necessity of attending to the Other, an attending that rests "in the teacher's own capacity to be receptive to the discourse of the face, to hear, to listen for the meanings that students work out for themselves" (Todd, 2003c, p. 31).

Like the educators I interviewed I sensed a struggle that we seemed to share where we sought a proper, ethical relation to the Other. This struggle involved resolving

the expectations and demands schools placed upon students but also with how this negotiation emerged amidst the demands we felt as educators who also had to find a way in our roles, roles always illuminated by our sense of selves as compassionate people.

As seen in the words of the educators I interviewed, the lives of students, their families and others such as Elders surpassed their ability to constrain or contain the difference embodied by others. They learned that the Other, that the difference embodied in students was a reality they could not dominate, envelope or surmount if they were to truly be responsible. For my part, my past experience of working within mainstream middle-class schools seemed an insufficient grounding in addressing the difference I encountered in the school I shared with these educators. I had a sense of being out of place of being inadequate in meeting others' needs even as I was tasked with accommodating the learning of students. In wrestling with how to proceed these participants, like myself, seemed to share a sensibility that we might be curtailing or limiting the possibilities and opportunities of others such as students, by a reliance on stereotypes and categorization. In Blair's words "who are 'they'" or where Kim noted, "every last individual required something special" there was evident a lesson where like myself and other participants they seemed to understand the poverty of stereotyping and categorization.

Even as people acted on such categories and ideas the use of these seemed insufficient in fully informing an ethical response because the needs of students varied widely and these needs could go unaddressed and unfulfilled if one held too closely or rigidly to categories. Together we seemed to realize that too severe an adherence to the

conventions of schooling was inadequate as a response to students' difference and the needs arising from such difference.

As with Kerry, who "wasn't prepared" for students for they were "mature in ways that other high school kids aren't," I was interrupted by the difference of the Other constituted by John's presence. His presence made a demand upon me where I was offered a gift of learning because I "*receive* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I" (Levinas, 1961, p. 51). This gift was evident with all these educators through various moments, where for example, Lee realized a student's notion of money and its utility were different than Lee's, or in Pat's case where there was realization that the needs of others would cause Pat to have to change to no longer "be a straight arrow, follow the rules." Like the educators I interviewed the difference I encountered prompted a dissonance in my thinking and action. In my case this sense of dissonance continues now even as I write, where I realize the need to learn not only *about* the Other as well as *from* the Other, but how to be "for-the-other." This dissonance, as I suspect with the colleagues I interviewed, taught us a lesson that we were in a "relation with the Other that is not predictable or calculable" (Todd, 2003c, p. 10).

The educators that I interviewed through their experiences of interruption, vulnerability and *hôte* seemed to learn their responsibility as educators involved being attentive to the Other and I share this learning. This attentiveness as Levinas (1981) suggested involves the face-to-face encounter where one hears and affirms the "saying" of the Other among the "said" of categories, rules and routine. This listening involved a conversation with the Other that could not be a one-sided transmission of words outlining the demands made upon others such as students (Todd, 2003c). In the words of these

educators one can almost see them leaning forward to others, attentive to the difference of students, cocking of an ear to hear and to listen what they as educators should be learning from the difference they have encountered. Like these educators, in my encounter with John, I am trying to discern his needs, listening for clues that emerge from the difference I am encountering, so I may best respond. I am the student, he is the teacher.

Listening, conversing, attending to the Other, while involving a comprehension of the words of others involved a hearkening to what was beyond the screen of their words, their movements and their articulations, where we sensed “the trace of the embodied presence who signifies” (p. 126). For the educators I interviewed as well as for myself we learned of “our capacity to be moved and touched by another’s life story” (Todd, 2003c, p.136).

Like myself, my former colleagues’ encounter with the Other seemed to them they could not rely entirely on the “said” of categories or rules to shield them from demand placed upon them nor would these ease the intensity of the demand for a non-allergic, non-wounding relationship. Such complacency, shielding or ease of demand, Todd suggests following Bauman’s lead, is where responsibility “becomes detached from the moral agent and is viewed only in relation to carrying out a job or duty prescribed by the institution” (Todd, 2003c, p. 143). For my part I could not seem to hide behind duty in my face-to-face encounter with John, his presence was too overwhelming, too poignant and demands an attentiveness that did not passively follow duty.

Such detachment or shielding emerges in part, if we believe Todd, because schooling demands students ‘become’ someone Other, instances where

the subject *learns* to become a being in relation to others it encounters, learning values, behaviors, and modes of thinking within the nexus of culture, language and social relations...an inevitably violent demand that society places on its subjects...Moreover, this violence is occasioned not only by the content of what one learns but by the structure of the demand to learn itself. (Todd, 2003c, pp. 19-21)

The demand to ‘become’ someone other (Britzman, 1998), while an inevitable aspect of life that has potential benefit for students, their families and ultimately communities and society, remains potentially coercive as Todd notes, for “if pedagogy is about the becoming of the subject, then it can become a tool for the most oppressive ends” (2003c, p. 28). In my encounter with John I sensed this demand and this caused some hesitation in how I fashioned a response. This hesitation was seen with participants like Lee in wondering how teachers and students alike are to deal with the “box” of schooling.

With John I did not wish to approach him primarily with arguments concerning the consequences of his inaction, that while appearing as an ethically neutral undertaking, could border on or become coercion or violation. This seemed in effect a demand that he account for himself not upon his grounds or in his time, not even on grounds that may be in his best interest (which is the question), but on the grounds I chose and in a manner I saw fit. This sense of the attentiveness to possible coercion seemed a lesson learned with the educators I interviewed where, for example, there was a need to change, as Kerry noted, one’s “language of encouragement” or as Jordan related previously, “to not press my values on them all the time.”

For my part I sensed that to press too urgently on John, what the convention of schooling might suggest, was perhaps to apply a measure or standard of sameness that for him in his life, at this point, that was irresponsible. In other words, to act in John’s

situation simply on what I might have done with the majority of students I encountered, was to do a disservice to John, to turn from the difference he embodied that required an attentive response. Simply following rules or guidelines or convention, while aiming to be equitable and fair, by the nature and insistence of this adherence, was perhaps inattentive to the Other, and therefore perhaps unfair and coercive.

The educators I interviewed, like myself in my encounter with John, seemed to learn that attending to the Other meant meditating the tension of a becoming that was perhaps found most pressingly in the confluence and tensions of teacher as an institutional figure and as a compassionate person. In this confluence there seemed to emerge a struggle to understand one's institutional role and sense of oneself as a compassionate person that was "fundamentally rooted in our capacities for emotional involvement and attachment" (Todd, 2003c, p. 145). In my experience with John I found myself questioning in a manner similar to Todd, "does becoming a teacher necessarily mean learning to make certain concessions to rules and routines that might be hurtful, at times, to students...?" (2003c, p. 26). Todd's question implies an awareness of oneself where one considers their circumstance or identity are not confined by rules and routines, where they judge when and when not to comply with the rules and routines in the discourse of schooling, that some other aspect of themselves was to step forward to mediate the discourse of schooling.

If there was an answer, even if it emerged only momentarily, perhaps it emerged in the face-to-face encounter with the Other where there was a realization for myself, but I also believe with these educators "that I am in this relationship, here and now, and that this relation has put me in a position of responsibility that is not dependent on principles

but on the Other's needs" (Todd, 2003c, p. 145). This need for attending to the Other's need was recognized repeatedly as evidenced in the words of the educators I interviewed whether in shock and surprise of interruption, their vulnerability in the substitution of the "for-one-self" by the "one-for-the-other", or in their hospitable accommodation of the Other. The recognition for attending to the other was a gift of learning brought by the Other.

For these educators the necessity of critically considering how they would negotiate their situations as institutional figures and compassionate people so as to avoid excessively wounding the Other, to evade a pathological pedagogy, was an essential lesson, a gift of learning the Other offered to them. In the re-envisioning of success as "getting it" that these educators experienced, these people learned the necessity for acting as institutional figures seeking to aid students in achieving academic success, but also understood there were considerations that ranged beyond simply carrying out one's role according to duty or convention. In their exposure, for example, to the financial, emotional, and social challenges that students frequently faced, these educators seemed unable to avoid the call to respond as compassionate people that Todd says "involves a painfulness that we simply cannot escape, a painfulness that is part of what is required to learn from, and not merely about, the Other" (Todd, 2003c, p. 136).

These realities that transcend but frame and influence the pedagogical experience of students called to these educators as well as myself leaving us to "put everything into proper perspective" (hooks, 2003, p. 114). In these moments educators' compassionate selves more fully informed themselves as institutional figures and these people realized their responsibility involved affirming and enhancing their personal relationships with

others, even when they were unsure of how to proceed. They realized the need to attend to the Other, to pay close attention to who was before them and the unique needs and challenges of individuals was perhaps more than a “lesson” but a fundamental aspect of responsibility. In other words, if the traditional discourse of success was to proceed this meant their role of institutional figure need to be strongly informed by their existence as compassionate person attentive to the face of the Other. In this lesson concerning relationship these educators learned the service they offered, their responsibility, could not avoid addressing the life challenges students face and how they might help them whether in school or beyond in students’ lives in general.

Buber (1970; 1972; 1966) while differing from Levinas concerning the nature and origin of responsibility nevertheless shares a common concern about the demands of our institutional self and self as compassionate person. Buber identifies a difficulty I believe these educators and I sensed concerning how we regard others. The core of this difficulty or challenge involved the necessity to speak as an ‘I’ in relation to a ‘You’, as a compassionate person to the face of the Other, even as we sensed our reality as an institutional figure tasked with encountering the Other more as an ‘It’. These educators sensed the tension and difference amidst “I”, “You” and “It” and the possibility of losing sight of the face of the Other, where for example, they might have concerned themselves narrowly with others merely as “It,” as means for the ends of schooling and not for others such as students, as a “You,” as ends in themselves. They seemed like my self to have been alive and sensitive to the possibility of a pedagogy that might involve coercion or excessive wounding of the Other. In other words, sensitive that the demand to become placed upon others, framed as it often is through the conventions of schooling, was an

approach to others that could be ill-timed, ill-placed or ill-conceived. This sensitivity and concern seemed to signal a more sophisticated sense of responsibility or ethical sensibility than merely treating others as an “It” as one carried out their role or followed rules or routines.

In this speaking to the Other we could also hear in the words of these educators a listening to the Other, a receiving of the Other as a “You” that went beyond attending to what was said, a revelation concerning the Other where, “when I listen, I surrender myself to the Other’s dense plots...without knowing how or why, and I yield to her appeal to me to respond and welcome her” (Todd, 2003c, p. 135). This surrender to the Other that involved both offer and reception was a conversation as Levinas notes, that emerges through listening not only to what is said, but to the saying of the Other. This is a listening where both the said and the saying convey meaning, an embodiment of a non-allergic relationship where “learning from the meaning of the Other, is not an act of interpretation or decoding but a holding open of disruptive possibilities where self-transformation is implicitly at stake” (Todd, 2003c, p. 130). This call for transformation might be signified by a simple but difficult to answer question that was inherent in the words of educators I interviewed particularly in their experience as *hôte*. This was the question, “Who am I?”

For my part, as I stood with John attempting to understand what I might do I gained a sense of the necessity for such transformation as a responsibility that involved enduring confusion and uncertainty, that altered “the very parameters of self-perception and one’s place in the world, and risks losing, therefore, one’s bearings and conventions” (Todd, 2003c, p. 11). This unsettling demand for change emerging in the call of the Other

found me “to be like a stranger, hunted down even in one’s home, contested in one’s identity and one’s very poverty...always to empty oneself anew of oneself, to absolve oneself” (Levinas, 1981, p. 92). This hunt involved change both professional and personal and like myself the educators I interviewed seemed to understand and accept that one’s self, ego or identity were dynamic and adaptive in a constant ‘becoming’, always changing. This was seen for example, in concern about Aboriginal identity voiced by Pat, in Chris’ deep involvement with a First Nations community that culminated in a ceremony where an Elder gives Chris a new name, in the questioning of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways of being voiced by Blair as Blair talked of “who is ‘they’”, and in Kerry’s and Jordan’s questions around their need to belong and be included in some accepted manner in the First Nation and Métis communities they served.

This did not mean these educators had no affiliations nor identify with particular ethno-cultural groups or roles or a strong sense of self, but perhaps what they learned was the necessity for critically questioning one’s self, purpose and identity, a questioning that was necessary if one was to be responsible to the Other, was to welcome others and realize oneself as an ethical being.

Such self scrutiny involved exploring one’s experience as “for-oneself” with the experience of being “one-for-the-other”, a scrutiny we witnessed in the words of these educators, where for example, they sought to negotiate themselves as *hôte*. This scrutiny meant risking the loss or lessening of self, ego, or psyche in a venturing forth “into an unknown (and unknowable) encounter with the other” (Todd, 2003c, p. 68) where, as Derrida suggests, we find ourselves “not only *not yet ready* but *not ready, unprepared*” (2002, p. 361). Pondering the words of the educators I interviewed as well as my own

story, we all seemed unprepared and open to being surprised by the otherness of students and their families, the lesson learned perhaps any lack of preparation and readiness did not excuse a person from responsibility, a responsibility that necessarily involved the struggle to negotiate oneself as an institutional figure and compassionate people.

Inherent in the words and stories of the educators I interviewed, as well as evidenced in instances, for example, as Kerry's deep regret and anxiety over the death of Freedom, there seemed a realization, a lesson, that there existed no final resolution to one's responsibility to the Other. For my part I realized with John and in other instances, that one must endure, if not revel in or enjoy at times, the confusion and uncertainty involved in enacting responsibility and that this confusion and uncertainty actually signified one's embodiment as an ethical being, part of the pursuit of a less-wounding pedagogy. A lesson apparently learned by these educators and I as well was that approaching the Other as if there were limits to one's responsibility or constraining one's response to the Other to a solely institutional role would not, as Levinas suggested, relieve us of responsibility but might leave us less ethical and irresponsible.

While the welcoming of others involved attending to the Other, Todd reminds us that this also involves an attending to our attending of the Other where there is "a mindfulness and sensitivity to the ways in which we participate in attending to difference" (Todd, 2003c, p. 142). This is another gift of learning that the educators I interviewed and myself both seemed to share, but what does this attending to one's attending mean and how does this occur in the context of the educators I interviewed as well as for me?

Attending to one's attending seemed to involve these educators re-conceiving of their encounter with others and existed in moments where these people critically questioned the constraints, conventions and boundaries of self, Other and schooling. In its entirety the re-envisioning of success enacted by the educators I interviewed embodies the mindfulness that emerged with these educators. Whether this concerned success or the propriety of a decision concerning a student's well being, the need for this kind of meta-cognitive move was evident in the words of educators such as Jordan and Kim, where Jordan talked of the need "to step back and think, 'Ok! why am I here and what are the reasons?'" and Kim noted "[I] started to see that the missing link was in how build relationships with people".

The lesson of needing to attend to one's attending was woven through the experience of these educators, existing for people like Kerry as they realized the need to reconsider their apriori framing of difference, and the hegemony of their own thoughts and beliefs, where as Kerry said, "I had to change my language...my philosophy...because your experience is foreign to somebody else."

In learning of the need to attend to one's attending while not dismissive of categories, groups or divisions these educators seemed sensitive to the possible harmful outcomes enacted in using such divisions. Such attending was a meta-cognitive move, where, for example, the discourse of dichotomies, divisions and categories concerning ethnicity, role, gender and identity were scrutinized not simply accepted. Kim understood this and noted, "every last individual required something special," while other such as Lee said, "every kid is different, they don't all have the same issues."

For my part I sensed this teaching of the need for mindfulness, brought to me as a gift of learning in my interaction with John. Questions emerged concerning how I understood John and I might frame my approach to him. In my case what came into question was how I understood the values and identity I claimed for myself that would form the basis for how I would act in regards to him. However subtle there was a need to consider what existed for him and myself on social, political, emotional levels as well as what beliefs and values existed that might help or hinder my efforts to aid him. This involved wondering who was John? Was he a teenager, hip-hop singer, an inner-city youth, Cree, male, heterosexual, a writer, a comedian, a student, a poet? Who was I facing and in what constellation of these identities did John exist? John as Other seemed to teach me of the need to be mindful, to consider such questions showing me there was no final resolution to these queries for

To the question *who?* answers the non-qualifiable presence of an existent who *presents himself* [sic] without reference to anything, and yet distinguishes himself [sic] from every other existent. The question *who?* envisages a face. The notion of face differs from every represented content. (Levinas, 1961, p. 177)

John was different than any conceptualization I might attempt to force upon him, different from “every represented content” and this sense of others as always beyond one’s representation seemed evident with the educators I interviewed through out the examples I provide in support of interruption, vulnerability and hospitality. Embracing this lesson, however, carried risk for John and myself, for within the reality of schooling some discourses are less open to being questioned; these are various political, cultural and social discourses that by their nature and their use may be less responsive to the unique difference of persons. What was at risk perhaps was the unique response that John’s presence demanded, a response that might be overrun, but if not by me, then

perhaps by others' conceptions of who John was and what John should be doing as a "member" of any particular group, and not perhaps the claims he made on his own behalf.

The educators I interviewed seemed to realize a need to grapple with issues of identity and cultural category concerning who speaks, what was to be said, how was it to be said and when it was to be said. The need for a mindful attentiveness to the Other was self evident as people such as Pat questioned their own identity in seeking to "dance" properly with others. Participants such as Blair and Kim while acknowledging the First Nations and Métis heritage of their students also spoke of the need to not press their values on others, to consider the unique nature of each person, where to rely on an earlier quote from Blair, "I struggle with placing my values on others. You know I really have to watch...I can't force them to believe the way I do or to value the things I do."

Like them I realized the necessity to seriously consider how we conceive of difference as well as the processes one participates in the discourse schooling; a questioning that is by Levinas' measure, involved in openness and vulnerability and what it means to be ethical and responsible. Ultimately, I could hold only myself accountable in such questioning, and in how I framed my approach to John. John by his presence taught me what was necessary but also taught me it is not up to me to define or limit his identity, for he is who he says he is regardless of how discrepant this saying may appear to me. However, John is also who he says he is regardless of others claims on him as a member of any group who look his way.

In the attending to their attending of the Other these educators, like myself, were reminded "that I am in this relationship, here and now, and that this relation has put me in

a position of responsibility that is not dependent on principles but on the Other's needs" (Todd, 2003c, p. 145). The lesson the Other taught us is that no protocol can alleviate the need to attend to the unique individuals they encounter. These are instances as Bauman says, where "we look in vain for the firm and trusty rules which may reassure us that once we followed them, we could be sure to be in the right" (1993, p. 20). Such a search is likely fruitless for others' identities are in transformation as are the identities of educators such as I interviewed and mine as well, therefore understanding one's responsibility means paying close and constant attention to others.

Like myself these educators sensed a paradox that resides in affirming categories too rigidly or too strongly, in acting as if one's ethno-cultural or personal identity was static and unchanging or as if such divisions could be used in any final way to enact one's responsibility. As with the experience of *hôte* there was a discomforting tension that existed where people, situations and circumstances were not quite what one believed. There seemed wariness among these educators concerning a sort of tokenism that existed regardless of how these educators self identified, whether as Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, male or female, or other constellations of categorization. This paradox contained dilemmas for how these educators and myself enacted our responsibility, for the Other taught me and these educators the necessity of negotiating a middle way with this paradox, in a manner living both the myth and reality of divisions and categories, where as one educator said previously "you are damned if you do and damned if you don't" while another in the tension of this exclaims with an ironic laugh " 'they' it's like who are 'they'" implying their own understanding of their confusion and complicity in the "they."

In attending to one's attending we witnessed with these educators the need to challenge "education's innocence" where educators acted vigorously on the behalf of others but showed caution in how they approached others because "violence is occasioned not only by the content of what one learns but by the structure of the demand to learn itself" (Todd, 2003c, pp. 20, 21).

These educators like myself received a gift of learning from the Other not only about others but also about self. We learned our unique and robust, yet infinite, responsibility to others through attending to the otherness of others, an attending or listening to the Other, that "is not an act of interpretation or decoding but a holding open of disruptive possibilities where self-transformation is implicitly at stake" (Todd, 2003c, p. 130) where the person who listens risks the alteration of themselves, where responsibility as a non-allergic relation, an ethical relation, lives.

Leaving Learning from the Other

In attending to the Other these educators appeared to learn of the need for change concerning their practice, the routine of schooling and within understandings of their identities. The depth of these lessons was revealed through the continual questioning of themselves and their situation as revealed through their experiences of interruption, vulnerability and as hôte. They were under a demand for change if we believe Levinas, that emerged immediately in their encounter with the Other. What I believe these educators came to realize, as I did, was that such change was inevitable and there was no circumventing this demand that called us all to responsibility.

These educators seemed to sense the Other required their attentiveness and the price of such attending involved their exposure and vulnerability to the Other in which

they had to change. This vulnerability and change involved the substitution of the ‘for-oneseelf’ by the ‘one-for-the-other’ where educators experienced “a profound exposure to the Other that constantly risks the rupture of one’s being” (Todd, 2003c, p. 134). The gift of learning brought to myself and I think these educators as well, involved a sensitivity to the danger of “obeying institutional law alone” that “depersonalizes our moral responsibility” (Todd, 2003c, p. 143), a circumstance that emerges as Wild says, from “self-centered totalistic thinking that organizes men [sic] and things into power systems and gives us control over nature and other people” (in Levinas, 1961, p. 17). This sensitivity was perhaps why these educators hesitated to consider success only in terms of academic achievement or in ways that saw students as problems to be solved and where with the correct instructional programs and management teachers could control and organize students to attain academic success.

In this sensitivity educators appeared to learn of the need to re-envision success and this perhaps represented a struggle to not lose sight of the very real presence of other persons such as their students but perhaps also signified their responsibility involved them as compassionate people. In their moments of interruption, vulnerability and hospitality, there did seem moments of profound learning where these educators learned that “to be attentive is to recognize the mastery of the other, to receive his [sic] command, or, more exactly, to receive from him [sic] the command to command” (Levinas, 1961, p. 178), a command that involved the serious charge to find a proper relationship with what is Other, an ethical, non-allergic relation.

The encounter with the otherness of others that occurred for participants and for myself taught us that a reliance on roles and routines or on groupings and categories,

while sometimes helpful, was insufficient in realizing and enacting our responsibility to others, insufficient in fulfilling our embodiment as ethical beings. In other words, for the educators I interviewed there seemed a realization that “rules cannot exempt us from acting responsibly toward the Other, nor can they replace responsibility with a call to follow orders” (Todd, 2003c, p. 144). They like myself came to understand the need for a mindful attentiveness, of a need to attend to one’s attending that was not “simply an intellectual activity but is fundamentally rooted in our capacities for emotional involvement and attachment” (Todd, 2003c). This was the inherent lesson in participants’ re-envisioning of success, in “getting it”, where participants came to understand that building relationships with students, their families and the community was the crucial undertaking for students’ well being, academically or otherwise.

In the previous discussion I offered a personal story to illustrate how the Other taught me, to show my own sense of attending to John, of attending to my attending and my search for a proper or non-coercive relationship with John. However, as I have suggested there seemed similar lessons learned by participants as revealed through their experience of interruption, vulnerability and hospitality. The words of these educators offered moments of learning from the Other where we could witness how participants came to understand that their responsibility was pedagogical in nature, where they realized others such as students were teaching them their responsibility.

The result of this gift of learning was a sophisticated and unique understanding and enactment of responsibility that involved a search for the “capacity for a relationality not premised on control or coercion...on denying or repudiating the student’s needs” (Todd, 2003c, p. 27). Participants realized the Other was teaching them a fundamental

lesson that involved the need to search for a non-coercive relationship, a less-wounding pedagogy, an ethical or non-allergic relation. This lesson emerged in their attending to the Other and attending to their attending where they listened to the dense plots of others' stories and lives (Todd, 2003c). In their experience of interruption, vulnerability and hospitality we could witness these educators overtaken and unprepared for the difference they encountered. In such moments we witness them realizing or learning, they were insufficient to the demand made upon them by the needs of others, yet also realizing they must be attentive to the Other, attending to their attending, searching for a less wounding relationship, and this was the pathway of responsibility.

In the following chapter I offer my judgment concerning the extent to which these educators understood their responsibility as a welcoming of the Other. I do this by again discussing interruption, vulnerability, and hospitality as instances of welcoming where educators learned their responsibility. Accompanying this discussion, I offer further comment concerning the implications of such understanding and what this may mean for educators and those involved with schooling. Finally, I provide an articulation concerning the utility of Levinas' ideas focusing on if, how and to what extent the notion of welcoming helped or hindered in considering how educators' understood their responsibility amidst the pressures and demands of contemporary schooling.

Chapter 9

Welcoming: Returning to the Question

Welcoming was portrayed in this research as a synthesis of ideas emerging primarily from Levinas' thought with a reliance most often on insights from Derrida and Todd. At the beginning of this study, using Hampton's (1995) writings I suggested that the notion of welcoming might help in understanding responsibility. In discussing Hampton's experience I also offered that what I had experienced and observed with former colleagues, working in a context of ethno-cultural difference, might stand as evidence of welcoming and the veracity of Levinas' first philosophy. Acting on this I offered some initial thoughts concerning the meaning of welcoming and the possibility of using Levinas' arguments to understand responsibility. My motivation for this exploration rested on the belief that in understanding responsibility as welcoming we might gain insight into how to live and serve others amidst the tensions of ethno-cultural difference in educational contexts, or any context of difference. Embarking on this exploration also meant that I would be exploring the utility and helpfulness of Levinas' ideas for understanding educators' responsibility.

In this context I set about examining the words and explanations of a group of educators who experienced situations common to mine, hoping to confirm their understanding of responsibility as a welcoming of the Other, and to explore what was involved with this understanding. This exploration and my discussions centered on the general research question "if, how and to what extent the responsibility of educators might be understood as a welcoming of the Other?" which in other words was to simply ask "is welcoming evident with the educators I interviewed?" Accompanying this question was another related question concerning if, how and to what extent the notion of

welcoming itself, and particularly the thought of Levinas are potentially helpful in understanding the responsibility of educators?

To address these questions in the preceding chapters I offered evidence and interpretation concerning welcoming yet there remains the need to pointedly address these questions and what they imply for educators and schooling in general. To accomplish this I first offer a determination concerning the extent to which these educators understood their responsibility as welcoming, which is to answer the question, “do we see welcoming?” Second, I outline lessons these educators appeared to learn concerning their responsibility and provide discussion of some possible implications for educators and those involved in schooling. Finally, I discuss the helpfulness or difficulty of relying the notion of welcoming for understanding responsibility which by implication offers a discussion of the helpfulness of Levinas’ thought but also that of Todd and Derrida.

For clarity I separate the discussion of interruption, vulnerability and hospitality, then use the topic of learning from the Other to summarize educators’ understandings of responsibility, the implications of these lessons and the helpfulness and utility of employing Levinas’ thought for understanding responsibility. There is again a need for caution concerning how I separate these aspects of welcoming for discussion, for none of these aspects of welcoming nor the discussions are discrete from each other nor do they imply some linear process of causation among them. They exist together giving rise to each other in our encounter with the Other.

Interruption as Welcoming

To ask to what extent these educators understood their responsibility as a welcoming of the Other is to ask if the interruption found with welcoming was realized in the words and experience of these educators. While the philosophical nature of this study does not lend itself to offering exact measures of responsibility, the poignancy and depth of these educators' experience demonstrates the interruption of which Levinas speaks and an implicit understanding and enactment of welcoming whether or not they could always directly verbalize this realization.

These educators' experiences of interruption existed not only in their responsiveness to being inconvenienced by incongruity and upset in students' lives, instances that affected the typical discourse of schooling, but occurred in more fundamental ways, this involving how educators understood the nature of their relationships to others and their personal and professional identities. There was for people such as Kerry, Jordan, and Blair a profound and deep interruption of self by the Other that inevitably involves the contestation of their sense of self or ego where "the welcoming of the other by the same, of the Other by me, is concretely produced as the calling into question of the same by the other, that is, as the ethics that accomplishes the critical essence of knowledge" (Levinas, 1961, p. 43). We witnessed several of these participants being surprised and unsettled, for example, by the nature of students' dangerous and impoverished lives, by the foreign and sometimes threatening streetwise knowledge of students, in the frequently unstable and insecure living situations of students, by students lack of capacity to overcome situations these educators consider normal, by the demand on students to maintain homes and family lives in which students

bear the pressing burden of responsibility not only for themselves but for siblings, parents and their own children, and by students' attempts to cope with the often uncompromising social demands or status quo of "white middle-class" society.

We see interruption in the words of these participants as they describe how they were discomforted by discrepancies between what they believed students should know and students' actual knowledge and by the challenge of students' transience and absenteeism. Interruption could be seen in participants' confusion regarding how to respond to student beliefs and values that were often a mix of traditional Aboriginal ways and Christian or Eurocentric ways, or where at times students seemed to fit no particular category, leaving educators uncertain about their assumptions and how to respond to demands for prayer, ceremony and spiritual experiences involving local cultural communities during events such as school assemblies and graduations.

The extent of interruption is witnessed in these educators' inability or perhaps unwillingness to overcome the strangeness of the Other, in participants' inability to deny, defend against or minimize the difference they encounter. Their encounter with difference pushes them beyond their assumptions and ideas about others, leaving them to realize that such assumptions and the knowledge they claim about others such as students is incomplete and not viable. Such realization, if not always consciously understood, still finds expression through their actions and shows that these individuals were uneasy about how they and others employed categories such as 'Aboriginal' and 'non-Aboriginal' even as they relied upon such categorization. We witness with these educators the beginning of a letting go of an understanding "that the worldview of one's own culture is central to all reality" (Bennett, 1993, p. 30) and this letting go is again indicative of the interruption of

which Levinas speaks where ultimately there is an inability to minimize or deny difference. As Levinas suggests, the interruption of self by the Other, these educators experienced bears out the transformation of understanding from any denial of difference to an acceptance and affirmation of difference. In response to the challenge interruption brings, we see educators in turn challenging the discourse of schooling and how success is conceived and considered. In such moments these educators understood that the typical discourse or conventions of school success was insufficient as an ethical response to their students. We can also sense through the strength of their response in which they re-envision success an indication of the presence and poignancy of the interruption they experienced. We witnessed with these educators the absolute upsurge of the Other Levinas discusses that resides in interruption, an upsurge that eradicates any complacency educators may have in regard to otherness of others. The evidence I have offered clearly shows educators in their face-to-face encounter with the Other experience a profound and poignant interruption where they come to understand that their responsibility includes but ranges beyond only pedagogical concerns. In the concluding chapter of this study I discuss further the outcomes and implications of this upsurge and what it may mean for educators and the discourse of schooling.

Vulnerability as Welcoming

As with interruption, if responsibility exists for these educators as a welcoming of the Other, then likewise there must be evidence in their words and experiences that illustrates vulnerability. For these educators, even when they may not have been able to articulate their vulnerability and the risks inherent in being open to the Other, such

vulnerability did exist and the degree to which this vulnerability was felt and enacted by these people seemed obvious and extensive.

We see vulnerability in the moments we heard educators talk of engaging students more on students' terms, where they respond to student need by finding places for students to live or of visiting students and their families in their homes. We witnessed the openness and extent of these educators' vulnerability as they showed anxiety and concern for students and their families during or in the aftermath of situations where students are at risk of injury emotionally, culturally or psychically and in the aftermath of a student's death. The extent of their vulnerability was evident in how they re-envisioned success and altered the routines of schooling, changing for example, programming and protocol for graduation and making way for First Nation and Métis spiritual and cultural realities in the secular context of public schooling. In these and other moments there was the substitution of one's need by the need of others, of the "oneself-for-the-other" which was not a bartering and was a situation, as Levinas suggests, that is central to vulnerability where exists the asymmetrical non-mutual response to others and where these educators expect no recompense for their service.

The expansiveness of participants' vulnerability was displayed in their response to the request of parents to search out their children in local neighbourhood places, both foreign and threatening to these educators. We witnessed vulnerability where educators faced and challenged other colleagues on behalf of students, even with people who held administrative power over them, risking repercussions after addressing the unsuitability of their colleagues' actions even while offering advice to these colleagues in the hope that their good intentions would not be misunderstood as accusation. We witnessed in such

instances these educators at risk and exposed both to possible retribution by others who disagreed with them and at risk and exposed to the possibility of change to how they understood themselves and their roles.

In witnessing these educators stepping beyond the comfort and security of the discourse of school and their role in this discourse, we saw them challenge and contravene the status quo of mainstream school practice. Their anxiety as they pondered whether they were truly helping students and their families versus merely enabling attested to the substitution of the “one-for-the-other” which comprises vulnerability. The depth of participants' vulnerability was seen in the questioning posture they assumed with its openness and attentiveness to the difference of others where doubt and anxiety in their concern for others existed and signified the ‘one-for-the-other’ which Bauman (1993) calls a ‘being-for’ the Other and Todd (2003c) cites as foundational to Levinas’ notion of responsibility.

These educators talked of how their relation with others never ends, even after students and families no longer attend the school, we sensed the commitment and ‘for-the-other’ which surpasses even the death of students, confirming what Levinas suggests constitutes our infinite exposure to the Other. Educators’ capacity to respond with sacrifice, to act before they fully understand what may be demanded of them in serving others and to be in response to the Other points to the depth of their vulnerability. These were moments where people acted before they may have understood all the implications or outcomes of their actions and where they seemed to attend “spontaneously to student spontaneity, outside of institutional frames of reference” (Todd, 2003c, p. 89), which serve as measures of vulnerability.

These examples and others demonstrate the vulnerability Levinas outlines which compromise our responsibility that is a response to the moral height of the Other—a response not conceived nor enacted as a mutual and reciprocal endeavour but as a reality which is entirely asymmetrical and in which one is all for the other with no expectation of recompense. The enactment of such a response was imperfect with these educators as with anyone, for no self can entirely escape the grasping of their ego where one is entirely free from the expectation of something in return. However, this was not a question of purity in the origin and existence of one's responsibility but of the existence of the "oneself-for-another" of a person in welcoming the Other. These words of participants conveyed this sense of the moral height of the Other for we saw that these people were looking to the Other, stepping toward the Other with a predisposition to serve others, where there was the "going to the other without concerning oneself with his movement toward me...in approaching in such a way that, over and beyond all reciprocal relations that do not fail to get set up between me and the neighbour, I have always taken one step more toward him...always one more response to give" (Levinas, 1981, p. 84). This movement was seen in a variety of moments and demonstrated the challenge to these educators' sovereignty, the substitution of the "for-oneself" by the "oneself-for-the-other." In the words of these educators we can sense their realization of an endless responsibility, the transformation of their sense of self and notions of responsibility and the risk and sacrifice to be made on behalf of others.

Evident with these educators was the vulnerability that Levinas suggests inhabits our relationship with others. In this study such vulnerability seemed keenly felt by participants for often the situations of others such as students were severe, drawing

educators forward in their responsibility toward the Other. This vulnerability, as with interruption, was a lesson in itself for these educators and concerned what the Other demanded of them. In the discussion to follow I will outline in more detail the gift of learning these educators received, the lessons of responsibility they learned and the implications of this gift. However, next I consider to what extent the experience of *hôte*, which is the core experience of hospitality, indicative of welcoming, exists for these educators.

Hospitality as Welcoming

If *hôte* is the central reality of hospitality and attests to the existence of welcoming, then there needs to be evidence of this experience and this evidence must show the reception of the guest, visitor, or stranger. What must also be evident is the anxiety and tension of a host who must accommodate and defer to the Other. In Chapter 7, I offered numerous examples of such anxiety, tension, accommodation and deference, all examples of *hôte*. This evidence involved, for example, negotiating a way with the disposition of a culture room, dealing with questions concerned with a person's credibility as an educator, peoples' anxiety over identity issues relating to "Aboriginal" or "non-Aboriginal", the inability of participants to teach as they had previously taught in other schooling situations, peoples' struggle with the demands of "European" versus "First Nation and Métis" values, and uncertainty concerning the involvement of spiritual pursuits in the secular setting of a public school.

These examples serve as evidence of the reality of these educators' experience as *hôte*. For these educators there was the discomfort and uneasiness of *hôte* where they found their plans and efforts interrupted as they accommodated and deferred to the Other.

There existed moments in which individuals felt out of place, dislocated or displaced, by their loss of power and ownership over pedagogical situations where they were typically the masters of what was to happen and of what was to be decided. This sense of displacement was extensive and was realized not only in changes to educators' relationships with students, but with colleagues and in relation to the discourse of schooling. These educators exhibited the unease and confusion of *hôte* in which borders pertaining to their practice and their identity as compassionate individuals or institutional figures was overrun by the otherness of others even as these individuals sought to maintain the integrity of their practice and psyche. This displacement was not superficial, effected only in terms of accommodating minor changes to processes of the school or their classroom practice, but were instances of *hôte* in which people sensed they were out of place not only with their pedagogy or practice, but within themselves, where the call of the Other within themselves found them in a struggle to accommodate but not be displaced.

The extent to which these educators were *hôte* was evident by their strong sense of being under siege. Where, despite their resistance to the Other, their resistance to give over too much, they found themselves pledged to the Other on an indeclinable parole from which they were not able to escape. Further evidence of *hôte* was seen as the words of these educators revealed the irreplaceable and non-interchangeable reality of themselves as individuals who accommodate and defer to the Other in situations that were always unique.

There is tension and negotiation in such moments and this reveals the face of hospitality. This is the uncertainty and tentativeness of hosting the Other, where people

struggle with giving over to others power and control but not giving too much, and where the experience of the hôte reveals educators' responsibility as a welcoming of the Other.

Learning from the Other as Welcoming

The question "To what extent did learning from the Other, the reception of the gift of learning, Levinas' "conversation" with the Other (1961, p. 51) exist with these educators?" strikes to the heart of the meaning and meaningfulness of welcoming and these educators' understanding of their responsibility. I suggest this because learning from the Other occurred not only in terms of their attentiveness to others and in the mindfulness of their attention to their attentiveness in the face-to-face encounter with other people, but existed across educators' experience of interruption, vulnerability and hôte. Welcoming then, in its entirety, was where these educators were taught responsibility and in this way responsibility becomes pedagogical.

The words of these educators revealed the lessons they received, lessons that were highly personal, deeply felt and sometimes disturbing and troubling. Like them, in my encounter with John I was also learning my responsibility as I welcomed him and sought to accommodate his need. These educators, like me, seemed moved to action in their face-to-face encounter with the Other and their notions of identity and the nature and form of service to others was challenged. This learning attests to Levinas' argument that the Other brings us a magisterial teaching, a "gift of learning" in which we come to understand the pedagogical nature of responsibility and the power and impact of this gift of learning was evident, especially as educators talked of "getting it," where they re-envisioned and restructured success. In moments similar to those of the participants, my encounter with John, as the very real presence of another human being made me think

again about my approach to the Other and how best to offer my service to someone such as John.

Through both my and these educators' encounters with others such as students, there seemed a fundamental over-arching lesson. This lesson, whether we were conscious of it or not at times, involved an understanding of a need to both search for and enact a non-violent pedagogy, where the often excessive and wounding demand placed upon students and educators in schooling, 'to become' someone Other, was lessened or even extinguished. This over-arching lesson was a welcoming of the Other where each participant worked out their own sophisticated and unique pedagogical response to those around them. This welcoming that is a learning from the Other (Todd, 2003c, 2006) gives support to Levinas' claims concerning the origin and unique nature of our responsibility, of our predisposition towards a pacific relationship with others. However, despite the sophisticated and unique nature of participants' responsibility there were commonalities that existed that may help others, such as school administrators, teachers, support staff, professional development personnel and teacher educators, in understanding how they might find their way with their responsibility in contexts of ethno-cultural difference.

The evidence I have provided through discussions in the previous chapters offers support that these educators understood their responsibility as a welcoming arising from the call of the Other, a welcoming where educators being interrupted by, vulnerable to, and hospitable to the Other learn the lesson of responsibility. Whether this understanding was always a conscious realization or an unconscious embodied response is open for discussion. In either case, however, these educators' responsibility seemed to exist as a

welcoming evident in their experiences of interruption, vulnerability, hospitality and learning from the Other.

In the following I discuss I further outline these educators' understanding or realizations, discuss what welcoming reveals and helps us understand concerning responsibility, and consider the implications this may have for educators, teacher educators and others involved in schooling.

Welcoming: Understandings and Implications

Considering the understandings of these educators and the notion of welcoming, is anything revealed that helps us think about responsibility in the context of ethno-cultural difference? In other words, what might Levinas' ideas concerning responsibility and the notion of welcoming reveal to us concerning these educators' understandings of responsibility, and what does this mean for us as educators? What wisdom and insight emerge to inform those involved in schooling and the preparation and development of educators and what does this mean for how we might act?

What I sensed earlier in Hampton's (1995) words regarding the possibility of understanding his experience as a welcoming resonates with much of the experience of participants. Like Hampton, they understood that the familiar was undone by the inscrutable difference of others, that the categories one may assume, apply or employ while encountering other people were insufficient as a basis for acting ethically towards them, for the difference of others overflowed any conception one might attempt to employ to restrict them. There is a realization that the dichotomy of self and Other, of notions of 'us' and 'them' were not static but incomplete and in question, and that to encounter another person involved the difficult act of receiving a gift of learning from the Other. The educators I interviewed could be said to welcome the Other but were also welcomed and they realized, as Levinas and Todd suggest, that responsibility was the search for and enactment of a less-wounding relation with others—an ongoing negotiation to find the proper level of demand and the proper framing of the demands placed upon others but also themselves. My participants rarely if ever, used the word welcome or responsibility in descriptions of their experience. Yet their experience offers

substantial evidence of the aspects of welcoming as I derived them from Levinas' philosophical arguments. This includes evidence of interruption, vulnerability, *hôte* and learning from the Other that offer potentially helpful insights.

So what are some of the fundamental understandings or realizations of these educators' responsibility when viewed as welcoming, a welcoming that is a search for a non-wounding pedagogy, a pacific relationship, and what do these understandings imply for us as educators, and those involved in the development of educators and others involved in schooling?

From the outset, these educators find their understandings and enactment of responsibility challenged. Responsibility was different for them. Their understanding and enactments of responsibility contrasted with more conventional understandings where typically there is a reliance on codes of professional practice or conduct that tell people if they have been responsible or ethical. The welcoming nature of participants' responsibility allowed us to witness how they acted differently in this context of ethno-cultural difference, a difference of action that might not have occurred so poignantly in a more conventional school setting. Levinas (1961; 1981) is helpful here, pointing out that often, as with much of Western discourse concerning ethics, we are likely to accept responsibility as coming after us, a reality where we can choose to accept or avoid responsibility, because we are already a self-sufficient subject—where we understand our selves as beings who are *apriori* to responsibility and so get to decide whether or not we will be responsible. However, Levinas suggests this notion is suspect, perhaps dangerous, if not incorrect and the understandings of participants and enactment of responsibility seem to support Levinas' contention, that responsibility is otherwise than being—existing

before our subjectivity. We can sense with these educators how they were already caught up, as Levinas suggests, in an inescapable, ceaseless and unique response to the call of the Other, a call that comes before any decision where one might choose to avoid responsibility even if we believe such avoidance is possible.

This means for us, that like these educators, we may also sense an inability to evade the demand the difference of others places upon us, where even in our reluctance to respond, the poignancy of their difference draws us out of our self-containment. Like them we are likely to not be ready in our encounter with others but find ourselves already called in to question, already responsible, where as I quoted Levinas previously, the difference of others “escapes my grasp by an essential dimension even if I have him [sic] at my disposal” (1961, p. 39). In this escape we are likely to realize that our control over others and our belief of others are essentially the same as ours will be less substantial than we might have believed, even if we might force another to act as we desire. We witnessed such instances with these educators. In these moments participants’ described how they were unsettled and overwhelmed by the difference they encountered, instances that give credibility to Levinas’ ideas. If this is the case then we should expect in our encounter with the difference of others, if we are ethical then we will we will also feel overwhelmed, anxious and uncertain in our attempts and inability to contain the difference of the lives of students and their families.

What these educators realized and what their words reveal to us, when laid against notions of welcoming, is that a central question or tension for us as educators concerns how we will negotiate our way in a responsibility that is inescapable and endless. Welcoming reveals to us that our responsibility is ultimately not avoidable, though we

may attempt to ignore or evade responsibility. A central feature of this negotiation for us as educators will involve our lives as institutional figures adhering to roles, rules and routines, wherein we hope that in following these will find ourselves ethical, in a proper response to others—where proper means ensuring the well being of others such as students, a well being not limited to only academic pursuits. However, understanding responsibility as a welcoming reveals that a non-reflective adherence to, or a hope in the sufficiency of, or a reliance on rules, role and routines is likely an ethically insufficient response and the poignancy of this lack is likely to be all the more evident for us as educators in multicultural settings where difference abounds or is more dramatic. This means for us that in realizing our responsibility and enacting our role as an institutional figure, simply following school rules and routines, and acting on curricula and the programming of schooling, while being necessary and helpful, will not constitute a sufficient basis for our responsibility or act as a sure guide to responsibility.

The welcoming of the educators I interviewed substantiate a suspicion that lies within the thought of Levinas, Derrida, Todd and Bauman, that compliance with institutional features or processes cannot ensure ethicality and that these alone cannot act as a standard against which to determine or measure our responsibility. This suggests that if we are ethical as educators working in contexts of difference we will be cautious of relying on codes of ethics or protocols, for these can never ensure we will act properly towards others. An ethical insufficiency is likely to exist if we dull our sensibility as a compassionate person, insulating ourselves from the difference of others such as students, through narrow or restricted concerns for processes, structure and organization concerning such demands as student and teacher accountability, efficiency and

achievement. What welcoming reveals to us as educators, what we will struggle with, is how we will negotiate a way with the demand inherent in the impersonal socializing urge of schooling. This demand is likely to intrude on the “moral party” of self and other where “the selves (unique and irreplaceable though they are inside the moral party)...have to explain what they do, face the arguments, justify themselves by reference to standards which are not their own” (Bauman, 1993, p. 114).

However we imagine them, if conventions and standards existing as codes of conduct or measures of student success or a variety of other frameworks were perfect and could account for all ends including our responsibility, then we may perhaps be happy to acquiesce unreflectively and unemotionally to the conventions laid out before us. However, the realm of society (Levinas, 1981), of “social order ruled by justice” (Bauman, 1993, p. 113) is not perfect despite the norms, laws, and rules offered, and schooling as an expression of such social reality is also not perfect, prone to ethical insufficiency. Therefore, for us as educators, to be responsible to others means we will struggle with what our compassionate self suggests and what the conventions of schooling desire. In contexts of ethno-cultural difference this struggle may be all the more significant for the conventions of mainstream schooling, even multicultural societies, because their structure, tradition and processes already hold less justice for some people than others. (Battiste & Barman, 1995; Battiste & Henderson, 2000)

As educators in multi-cultural settings we are likely to realize our inability to hide from the face of the Other behind realities such as schoolings roles, rules, routines and programming, where as Bauman says,

responsibility has been ‘floated.’ Or rather...it rests with the *role*, not with the *person* who performs it...the code of conduct and guidelines for our

choices which are attached to the performance of a role do not then stretch to get hold of the 'real self'. The real self is free—a reason for rejoicing, but also for no little agony (1993, p. 19).

In other words, we might believe that roles or the conventions of schooling can free us from our responsibility born in our moral capacity as compassionate selves but they cannot. However, like my participants, we are unlikely to find relief from the anxiety of considerations concerning what is ethical and responsible by simply adhering to institutional features such as roles, routines, curricula or programming. Like them, whether explicitly or implicitly, we are likely to reject floating our responsibility as our compassionate self, keenly aware of the often significant difficulties and challenges facing students, cannot accept simply going along with the conventions of schooling.

The welcoming of these educators provides a realization that being open to the call of the Other, the saying or trace of the Other, eventually interrupts the said of institutional reality, which in a manner is already demanding or desiring to prescribe how we should act and what we should do in regards to the Other. The understandings of my participants give credibility to the argument that responsibility is a welcoming and that this welcoming rests on the primacy of the face-to-face relationship. This is a being "for-the-other" that Levinas argues is the origin of responsibility. A primacy, Slattery and Rapp (2003) suggest, in following Levinas, that founds all other considerations of responsibility but also surpasses them.

What welcoming shows us through my participants inability to float responsibility, is that in attending to the difference and circumstance of individuals we fashion a unique response to them that becomes fore-grounded while our service to institutional realities, both necessary and helpful, becomes back-grounded. In other words, in welcoming we are likely to realize that our responsibility emerges in the

inspiration of ourselves as compassionate selves who from the beginning encounter the face of the Other—compassionate selves who find a reliance upon institutional form and features ethically inadequate though not useless as guides to proper action. This is a reality where “rules cannot serve as a substitute for ethical response” (Todd, 2003c, p. 144). The lens of welcoming laid against the experience of these educators shows us that like them we are likely to find little protection from the continual and inescapable demand of our responsibility behind institutional features such as roles, rules, regulations, curricula or programming. Though we may attempt to use these features in seeking relief from our responsibility, our compassionate self is continually present and alert, remaining open and vulnerable to the Other, hoping for our self but also others that we are not responded to as objects in the process of schooling.

Welcoming helps by providing us with some substantiation for the legitimacy of a response to others that does not rest entirely with Western codes of ethics, logic and reason. With welcoming we are alerted not only to the possibility that we may float responsibility, but that the conventions of schooling by design position us for this, where in concern for traditions, routines, rules and other features of schooling we may become deaf to the call of the Other. Whether we are involved in schools as teachers, administrators or support persons, understanding responsibility as a welcoming reveals that ultimately teaching and learning concern the ethical relation of human beings emerging from our moral impulse that Bauman (1993) suggests animates all humans. Understanding responsibility as welcoming positions us amidst and in opposition to arguments and rationales for efficiency, for measures of performance and even standards of accountability and assessment when these seem misguided and in danger of over

running the need and well being of others. When discussions shift, for example, to the use of standards, to demands for success and achievement, especially as it involves marginalized others who have little say or power, then welcoming may offer us some insight into what is at stake (i.e. justice) and the possibility of tempering the more instrumental urges and technical approaches that may hold sway.

In understanding that organizations such as schools and school boards are often by design “a machine to keep moral responsibility afloat” (Bauman, 1993, p. 126) our awareness of welcoming might fore-warn us against quieting too much our moral sensibility. This means, as Bauman notes, that in our collaboration with others we need to guard against our responsibility being “dissected and dispersed, shared with others to the point we are speechless and defenceless” (1993, p. 126) where collaboration becomes collusion as we just go along with conventions. If welcoming exists we are likely to find ourselves guarding against the effacement of the face of the Other, where perhaps before we might have been found denying those such as students our ethical response. Welcoming alerts us that we are likely to find ourselves resistant to an over reliance on categories and grouping where we lose sight of the Other, “by-passing or avoiding all together the moment of encounter with morally significant effects” (Bauman, 1993, p. 126) and that we must be aware and cautious of, if not guard against, such inclinations whether they reside within ourselves or within schoolings’ organizational structure and processes.

Welcoming suggests there exists a wildness in our response to the Other, an urge to serve the Other but a service that cannot be entirely tamed, subdued or exploited by adherence or reliance on rationality alone as a basis for responsibility—thinking that

involves “absolutist standards” of rule and law or “what is expected by the culture of a particular people” (Slattery & Rapp, 2003, p. 41). This wildness may leave us jumping the fence, so to speak, of faith in a universality of ethical codes, leaping beyond a one-size fits all stall that accommodates responsibility. Educators in circumstances similar to my participants, should perhaps not be too surprised to find themselves roaming off the narrow and well-trod paths of a reliance on a belief in reason as the foundation of ethical relationship. In a manner this wildness signifies the natural state of our responsibility, a state that relies on the non-rationality of our moral selves and that requires from us emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual vigour as well as patience and endurance in moving beyond the confines and safety of ethical guidelines and codes. We are perhaps creatures of responsibility prowling about in the landscape of the Other’s need alert to their call, wary of our confinement or domestication by strict or unreflective adherence to rules and routines, even though we desire relief from responsibility.

The welcoming of these educators shows us that

issues cannot be ‘resolved’, nor the moral life of humanity guaranteed, by the calculating and legislative efforts of reason. ...Reason cannot help the moral self without depriving the self of what makes the self moral: that unfounded, non-rational, un-arguable, no-excuses-given and non-calculable urge to stretch towards the other, to caress, to be for, to live for, happen what may. (Bauman, 1993, p. 247)

This non-rational, non-predictable stretch towards the Other reveals the wildness we can expect to experience as educators, when amidst ethno-cultural difference, we will find ourselves at times, seeking to escape from contraventions, ignoring rules, routines or downplaying or stepping out of our roles. The welcoming seen in my participants’ experiences suggests to us as educators that we cannot allow ourselves to be entirely

governed by the socializing demands that often seek to hamper our innate disposition to stretch towards the Other.

However, understanding responsibility in this manner does not necessarily mean we should intentionally set out to dismiss the calculating and legislative efforts of reason, for these are the 'said' of our 'saying' concerning responsibility that alerts us to previous efforts to act properly towards the Other, that in turn can inform our efforts to be responsible. Yet, if we accept Levinas' argument concerning responsibility, then we are likely to realize that our responsibility emerges across the domain of our human experience, embodied in our emotional, intellectual and spiritual realities. In this emergence, we should not be overly surprised to find that a reliance on reason alone as a measure or determiner of responsibility is ethically insufficient. Welcoming suggests that we are likely to sense this insufficiency and realize that a lack of challenge concerning the suitability of logic and reason, active within institutional roles and routines, is irresponsible responsibility.

In summary, welcoming suggests for us that fundamental to our responsibility is a struggle involving our compassionate selves and our enactment of rules, routines and roles of schooling as we seek an encounter non-wounding relationship with others. Welcoming suggests that this will be central to the contexts of teaching and learning, administration or support activities that exist for us amidst any difference but perhaps especially in contexts of ethno-cultural difference. Welcoming allows us an understanding that in learning our responsibility from the Other we will need to avoid floating our responsibility or being complicit in floating responsibility through our collaboration with others as together we enact the structure and processes of schooling.

Welcoming shows us that in addressing our responsibility we will necessarily and inevitably involve the contravention of institutional realities such as rules, routines and roles. Welcoming suggests to us that the call of the Other will likely prompt our suspicion concerning any unreflective reliance on reason in understanding and enacting responsibility. The call of the Other will prompt us as well as demand of us deeper examinations of the nature of schooling, our values and beliefs concerning schooling but also of ourselves. What other understandings and implications does the welcoming of participants' reveal to us?

In a similar manner, the welcoming of these educators, their stretch towards the other where there was a suspicion and uneasiness concerning calculating reason, holds a similar suspicion concerning the veracity and employment of ethno-cultural grouping and categorization as responsible avenues of approach to others. In the words of individuals such as Pat, Blair and Kerry is revealed an anxiety concerning their sense of belonging, inclusion, and place and in similar contexts we may find ourselves uneasy and cautious that the categories we place upon others but also where we place ourselves. Perhaps, like my participants, even as we self-identify and accept others, for example, along gender, religious, tribal, socio-economic or ethno-cultural lines, we will sense that along with the potential utility of such designations is also an insufficiency in our responsibility. As educators involved in face-to-face encounters with others such as students and colleagues, where individual difference is apparently obvious and uncontestable, we are likely to have some hesitancy in simply adhering to notions that categorization will necessarily help us in serving others' well being.

Like these educators in ‘being for the Other’ we are likely to realize an “awakening of the self, which is the *birth* of the self...finding out myself as the *unique I*, the one and only I, the I different from all others, the *irreplaceable I*, not a specimen of a category” (Bauman, 1993, p. 77). As educators negotiating our way with others and within our understandings of ourselves we are likely to live the paradox of belonging and identifying with groups, of affirming and acting upon similarity and commonality even as we realize we are an “*irreplaceable*”, a “*unique I*”, as are others, who resist any categorization and containment. These are moments not of negotiating a group or a “*unique I*” but of finding a way with a group and a “*unique I*.”

This suggests caution is warranted in approaching others primarily through an understanding of them as cultural representatives even when these others present themselves in this manner. As educators this suggests our need to listen attentively to who others tell us they are, to act upon who they tell us they are, but to be attentive that they are more than even what or who they say, or who others say, they are—a saying that is always beyond us and them, and this should prompt caution for us in moments when we presume to designate others, bordering off their difference and believing we know who they are and what is in their best interest.

To welcome an other is to accept their designations but also to see past them. My participants realized that not all those they served followed traditional Aboriginal ways, claimed a particular heritage, or spoke certain languages, nor could participants assume there was a desire to do so among others such as students. However, they recognized they were implicated in a demand they affirm and help in the building of ethno-cultural capacity. Like these educators finding their way amidst difference, in similar

circumstances we are likely to find ourselves bound to respond to the uniqueness of individuals, unique individuals “standing sacred” who call us to our unique responsibility involving them. This means for us as educators that we should remain aware that ultimately we serve not concepts of culture, nor the embodiment of a culture, but are unique human beings who transcend any designation or containment.

This, however, does not dissolve sociological, familial or ethno-cultural realities for these may be treated as realities by others, aiding them in living their lives. However, the reliance on such categorization, with its inherent division and potentially polarizing effects, should perhaps always be back-grounded against the very real presence of other human beings for it is unlikely we can be confident that the concepts that we rely upon, whether involving notions of ethnicity or cultural knowledge, are what they seem (Warner, 2006). There will be ideas, such as “White” or “Aboriginal” or “teaching” or “learning” that in some manner will always be contested yet will impact how we engage and act in response to others. Relying, for example, on curricula developed for particular ethno-cultural groups is helpful and needed, yet at the same time their use cannot be assumed to resolve our responsibility. The difference of others such as students, what we believe will aid them is built on our assumptions and speculations. Not all students will identify themselves as we envision and so we must listen carefully to who they say they are. As educators we must be cautious of being irresponsible in our visions, planning and implementation, for example, of culturally sensitive curricula or culturally aware instruction for these may not match what the Other is demanding of us. As leaders and spokes people, while seeking to act in the best interests of others such as students, we must realize that ultimately we do not speak for others even if we believe we are this

Other. Welcoming leaves us understanding that identities are multiple and intersected (Kumashiro (2000; 2001) and we must be attentive in our responsibility for no matter how closely we or others identify with students, and despite our declarations of belonging or inclusion, students are always an Other to us but also others who claim them for their own.

What the welcoming of my participants help us understand is that though we may develop a “continuum of increasing sophistication in dealing with cultural difference, moving from ethnocentrism through stages of greater recognition and acceptance of difference” (Bennett, 1993, p. 22) our understandings and responsibility will remain incomplete, always a work in progress. Whether we put aside or lessen the denial, defense or minimization of difference, or our reliance on the said of categorization, or our trust in what categories can help us accomplish, we are likely to find such moves always insufficient in resolving our responsibility. The welcoming of my participants helps demonstrate that in our very grasping after categories, in our need to classify, to place others where we think they belong, there exists the potential to mistake if not lose sight of our responsibility—which is to not lose sight of the face of the Other.

If we rely on the notion of welcoming, then we can understand that we will need to act upon such insufficiency realizing, as Levinas suggests, that the difference of the Other is always more than we can contain. Welcoming alerts us to potential ethical difficulty that may emerge if we are unquestionably confident and comfortable in believing we can really know others, a knowing we might unwittingly use to constrain and collapse the difference of others into our groupings and categories for our purposes, in our time, for our benefit. Welcoming helps us understand that as educators, we must

exercise caution and remain vigilant that attempts to reify the Other do not leave us irresponsible. For example, to ensure that the legitimate pursuit of academic achievement and efficiency and accountability in schooling contexts does not overshadow the non-containable difference of those we serve even as we rely on designations, groupings and allotments along ethno-cultural lines.

Welcoming, if we are in situations similar to those of my participants, suggests that like them we are likely to find ourselves contravening and in conflict with the discourse of schooling but also with our understanding of our own identities. We are likely to experience contravention when our moral sensibility and capacity as compassionate human beings are at cross purposes with the conventions of schooling. We are likely in our attempts to attend to the call of the Other to push past borders in how we understand ourselves and schooling. It maybe that even though we may attempt to avoid contravening the routines of thought and action we enact in our school roles, where we might be “floating” any chance of contravention by clinging to institutional norms and practice, we are likely to be unsuccessful. Understanding our responsibility as a welcoming suggests for us as educators there can be no ultimate insulation from contravention, there can be no evasive action that can be taken that relieves us of the pressing demand to go beyond convention in response to the needs of others. In other words, while reliance on institutional features, our hope for and reliance on reason in aiding our ethicality, and our employment of categories are helpful and inevitable perhaps, they are never enough for the enactment of responsibility. Likewise with our identity, if we have too strong a reliance on particular conceptions of who we believe ourselves to be this may leave us irresponsible.

Being forewarned that contravention is a likelihood may help us as educators in finding our footing in negotiating moments of contravention. Like my participants we may need to question and re-examine the inherent values and beliefs of the schooling contexts in which we participate and offer more than a passing or casual examination of these contexts. In such reflection we are likely to be drawn from the security and safety of our self-assuredness and confronted with the task of responding in unique and mindful ways to the Other—responses which transcend “absolutist standards that cannot be questioned” (Slattery & Rapp, 2003, p. 41). Similarly, we are likely to realize the need to continually reconsider how our identity emerges and what we claim as absolutes about our identity or identities.

Like my participants, we are likely to recognize ourselves as *hôte* in an ongoing accommodation and dis-accommodation between our beliefs and others’ beliefs. Knowing that we are likely to find ourselves anxious in our encounter with others, never quite prepared or ready in the face of the demands the difference of others places upon us can provide us with a measure of confidence that we are acting ethically yet not ensure this. What participant’s experience of welcoming perhaps provides us with is that if we have anxiety and fear about unquestioningly and non-reflectively accept the ‘said’ of “absolutist standards” or conventions of schooling we should not be too dis-hearted for these are signs of our ethicality and signals our responsibility (Levinas, 1961) and moral capacity (Bauman, 1993). In other words, we may not entirely understand nor accurately predict what will transpire with others in learning situations but our uncertainty and anxiety are likely assurances we are on the path of being ethically sufficient.

What participants' experience of welcoming helps us realize is that in our experience of circumstances similar to theirs, uncertainty is likely a sign of our ethicality and illustrates that while the search for responsibility through adherence to the conventions of schooling is valid, a "foolproof – universal and unshakably founded – ethical code will never be found" (Bauman, 1993, p. 10). Their experience of welcoming suggests that like them we will also realize that "the frustration of certainty is morality's gain...the greatest gain that one can reasonably hope for" (Bauman, 1993, p. 223). What this uncertainty signifies for us and encourages in us is a continued openness and vulnerability to the difference of the Other even as we seek to take concrete action in aiding and helping those around us. Like these educators living amidst the reality of ethno-cultural difference, like them we will be distressed and unsettled, but can find some comfort that our uncertainty signifies the existence of an ethical relationship with others, a non-wounding relationship..

The welcoming of these educators shows us, that like them, there is likely to be no guarantees of safety of our ego, psyche or subjectivity, and that repeatedly we will be drawn beyond ourselves in service to others. We will be asked to pay a price for which one can never entirely find the funds—an ongoing debt, as Levinas suggests, that only increases the more one pays. This is a debt that will draw not only on our time and energy, but on the very capital of our ego, lessening and restricting the urge to consolidate against the Other. Amidst the challenge and difference in school settings typified by ethno-cultural difference we are likely to find ourselves pressed to respond to the difference of others and this demand will press on our identity and sense of place urging us beyond the borders we have established. In other words, we will face an

unavoidable self-introspection concerning our belief in our selves and in the nature of our attentiveness to our attentiveness, where we will be challenged to wrestle with questions of who we are and therefore how we should be, not only with others but for others.

Welcoming as contravention shows us we will be under the continual demand to question ourselves—a questioning of our motivations, values and identity. By necessity we will come to understand that what is ethical is not found in some final resolution concerning the question of self, where we suppose we can arrive at a satisfactory and final answer. Our embodiment as ethical beings will find us continually opening and re-visiting the question of self or identity in our attempts to serve those around us and with inner change will come outer changes that put us in direct confrontation with the conventions of schooling. This will happen in the face-to-face encounter, in our classrooms, in the staffroom, in the school and beyond. Welcoming the Other will find us acting from the fore-ground of our moral capacity as compassionate selves on behalf of the Other and in this service we cannot but contravene the routines, regulations and rules of schooling.

Welcoming reveals to us that the importance of questioning one's identity and place exists, to rely on Levinas, because one's self responds to the ever-changing and unfathomable difference of the Other. In response to this difference, to the call of the Other, our subjectivity and actions will be challenged. In this challenge we will contravene the conventions of schooling and self that in gentler terms may be called change and growth but in harsher terms is justice and the extinction of the oppressive features of self and schooling that coerce and do not serve others best interest.

If this is in part what welcoming holds for us there are perhaps other implications that can be drawn out for consideration that may shape our actions in regards to others and understanding our responsibility. The following section extends this discussion of implications for our understanding but also the practicalities of welcoming as responsibility.

Welcoming: Further Understandings and Implications

I have explored the idea that the responsibility of the educators I interviewed could be understood as a welcoming of the Other and that such understanding is helpful in understanding educators' experiences of working amidst ethno-cultural difference. Relying on the evidence of their experience I suggested that the welcoming of my participants involved learning from the Other, evidenced by the interruption, vulnerability and hospitality these people experienced. I suggested this gift of learning ultimately involved a realization they were in a search for a less-wounding pedagogy and offered discussion on some of the implications this may hold for us as educators. However, there seems to be further understandings and implications we might consider that emerge alongside or from the struggle of the negotiation of our compassionate self, concerns about categorization and the inevitability of contravention. What are these implications and where we can look for further wisdom in understanding and enacting our responsibility? In other words, what else might welcoming reveal to us as educators, but also those involved with teacher education, concerning welcoming as a way to understand responsibility?

In asking such questions we should remember that Levinas' ideas involve a discourse more about an ethic of ethics, a meta-cognitive endeavour concerning our approach to responsibility and for the most part this is the nature of the following discussion. There are challenges here for any discussion that relies on Levinas' thought, where such discussion offers specific remedies, guides to action or ways of enacting one's responsibility. This difficulty emerges because Levinas' work is in part a testament to the insufficiency of outlining such specific events and contexts and so to offer such

specificity is to contradict and confound Levinas' work. However, I believe offering a discussion that touches on the more pragmatic concerns of what educators might do is potentially helpful and therefore necessary if one does not attempt to outline too specifically particular codes, actions or activities suggesting these offer some finality or sufficiency in resolving one's responsibility. So despite what will necessarily be an insufficient, limited, conditional and cautious discussion I touch on some pragmatic aspects of the implications of conceiving of responsibility as welcoming. However, the following discussion will remain very much a talking around specifics and will remain closely bound to the contexts of ethno-cultural difference similar to that of the educators I interviewed.

Levinas suggests in considering "the relationship between the same and the other, my welcoming of the other, is the ultimate fact, and in it the things figure not as what one builds but as what one gives" (1961, p. 77) and this seemed borne out with my participants' experience. So what is it that we as educators must give or perhaps give into in welcoming others? We already know we will experience interruption, vulnerability, *hôte* and learning from the Other and we know this will mean a struggle for us involving our compassionate self, concerns about categorization and contravention, but what else exists here alongside these or emerging from them?

A simple answer with complicated outcomes is that we will find ourselves already given unconditionally and completely to the moral height and demand of others. This response, while always present for us may be much more poignant and keenly felt in multi-cultural contexts, where we are more likely to find any complacency we possess frequently and overtly challenged. In this encounter we will find, not that "deep down we

are all the same”, but there is as unending and uncontainable difference, the face of the Other, and as noted before, this is what awakens our responsibility by prompting our moral capacity (Bauman, 1993). The difference we encounter in ethno-cultural contexts is no more or less that which we encounter in other contexts, however, such difference may appear more striking and evident and we perhaps respond disproportionately to this difference.

Multicultural contexts may be for us be particularly favourable “for the possibility of sobering up our self where I, facing the Other, am liberated from myself, wake up from dogmatic slumber” (Levinas, 1981, p. 112), moments of awakening to responsibility. These situations may act as catalysts to awaken us to the abounding difference that occurs in all contexts, difference that we will consciously notice as we attend to others. Our consideration of responsibility as welcoming shows us that difference belongs to individuals who exist and found ethno-cultural realities and that however we choose to approach and employ categories, groups and notions of community, based for example, on notions of ethnicity, religion, gender or other designations, these are not primary to our responsibility. They matter, but they matter less, for these are not the face of the Other. These aid us only to the degree they inform us concerning the enactment of our responsibility to the individuals we encounter. Bauman (1993) and others (Abowitz, 1999) caution us concerning some of the challenges involving notions of community and universalizing ideas for

whenever one descends from the relatively secure realm of concepts to the description of any concrete object the concepts are supposed to stand for one finds merely a collection of men and women acting at cross purposes... (Bauman, 1993, p. 44)

While we may have a keen interest in knowledge, process and the experience of community and culture, their existence emerge from the living presence of human beings, a presence, a face, and to this face we respond. We employ categories as tools that allow us to enact our responsibility, to build capacity for others and seek justice but they should not be mistaken for the face of the Other. The categorization that helps us establish ethno-cultural community is said to be active but culture thrives and survives through the moral capacity of individuals as compassionate people responsible to each other.

As educators this does not mean that we should cut our activity and interest short, stop creating curricula or programming which assumes and addresses, for example, ethno-cultural difference or that we should cease in securing and developing the resources and stories of those in ethno-cultural communities. What welcoming suggests for us is that the origin of our response and the strength of our actions emerge not so much in response to ethno-cultural difference but in response to the difference of those within the culture, where we are responsive to the very real presence of other human beings. Welcoming alerts us to the notion that even as we seek to enact a less-wounding pedagogy through our attempts to create and implement supportive programs, curricula, support organizations and communities of learners, or to carry out ethno-cultural duties we may be assigned or asked to undertake, we need to remain aware that we are in service to the unique difference of individuals, even though they call us to be accountable in acknowledging, affirming and aiding their ethno-cultural reality and capacity.

However, because self-identification and categorization is their concern, not something I can rightfully place upon them, there is ultimately no bargain we can demand of them. The moral height of the other, according to Levinas, does not position us to

expect that others will correspond or conform to who we think they are or what we think is correct, regarding their self identification and affiliation. As educators we need to remain alert to the notion that our responsibility is not a commercial transaction, not a contract, where there is a simple bartering where we exchange services with others such as students and where we accept others because they accept us. Welcoming shows us that schools are not commercial venues but are ultimately ethical situations. If these situations were a barter of expectations we would find there was no purchase that offered redemption for us from the demand of others. Our only hope for justice for ourselves, if we believe Levinas (1981), exists with the third person who is responsible to us, to whom we are Other and who intercedes on our behalf in our other relationships.

Welcoming suggests that we are only available to be commanded, to not immediately yield to laws or groups or conventions but to the face of the Other (Levinas, 1998). Our concern is our responsibility to others, the difference of others, and in our response we will be called to acknowledge and affirm, for example, ethno-cultural and socio-economic realities not for sake of these realities in themselves, but because these are realities others demand we attend to. We will find ourselves seeking social justice in schooling contexts not so much because people are oppressed as a group in some way, but ultimately because the face of an Other, a human being, our neighbour, demands our participation on their behalf, on their terms, on their ground, as they choose. As we witnessed with my participants, like them, this learning may be difficult for us as educators for we are positioned to assume the justice of causes and groups and we are familiar with being, as educators, the ones who demand participation on our terms, on our ground and when we choose. To be responsible to others such as students and their

families we will necessarily find ourselves in service to them because of who they are, not what they represent, even if they agree that our responsibility is to affirm and aid their development as cultural beings. Our ethicality emerges from our moral impulse prompted by the unique difference of others and in this impulse they bind us to them in whatever manner that is helpful to them. This binding was evident with my participants in their vulnerability to others such as students.

Again, welcoming suggests to us that this service is not reciprocal. In other words, despite our responsibility where we acknowledge, affirm and support, for example the ethno-cultural reality of students and their families or the local community, we cannot expect any reciprocity. This reality exists, as Bauman says (relying on Levinas), because “I am for the Other whether the Other is for me or not; his [sic] being for me is, so to speak, his [sic] problem, and whether or how he [sic] ‘handles’ that problem does not in the least affect my being-for-Him [sic]...” (1993, p. 50). This ‘being-for’ seemed evident with my participants and myself in our schooling circumstances and like the, for us as educators, this likely means we should be suspicious of our desire to find equity or to be ‘paid back’ in kind. For example, in situations where we affirm the heritage of others offering ourselves by participating in cultural ceremonies that may have religious or spiritual features foreign to us or where we serve others in cultural events of local ethno-cultural communities different than our own. Our involvement does not rest on any assumption of reciprocity. The response of others to us or their attendance to our particularities is less our concern and if we believe Levinas, any demand for repayment by us is perhaps irresponsible.

What this likely means for us as educators is that we will offer our creativity and flexibility to others to create opportunities for learners and their families, yet cannot expect they will respond to our efforts in ways we desire, or in ways that even find our efforts worth their while. In this more radical understanding of responsibility this may mean even our expectations that students excel in the ways we envision, or adhere to the goals we define, or complete the programs we require and accept our visions of success and achievement, are ethically questionable undertakings. In other words, the demand to become that we place on the Other and our expectation of reciprocity is not without ethical peril for ourselves.

However, what modifies this radical aspect of Levinas' responsibility is that we are commanded to command the Other to command us (Bauman, 1993; Levinas, 1998). In other words, in our responsibility the Other orders us concerning their need. In this manner others outline how they wish us to approach them and how we are to help them. Explicitly but also at times implicitly by their actions they let us know how far they wish to be challenged and even what constitute the measures of their success. They bring the gift of learning that shows us as educators we need to be attentive to what we are commanded to do and this requires an attentiveness to the Other that involves encouragement but not coercion—a pressing upon them to pursue their well being that does not evolve into oppression. This attentiveness to the Other will exist for educators in any educational context but may be more keenly felt and have more profound implications in contexts, where students and their families have less cultural or socio-economic capacity. For my participants their attentiveness to the Other and the command

of the Other to command them involved as a central feature of their responsibility a re-envisioning success, but for other educators this may result in something else.

In the context of compulsory education, where educators hold a degree of power and students less, where schooling is a paradoxical mix of volunteer action and schoolings' demand for students to become someone other, understanding what the Other is commanding us to do will not always be clear. We will be required to trust the wisdom of others, accepting that however incomplete and imperfect in scope we believe their wisdom to be, those we serve likely better know their needs than us and possess knowledge concerning themselves that we need to attend to. The welcoming of my participants suggests that like them we must trust these others, whether student, parent or Elder in the community, to be active on their own behalf and to give voice to what they desire. We must trust that despite the challenge of marginalization or the disadvantage of some students and their families and the incapacity this implies, that they are competent concerning the determinations of their lives. In one sense the learning they undertake is their choice not only by their entrance across the threshold of school, but in what holds value for them, what they desire to learn and what they consider success, yet this does not relieve us in any way from the demands they place upon us.

In our response as compassionate selves we must attempt to make a place for others as they envision themselves, on their terms, in ways that are accessible to them. This is not the place for our expediency, but where the Other asks us to aid them and we are to be concerned not with our aspirations but with the aspirations of others as our aspirations. In these moments, like my participants, we will likely attempt to open the venue of teaching and learning through, for example, the creation of new programming,

alternative instruction, integrating traditional and non-traditional learning situations, and involving community Elders and knowledge keeper in the routines of schooling.

Our response to the Other will mean that time will exist as a variable that we use to address the difference of others and less a reality to which we make them conform. We are likely to find ourselves along with colleagues changing the structure of the school year where, as with my participants, the attempted to create more entry points for students to begin their studies or to re-enter school after some disruption in attendance. Like the educators I interviewed, this may mean, altering the length of course work, extending times for completing credits, and creating individualized learning programs to allow students some flexibility with the time they take to complete their learning. This may also suggest that we might find ourselves altering our assumptions and expectations, as my participants did, concerning what is a reasonable time to expect students to complete their high school studies, perhaps accepting that four is too brief and that five or even six years of study may aid students best in achieving academic success.

However, despite the possibility of such change we are likely to find we will remain pressed to not forego the expected outcomes of mandated curricula though how we help students meet the criteria of schooling may vary widely and necessitate changes in how we assess and evaluate students. Such examples of what we may find our selves doing in response to the needs of others, represent attempts to create a more humanistic pedagogy (Aikenhead, 2006; Blades, 2006; Blades et al., 2000), an anti-oppressive education (hooks, 1994, 2003; Kumashiro, 2000, 2001), a less-wounding pedagogy (Todd, 2003c), that ultimately seek to enact Levinas' notion that our responsibility involves a non-allergic, a peaceful relationship with others (Levinas, 1961).

For our selves as educators or teacher educators this suggests significant changes concerning our personal pedagogy, but also the operation of schooling, in preparing our selves and others to enact a less wounding pedagogy amidst the tensions of ethno-cultural difference. Here again we may find our selves in contravention of the norms and discourse of schooling and also find ourselves questioning the origins of such norms and discourse. Contravention is likely to be non-trivial, leaving us thinking and act differently in regards to our selves and others yet contravention will vary for us as individuals given the unique roles we play and differences we embody. We are unlikely to escape uncertainty and anxiety about our relationship with others, where we feel at risk and vulnerable. Amidst ethno-cultural difference we are likely to sense that we can never be quite prepared or ready for what others will demand from us however as educators and teacher educators we need to remain aware this is not a sign of ethical failure, nor an indicator of a lack of responsibility but the presence of these sensibilities signify responsibility. What is important for us as educators to realize and for teacher educators to relate to others, is that ultimately no preparation we can undergo will eliminate our anxiety and uncertainty concerning our proper action in being for the Other. Further, seeking to eliminate or downplay such sensibility may in effect be a floating of responsibility, which as we have seen is irresponsible. We must be cautious of being inattentive and unaccommodating to the Other in a search for comfort within ourselves, a comfort that exists as we dismiss the Other fearing for the solidarity of our ego or psyche. Continually reminding ourselves as educators that teaching is not about us but our accommodation of the Other sensed in our experience as *hôte* is perhaps a simple yet important lesson we learn continually.

However, conceding to our continual un-preparedness as educators in meeting the demands of the Other does not mean we do not operate in a practical manner seeking information concerning others' living situations, ethno-cultural background, heritage or the particular challenges they face. Nor does this mean avoiding planning and fulfilling our roles or acting on rules and regulations. Nor does it mean we will not experience satisfaction, comfort and happiness in witnessing the emergence of the well being of others through our efforts to be responsible, for part of our peaceful relationship with others is likely to share such experiences as others such as students meet and overcome challenges. However, if we follow Levinas such emotion is likely to emerge not from the consolidation of our ego and fulfillment of our goals but in the fruition of the goals of others around us.

Regardless of emotions, however, we will always fall short in our responsibility if we believe Levinas, for we cannot be entirely prepared for the demands of others, demands that are likely to be frequent and urgent. In seeking to be responsible we may need some reassurance and confidence of those around us, to understand that our lack of confidence signals our ethicality. Those we are involved with who are our colleagues and teachers can aid us by reminding us that our uncertainty, unpreparedness, lack of confidence are part of our ethical positioning towards the Other. We should not be surprised that we will be drawn into action on behalf of the Other and that we will take action even when we are unfamiliar with situations, and perhaps reluctant fearing that our actions maybe incorrect or unsuitable. While to remain anxious, fearful, or reluctant will potentially disrupt us in enacting our responsibility welcoming reveals to us that we can

find some comfort knowing that in being open, vulnerable, hospitable to others and learning from the Other we are being responsible.

As we saw with the educators I interviewed, welcoming will find us in situations that exist beyond schooling contexts, where we are involved emotionally, psychologically, materially and spiritually in aiding and acting on the behalf of students and their families. This will mean at moments walking a fine line between enabling and helping others such as students and their families as we seek to help them build their emotional and social capacity. We may aid such others, for example, in helping them build capacity and resiliency (Ungar, 2005; 2008) by arranging for their participation in high status learning venues, venues they may not typically experience. These might be recreational, ethno-cultural, or business oriented ventures, where for example they participate in fitness clubs and in organizing events in the community or participate as artists in collaborations with art galleries and museums or develop entrepreneurial skills through working with businesses in the community. This also means involving them in situations with ourselves where we typically hold less power as educators, situations perhaps foreign to us such as a cultural events or ceremonies where they can witness our acknowledgement, affirmation and support for beliefs and values they hold central to their understanding of themselves. In the case of my participants and I, such moments involved participating in Treaty celebrations and powwows, in participating in sweat lodge and other ceremonies, and participating in cultural camps where Elders directed the learning of both educators and students. Despite our involvement in such events, if we believe Levinas, we will not be released from our responsibility even as we anguish, fear or rejoice at the outcome of our efforts.

Participants experienced a sense of reluctance in educating others, borne of a concern they maybe overstepping the bounds of others. The presence of this sense of reluctance, like that of our anxiety and unease in our un-preparedness, is not a guarantor of our ethicality but perhaps can reassure us, if not comfort us, that in our hesitation are being open and attentive to others and in this way are on an ethical path. We are likely to experience this sense of reluctance, for example, when we are asked to participate in cultural ceremony, perhaps to offer a prayer in such ceremony or when students seek our advice about cultural, family or personal matters—situations where for some of us we do not feel knowledgeable or adequately prepared. What is important for us to realize is that a sense of reluctance indicates our concern that we may be intruding upon people and their circumstance in ways that are offensive or disempowering for them. Therefore, our reluctance in a manner does not involve a dismissal or disinterest in the personal and ethno-cultural reality of others, but of a concern to be in non-allergic relationship to those around us.

What welcoming shows us is that we will remain tasked with the infinite demand placed upon us even in our imperfect response, in our inability and in the inadequacy of our preparation for the roles we play, the rules we follow and regulations we rely upon. Recognizing our un-preparedness and our inadequacy though unsettling, signals our attentiveness to the difference we encounter and while uncomfortable gives us some assurance we are listening to the call of the Other. In other words, we are being responsible.

What reluctance, un-preparedness and inadequacy likely mean for us is that we will also feel a sense of non-resolvability concerning our responsibility. We are likely to

sense within ourselves that in being “for-the-other” there is no final moment where we can relax after having fulfilled the need of others. One might consider this the ongoing state of educators where teaching and learning is never complete, where doubts about what one should have done mingle with the need to plan again, for next time, to do something better. These are moments of welcoming where suddenly one is thinking again, for example, about the suitability of a mark that was assigned or a judgment made concerning a student’s behaviour or one’s inaction regarding an other’s circumstance. These are moments where often long after the fact, we anguish over situations and reconsider our judgment. Understanding that our responsibility involves this sense of irresolution is sobering for us as educators for in these moments we are likely to realize that the needs of others will push us beyond ourselves. We will act in ways that will unsettle the status quo of self and surroundings but also in a way where we are always at the beck and call of the Other even long after an event has transpired. In a manner the resources that we possess, whether emotional, financial, time or energy are always at risk of being called yet again into the service others.

This irresolution involves a struggle to understand the boundaries of our actions, self and other. This struggle will prompt questions concerning our identity, the identity of others, the conventions of schooling, and the nature and extent of our roles as educators—educators who are always aware of our existence as compassionate selves with moral capacity. We will find ourselves like these educators, for example, questioning the meaning and standards of success for students and their families but also ourselves. This means that for us as educators, we cannot stay narrowly within the confines of a non-reflective role or ignore fundamental societal or pedagogical issues that

seem beyond our duties to deliver curricula and instruction. This will likely mean for us as it did for my participants, for example, not merely implementing existing curricula, resources and activities deemed ethno-culturally suitable but also taking part, along with colleagues, students and community members, in creating these through frequent discussion and collaboration.

Accompanying the irresolution of our responsibility is a sense that there can be no relief from the demand of the Other and that nothing we ultimately can fashion will relieve ourselves of responsibility to others such as students. As noted before in discussing Levinas, our freedom will exist not in avoiding a response to the demands of others but in our choice of how we meet such demand. However, while we will be continually pressed upon, there are others around us who will fashion some degree of relief for us, because to those around us we are an Other. In this regard we have moral height and our needs must be met, but this is not something we can demand from others. We can only await their action on our behalf. Whether they are students, students' family members, colleagues, or Elders in the community we can only hope they will seek justice for us and come to our aid. In these moments we must be patient as we wait for others to us to reassure and guide us in their moral capacity as human beings, guarding us from over extending ourselves even as we are under the demand to be for the Other.

The easing of our responsibility, however brief, will come at the hands of others but we cannot make this a demand of them. Their learning from the Other will occur as ours does in the face-to-face encounter with each other that may be best served by our frequent and ongoing contact with them, in a variety of venues, within but also beyond the boundaries of schools.

What the un-preparedness, anxiety, reluctance and irresolution of our responsibility suggests for us, is that in serving others such as students there will be a necessity for flexibility and creativity. This demand arises in part because rules, routines and even laws can position us to become legalistic, inflexible and unjust in our encounter with the Other (Slattery & Rapp, 2003). Therefore, flexibility and creativity in our approach to the Other will be required of us, found, for example, in how we re-interpret and enact programs, how we position our response to others as we better understand who they are and the nature of their experience and lives. We will need to be creative in our response to the outcomes of the challenges that students face beyond the school that affect their attendance, readiness and capacity to learn. Where as I noted earlier, time becomes a variable and where we might delay or defer students' course of studies not through a lowering of academic achievement but through providing time and support for students to progress at rates and in ways more suited to them. We will need to act with the knowledge we gain about such realities as poverty and ability but we will need to avoid conflating these where we suppose one is entirely determinative of the other (Gorski, 2008) remaining aware that while we employ categories to aid others people are not representative of these categories.

In welcoming there will be the demand that our creativity and flexibility fully address the need of the Other and this is likely to take us beyond a strict delivery of programs or adherence to the conventions of schooling. This may be especially so when such programming and convention are inactive concerning matters such as the classicism inherent in many schooling contexts (Kozol, 1992) or fail to address the cultural capacity of people (Giroux, 1992, 1997). Our response to the Other will require creativity and

flexibility that allow us to offer suitable and timely learning challenges for students, challenges that are not beyond their abilities but encourage learning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) yet allow others such as students to make meaning and develop knowledge useful and helpful for them, by their estimation and more for their purposes, where fear and anxiety is reduced (Caine & Caine, 1994).

As noted earlier enacting our responsibility may mean taking students beyond the confines of school to experience sporting, recreational and artistic venues, to explore work and technical environs and engage people who inhabit such places. Such undertakings offer challenges logistically and financially that can be daunting even to educators in mainstream schooling contexts, yet in circumstances similar to my participants the need to overcome such challenges will be no less pressing therefore securing adequate support both within and beyond the school will be crucial. There will be a need for the inclusion of ethno-culturally and personally affirming knowledge and processes that allow students and their families to approach schooling more on their terms, in ways that are meaningful to them, recognizing they already have knowledge and this knowledge has value. These constitute moments where people are not implicitly considered deficient intellectually, morally or otherwise but acknowledge that inequalities exist that prevent their full engagement with schooling that is of aid to them (Gorski, 2008).

Welcoming suggests to us, if we are in circumstances similar to my participants, that we will need to seek out the knowledge keepers of ethno-cultural groups and others such as Elders from the local community, allowing them the time and resources to engage students and adjusting the processes and structures of schooling to accommodate them. In

other words, we will likely need to create opportunities and experiences for students that affirm them, their families and the encompassing cultural community. In arranging for such moments of learning we will encounter obstacles that in more mainstream settings pose less of a challenge but in settings similar to those of my participants are often difficult to surmount. Our responsibility will involve securing enough financial resources to provide for transportation, food, shelter and other sundries for students to go beyond the school but also in accommodating those who come to the school. If we are fortunate we may have access to sufficient resources but often the cost, at least in part, will fall upon us individually and we may find ourselves providing money and materials, sometimes items as simple as proper clothing.

As mentioned earlier this creativity and flexibility, originating in others' need, is likely to find us as educators in contravention of various aspects of programming, curricula, school norms and even school board policies. This does not mean that as educators we should look for opportunities for such contravention, to be in rebellion for the sake of rebellion, or to challenge convention for the sake of challenge. However, in the interruption, vulnerability, hospitality and learning from the Other of welcoming, where we exist as compassionate selves acting on our moral capacity seeking to be ethical, that contravention should arise in being responsive to others should come as no surprise, for while contravention does not guarantee responsibility, responsibility will inevitably involve contravention.

Whether or not as educators we acknowledge the need for creativity and flexibility in our response to others, this need will likely remain, awaiting our realization that our responsibility is likely insufficient without a creative, flexible and

accommodating response to the Other. In the demand this places upon us we may find little comfort in terms of the duty that programming, routines and roles schooling demand of us. However, understanding our responsibility involves a creative and flexible response to others that involves some contravention and transcendence in our understanding of self and other may allow us the fortitude to act in the best interests of others such as students. We might be more confident and reassured in contesting situations and expectations that appear too wounding to the Other and find the courage to risk something new, alternative or different in seeking to serve those we teach.

If our responsibility involves the contravention and transcendence of our understanding of self and other, and if gauging how we might enact our responsibility involves a suspicion concerning the sufficiency of rules, routines, programs and ethical codes as guides to ethical behaviour, then where else might we turn to better know how to be in regards to others? In other words, where else might our responsibility lead us, and what might we be doing to better understand how we might proceed in being-for-the-Other in pursuit of a less wounding pedagogy?

In our responsibility, whether tasked with the roles of administrator, teacher or support person, welcoming is likely to lead us to participate in ethno-cultural community, family activities and even the personal lives of others such as our students. While this involvement happens already within school settings in the everyday activities people share with others, we are likely to find ourselves involved in encounters with others beyond the confines of schools, poignant encounters of learning from the Other. These are situations that awaken us more fully to the Other and alert us concerning our everyday 'normal' school life where we may be "physically close" but "spiritually

remote” from others (Bauman, 1993, p. 242). This involvement will be at the invitation of others, on their terms and at their behest where we will find ourselves open and vulnerable to others because the possibility of rejection is always present. In these moments our beliefs and values will be available for inclusion or dismissal, where others hold power over the events that will transpire and our status as educators or ethno-cultural members will have less significance. Such instances may involve, for example, events such as feasts, powwows, a sweat lodge, a talking circle or other ceremonies but are not limited to these. They could as easily be an art show, an outdoor recreation trip, dramatic program or concert where others such as students are participating. Such instances may occur in attending to an Elder or healer in their activities or as one is asked to carry out a task during a feast or ceremony. What is common to all however is that these are often moments where students, their families and others witness our involvement, our “being-for-the-other” that Levinas suggests founds responsibility.

Regardless these are instances where, as educators, we wait upon others in face-to-face encounters with the Other, participating as we are instructed where if only momentarily we shed the role of educator. These are tangible moments of learning from the Other. These moments do not culminate in a consolidation of the sameness of self where we can rest contentedly believing we comprehend others, but exist as an opening, a being-for-the-other. These are moments that will be poignant for us as experiences of interruption, vulnerability, hospitality and learning from the Other, a welcoming arising from the call of the Other.

What is important in such moments for us? What do we need to realize about them? In such events perhaps because we find our roles as educators slipping off, the

persona or mask of our roles slip and our compassionate self is revealed there is the possibility of gaining a sense of our moral existence and the possibility for the further development and sophistication of our moral capacity. Welcoming allows us to realize more fully that each encounter with the Other is unique contributing to the growth and sophistication of our compassionate self; our very being. The activities I offered as examples and other circumstances like them, demonstrate our responsibility as a being-for-the-Other but also prepare us for further responsibility. Such experience prompts and educates our compassionate self, or moral self, and provides us some sense of where we stand as we enact our roles, or act on ethical codes or routines that give shape to our responsibility. These experiences enliven our sensibility of our selves and others as moral beings and inform us, so that later we do not flounder as we are caught struggling to negotiate the demands of schooling's expectations, codes of ethics, rules, policies. However, these are likely to remain often anxious and uncertain moments, yet we can at least call upon this deepened experience of the Other in giving substance to our responsibility.

Through such encounters we are likely to realize that our responsibility does not involve the mere tolerance of difference, as if our moral selves can ever be indifferent, but is an active being-for-the-Other (Levinas, 1981). There exists a form of togetherness, as Todd (2003c) and Bauman (1993; 1995) illustrate, where we do not casually occupy the same space with others, where there is no significant interaction or we merely have some interesting communication, but are moments of relationship that are

a leap from isolation to unity; yet not towards *fusion*, that mystic's dream of shedding the burden of identity, but to an *alloy* whose precious qualities depend fully on the preservation of its ingredients' alterity and identity. Being-for is entered for the sake of safeguarding and defending the

uniqueness of the Other...the self is not absolved of responsibility....Being-for is the act of transcendence of being-with. (Bauman, 1995, pp. 51-52)

This “being-for” both Bauman and Todd suggest cannot be predictably ensured in our encounter with others. However, we can allow for the possibility of such transcendence in not looking away from the Other, in allowing our selves to encounter the Other in a face-to-face meeting. Here there is the possibility of transcendence from merely being-with to being-for where there is also the possibility of the birth of commitment, where as Bauman says, “commitment shoots up, apparently from nowhere, certainly not from previous intention, instruction, norm; the emergence of commitment is as much surprising as its presence is commanding” (1995, p. 53).

This shooting up of commitment, unpredictable and surprising is seen with my participants as they go against convention. Where for example, Pat arranges for a feast and ceremony within the school despite the disciplinary risks this entails, or where Kerry visits Freedom’s run down home after dark realizing Freedom’s need for support and help, or where Jordan suddenly decides to visit the “crack house” to find a student whose mother is hoping will come home or where Chris realizes the need to do something for the students that will be meaningful to them, something that students are not currently doing. These seem moments where there has been the transformation of being-with to being-for that signify a commitment to the Other, a commitment that would seem especially crucial for those responsible to others in contexts of ethno-cultural difference. The outcomes of educators’ involvement almost certainly will be different for each of us, however, we need to be aware of the potential opportunity that exists in different contexts, that allow the move from being-with to a being-for where we can better sense our responsibility in hopes of acting ethically towards others.

Because people who act as administrators or teacher educators often frame the experiences of teaching, and learning to teach, by virtue of their roles in schools or in preparing teachers, their involvement deserves comment. Given this, we might ask what administrators and teacher educators might be doing in regards to others in their transcendent move from being-with to being-for where educators realize their commitment to the Other? In other words, to ask what may be involved for them with others as educators seek their way as compassionate selves and where there is the potential transformation for educators from simply being-with to the commitment of being-for the Other?

Those tasked with administrative duties are concerned with maintaining institutional routines and processes relying on categories and designations to organize and direct others. There are policies and protocols to be followed, financial realities to be accounted for and many other concerns that divert administrators from the face-to-face encounter with others such as students. Given this, those of us fulfilling administrative roles, like my participants Pat, Lee and Kerry, will likely endure particular challenges in not floating one's responsibility. There will be demands made upon us that are likely to draw us out of classrooms, beyond our schools and out of contact with school colleagues, students and students' families. Conversely we may find our selves confined to our offices under the burden of duties where there is less frequent face-to-face contact with others such as students and teachers where perhaps duties obscure attending to others. These situations may perhaps find us floating our responsibility as there seems less involvement of our moral or compassionate self in the face-to-face encounter with others such as students. Such floating is undesirable in ethical terms and so to avoid this might

mean a concerted effort on the part of those in administrative roles to remain attentive to others. In turn this may mean guarding against being overwhelmed by the duties that confront us, duties that lessen our time, energy and attentiveness to others such as students. Like other educators, administrators are likely to find little relief from moments of uncertainty and anxiety regarding the suitability of their actions towards others but this is where their attention should be, even as they are burdened with, among other things, demands for accountability, efficiency and achievement.

Despite these demands, in administrative roles our compassionate selves are not likely to be silent in their moral response. What this means for us is the need to remain cautious of having our compassionate selves covered by our role as administrator or diverted by the ongoing and faceless institutional demands that inhabit the role of administrator. This seems no small challenge and is perhaps why those in administrative roles will likely have to expend significant effort to remain in contact with or re-enter classrooms to meet others such as students face-to-face, to teach others directly or participate with teachers and their students in activities within and beyond school. In the role of administrator we may find that it is exactly the moments of the face-to-face encounter with the Other, where the being-with becomes a being-for, that we find a more sophisticated sense of responsibility—a sensibility alive to one's moral capacity and a sensibility that allows us to make more informed and ethical decisions concerning the well being of those around us.

Those with administrative roles and duties in welcoming the Other are also likely to carry the burden of leadership in helping to create or frame the schooling experience for others in such a manner as to reduce the possibilities of others such as teachers

floating their responsibility. To accomplish this may mean administrators will need to arrange opportunities for others such as students, student's families, teachers and support staff to come together, frequently and with purpose, to build the relationships that educators, such as my participants, cite as so crucial to the well being of students. As mentioned previously this could involve any number and type of activities that exist as opportunities but not guarantors of "being-for" that gives rise to commitment. However, that such events and activities should occur seems necessary despite the lack of predictability and assurance for only in the face-to-face can we begin to entirely fathom the nature of welcoming. Such activities may occur in the setting of a school, yet like other educators in being-for the Other they are likely to find themselves with others in contexts beyond the school.

What else might await those in administrative roles as they act on an understanding of responsibility as a welcoming? In welcoming, administrators are bound to find themselves but also others contravening the norms of schooling and this presents conflict and dilemmas for them. While administrators will experience a similar struggle of compassionate self and institutional figure that other educators experience, these individuals may arguably be in a more precarious position when they encounter the contraventions of others for their roles may enclose them too tightly for much creativity and flexibility in their response to others.

For those tasked with administration realizing responsibility as a welcoming of the Other might allow for an alternative understanding of the tensions and challenges their colleagues face, colleagues who they are to direct and aid. In understanding the inevitability of contravention involved in responsibility and knowing that their colleagues

are negotiating a way in seeking a less-wounding pedagogy, they might need to reconsider the suitability as well as ethicality of their response to their colleague's thought and action. Appreciating the demands placed upon others that welcoming reveals and acting upon such insight seems especially important if others such as teachers and support persons are to find themselves supported in seeking a less-wounding ethical pedagogy. The outcomes of not offering such support was seen in Kerry's experience of working with an Aboriginal Elder in Kerry's visual and language arts project that infused First Nations and Métis content and perspective into the learning experience of students, with the end result that Kerry felt unsupported by administrators and overstressed enough to not return to school the following day.

If administrators understand the inescapable contravention involved in responsibility perhaps this may aid them enacting their responsibilities. They may appreciate more fully the tension between compassionate self and institutional role and others' involvement with such conflict. For those administrating, understanding the challenge and difficulty inherent in this tension is an ethical response that may allow them to re-situate themselves in supporting colleagues to look perhaps past considerations of contravention as merely transgression of institutional convention, or the "breaking of rules," where there is the possibility of disciplinary action. In this re-positioning of responsibility, persons in administrative roles may find support for aiding others who in being responsible push against or go beyond established conventions of schooling. Those administrating, in understanding responsibility as welcoming, may find justification in calling for or demanding time and resources to consult with others and for involving others in decision making. Welcoming may provide justification for those in

administrative roles to have a freer hand in creating or helping to create opportunities for those in schools to be involved in activities together, where students, families and educators are involved in shoulder-to-shoulder activities, face-to-face encounters, where being-with transforms into being-for, a transformation that gives birth to a lasting commitment to others.

For those administering, understanding welcoming as responsibility may inform them further about the nature of responsibility and help in creating insight into their decision making and role as an administrator, where they may be able to guard and caution others against the ceaseless and strong demand inherent in responsibility. Given that welcoming puts into question basic assumptions about the nature of responsibility and ethics as typically conceived in Western philosophy, in thinking on welcoming administrators might better inform themselves concerning what maybe helpful to colleagues, but also students and their families, in negotiating the demands that schooling places upon them.

Like those that fulfill administrative roles, people who are engaged in preparing teachers may find the notion of welcoming offers insight into what they may do in helping others in understanding their pedagogically responsible regardless of the schooling contexts they may experience, but particularly in contexts similar to those of my participant that are typified by ethno-cultural and socio-economic difference in an inner city context where there are significant challenges to students' well being.

By alerting others to an alternate consideration of responsibility, teacher educators in preparing teachers, administrators and support persons might alert these others there exists the possibility of being irresponsible in adhering to the conventions of schooling.

They can alert them to the possibility of being irresponsible by the floating of one's responsibility through a non-reflective reliance and adherence to the institutional structures and processes of schooling. Offering some fore-shadowing of the tensions that await them in circumstances similar to my participants and alerting them to the potential dilemmas involving one's compassionate self and institutional role may also be helpful to future educators by allowing them to consider what they might do in such circumstances. Here, teacher educators, while not able to offer others entirely accurate predictions or prescriptions for how one might act in a future situations, can provide these individuals some discussion and reassurance that to be anxious, uncertain, to experience a sense of un-preparedness, as well as understand that one will contravene the conventions of schooling, is not to be unexpected but may signal one is on an ethical path. Alerting them to this possibility may help them by being both a caution and explanation for what they may experience in schooling contexts typified by ethno-cultural and socio-economic difference in inner-city settings or perhaps in any context of difference that is poignant for them.

As with administrators, equally if not more important for teacher educators, may be creating opportunities for future educators to encounter others who differ from them in ways they recognize as significant. These are moments where again there is the possibility of the face-to-face encounter with the Other that leads to commitment, and where these future educators learn from the Other and can further develop their understanding of the nature of responsibility. These opportunities likely need to involve more than intellectual discussions concerning issues such as prejudice, racism, social justice and equity that occur in such places as college and university classrooms. While

such intellectual discussion is needed, is necessary and is potentially helpful, these alone they are likely insufficient in offering the opportunity for the emergence of a more sophisticated and felt responsibility, of a being-for-the-other. As with my participants, who understood that their responsibility was more than an intellectual undertaking emerging from reason and logic or the fulfillment of their role or duty, it would seem potentially helpful for those who are being educated to be teachers, to experience and recognize the nature of responsibility through close and personal interaction with others who differ from them. What welcoming suggests is that opportunities are needed, whether within teacher education programs or concurrent with them, where the togetherness of shoulder-to-shoulder activity, the being-with others, may transform into the ethical commitment of being-for-the-other. These opportunities may involve intellectual discussion however in some way at some point in some place, they are likely to involve emotional and spiritual experiences, experiences that may emerge for future educators as they move from simply being-with others to being-for others in responding to the difference of others around them.

As mentioned previously with my participants, and this holds for myself as well, such opportunities may involve participation in ethno-cultural activities and ceremony across a variety of venues, however, the direct participation of future educators in schools and classrooms, in community service settings or other contexts where difference is poignant for them, would seem highly desirable if one is convinced that being-for-the-other should replace merely being-with. Again the benefit for those being educated to be teachers emerges in the opportunity of face-to-face encounters with others where they might better understand responsibility is this being-for the other, a being-for that will take

them unprepared but will require their commitment—a being-for that will demand much of them but if we believe Levinas where they will find their freedom and meaning of their lives.

While teacher educators cannot demand the development of an embodied and encompassing understanding of responsibility for their students (nor should they), nor guarantee for their students that such experiences will find them ethical and responsible, they can attempt to provide the conditions or circumstance for the emergence of this awareness of responsibility. In considering responsibility as a welcoming of the Other, they can alert their students to the possibility that they are likely to find themselves interrupted by difference, open and vulnerable, living the tension of *hôte* and constantly learning their responsibility from the Other. They can offer developing educators assurances that there is an ethical need to have a healthy skepticism concerning the nature and use of categories in dealing with the difference, and that relying on such categorization or the following of routines, rules or regulations does not relieve them of their responsibility. Teacher educators in discussing welcoming can alert teachers in training that individuals such as their future students, while participants in cultures that students self-identify with, always surpass the categories they or others such as teachers place upon them. Teacher educators relying on notions of welcoming can encourage and offer support for their developing teachers to critically question the routines and regulations of schools, school programs, curricula and instructional practice and the larger socio-cultural framework that encompasses the discourse of schooling and identify such questioning as an ethical undertaking. Finally, teacher educators can engage developing teachers through discussion and direct involvement in teaching situations to

consider what welcoming may tell them about the purpose and nature of education, and if these viewed together through the lens of welcoming might not suggest that for all of us as educators, this concerns the working out of a less wounding pedagogy, a non-allergic relationship with the Other.

Summary

I have outlined various understandings and implications for us as educators revealed through considering responsibility as welcoming. Prominent among these ideas is that ultimately our responsibility is a search for a less wounding pedagogy, a search that emerges in our experiences of interruption, vulnerability and *hôte* where we learn responsibility not as a function of reason and being that typifies Western philosophical thought, but in our face-to-face encounter with the Other. This ongoing search is a venture that seeks a pacific, non-violent encounter with others that will offer a continual challenge regarding our understanding of self, others and the norms and conventions of schooling and society. This is a challenge that involves change and this change emerges in our response as ethical beings with moral capacity, a reality that grounds any enactment relating to what is mandated or suggested by codes of ethics, programming, curricula and other conventions of schooling. Though unpredictable in form and perhaps not voiced or codified, such change will see us re-envision success for our selves and others as we come to understand responsibility in a different manner, a different way of considering responsibility that may result in changes to our practice and experience of schooling.

Central to this search is likely to our struggle to avoid dominating, surmounting or enveloping the difference of others while dealing with our shock and surprise that the

Other is always more than we can know or imagine, and where we will be required to alter our misconceptions, misapprehensions and actions concerning others. We are likely to experience vulnerability both as origin and outcome in this struggle for proper relationship, where we yield to the moral height of the Other, who holds us to account and where we cannot barter nor float away our responsibility. We are likely to wrestle with if we are merely enabling others or truly helping them on their terms and to their ends. In our vulnerability we are likely to experience a transformation of ourselves that will be neither predictable nor final but will reveal our responsibility. In this search the tension and impossibility of our existence as *hôte* is likely to be constant as we seek to literally accommodate others but also find a place for the Other within our psyche. We will likely come to understand that while we strive to accommodate the Other, yet not entirely lose our place or ourselves, the discomfort of this struggle signifies our embodiment as ethical beings who are on responsible path.

The search for a less wounding pedagogy will demand that we are attentive to the Other and attentive to our approach to the Other. Throughout these situations much of our anxiety, uncertainty, questioning and wonderment will involve negotiating our way as compassionate human beings who must enact institutional realities, realities that may subvert our responsibility. We are likely to struggle in our encounter with the Other as we realize that the categories, groups and labels that are employed to aid us, also hide the face of the Other from us. In this struggle we are likely to realize the irresolute nature of our responsibility, where the Other continues to call to us and make demands upon us regardless of time and place, to also realize perhaps that we are irreplaceable and so totally accountable to the Other in that only we and we alone can fulfill our

responsibility. In our search for a non-coercive pedagogy we are likely to find ourselves discomfited and ill at ease, anxious and uncertain, sensing that our responsibility will mean contravening at some point in some manner the conventions and norms of schooling. Our identities, our comforts and material resources will be insecure and open to the demand the Other places upon us yet this will be as it should for there is the an understanding that to be responsible is to be for the Other.

Despite the foreboding demands the search for a less wounding or non-coercive pedagogy implies, welcoming helps us realize that we do have freedom, not freedom from the Other, but freedom in a different manner from a different source. This freedom exists in the creativity and flexibility of our service to others and in understanding that the poverty of categorization and the inevitability of contravention can allow us and aid us in thinking beyond the norms and conventions of schooling and society. In this understanding we can perhaps envision new, alternative and enlivening ways concerning how we may best serve those around us. We perhaps can find satisfaction not in being relieved of responsibility, but in knowing our unsettlement, discomfort doubt, hesitation, anxiety, and uncertainty are indicative of a moral self, becoming a self that seeks a proper relation to others. While we likely cannot ever rest easy in our search for a less wounding pedagogy we can experience some relief and assurance knowing we are the Other to others who must support us and ensure we are also justly treated. Welcoming as a search for a less wounding pedagogy affirms the substance and legitimacy of our moral capacity that reaffirms our humanity as human beings who have wisdom and insight that does not always need explanation, a humanity that cannot be extinguished by the application of rules and routines and through deontological role playing. Understanding responsibility

as a welcoming may aid us in affirming that we are capable of responsibility and can be bold on behalf of the Other, but not so bold as to suppress the autonomy of the Other. We can take heart for others and ourselves for welcoming allows us a space to consider that our responsibility does not necessarily have to be realized as an ‘educator proof’ set of methods, rationales, techniques, codes or programs that stand in stead of our compassionate response to others and denies our sometimes intuitive response to others borne in our moral capacity.

In understanding and acting on our responsibility as a search for a less wounding pedagogy where we learn from the Other, in welcoming we realize a being-for-the-other that gives rise to our subjectivity and purpose as educators.

Returning to Levinas

I have offered evidence that I believe demonstrates that the responsibility of the educators I interviewed could be understood as a welcoming of the Other, suggested that we can learn meaningful things from such consideration and offered further comment on what was involved in this understanding. I also outlined possible implications for us as educators. However, there remains the task of directly addressing the usefulness of Levinas’ thoughts and ideas. This is to simply ask, how is Levinas’ thought helpful or not in understanding responsibility?

I would suggest Levinas is helpful. He offers us an alternative view on what constitutes responsibility, one that can allows us to rethink our experience as educators and perhaps provide us with a certain freedom of thought to consider how we might act towards others in educational contexts typified by ethno-cultural difference. He provides us with a unique set of phrasings, or prompts others such as Derrida, Todd, and Bauman

to create such phrasings, in a manner creating a unique ‘language’, a language involving interruption, vulnerability, hospitality and learning from the Other that help us explore the notion of responsibility. This language both helps us understand what may be involved with responsibility but also challenges us in our assumptions concerning responsibility.

In Levinas’ criticism of Western thought, as it relates to ethics and responsibility, he provides a way for us to make sense of the confusion, anxiety and uncertainty we may feel in schooling contexts typified by ethno-cultural difference and this seems particularly important in the apparent moral relativism of the postmodern world we now live in (Bauman, 1993, 1995). Levinas allows us to see into the experience of my participants and my own to discover that our responsibility is perhaps less determined by conventions of schooling and society, where instead our responsibility emerges in being-for-the-Other, a being-for that is the birth of responsibility but also our subjectivity. He shows us our responsibility is a sophisticated rendering of ‘said’ and ‘saying’, and that we have every right in our service to others, to question the conventions we encounter as we wonder about how to enact our responsibility. In relying on Levinas I think we can find some reassurance that we are sufficient to the task of being ethical despite what codes of ethics or the conventions of schooling might suggest to us concerning our ethical sufficiency. This seems potentially helpful for educators even though this involves some uncomfortable challenges to and questioning of our identities and the accommodation of otherness within ourselves.

Levinas appears to lend credibility to and give us some confidence that at moments when we look past rules and conventions in trying to help others this is neither

un-natural nor necessarily improper and that we can place some trust in our intuitive judgments concerning how we might help others. He allows us through the ‘language’ of welcoming to confirm a suspicion we may already have as educator that ethno-cultural categories and groupings while useful are ultimately insufficient as a basis for enacting our responsibility. His ideas seem to steady us in our doubt and uncertainty concerning divisions and categories, not by suggesting we are all the same and in effect dismissing difference, but by helping us realize the incontestable difference unique to each human being, transcends categorization helping us to relocate our understanding of such designations—a much needed relocation perhaps among the contesting claims of ethno-cultural solidarity. Levinas shows us that in being-for others, in being attentive to others we can use such categories for their benefit, as the Other commands us to command them, but that always the face-to-face encounter permeates and dominates the ethical landscape. In other words, he shows us the face of others, the Other, in all their uncontestable and ceaseless difference comes first, however slightly, is our first consideration, before categories and divisions whether these are based on ethno-cultural, tribal, gendered, religious or some other designation. This is one of the gifts of learning that welcoming brings to us via Levinas.

By establishing the ethical grounding of our being as arising from responsibility, Levinas positions us differently to consider the experience of my participants and our own understandings of responsibility. This repositioning allows us some confidence in what may be our predisposition to put first and foremost human to human relationship. Levinas allows us to see in the experience of my participants, the legitimacy of their moral capacity and therefore their compassionate selves as the central reality of their

responsibility as educators. He confirms this by giving us arguments needed to position and justify ourselves to act on the needs of other human beings though he stunningly silent concerning the face of the nonhuman.

Levinas is helpful yet there are difficulties and challenges with Levinas in using his ideas to illuminate our understandings of responsibility and in helping us act. His philosophy does not sit well with the more instrumental demands of Western society, academic discourse and schooling that often seek precision, universality and predictably as measures of worth and guidelines for action. With Levinas there is lack of prescription concerning our ethical response where he offers no principles or ethical codes to guide us (Chinnery, 2003; Davis, 1996), we are left to struggle on in our own circumstance.

Levinas offers an opportunity for re-conceiving responsibility but the nature of his argument means specifics will be lacking. His words may prompt us to action but never tell us what we have to do or even hint at a direction, except to gesture towards the Other. His work is not prescriptive but instructive and for educators who often need to know what should be done and how and when Levinas' aid may appear quite unsubstantial perhaps almost inhospitable. He aids us by allowing us to see, in the experiences of these educators, that relying on universals, lists, codes and guidelines will always be inadequate and potentially misleading as it concerns our responsibility, yet such things are of value to educators who are hard pressed for time and opportunities in the everyday demand of schooling. Educators encountering Levinas somewhat inaccessible language, even in attempts such mine to make his 'language' clearer along side the experiences of educators, may decide to not enter into a conversation with Levinas about responsibility.

In the contexts of contemporary education that increasingly involve ethno-cultural diversity educators desire to know what to do and their need is often immediate and keenly felt. They have legitimate concerns and requests for aid that Levinas' writings and the notion of welcoming seems insufficient in addressing these briefly and precisely.

Levinas is helpful if one can engage his ideas with enough time and energy to consider his work alongside one's experience but even then Levinas' use of language and his struggle with language bring other challenges. His meanings are often not easily understood, are often not what they seem, because of his struggle with language. His words require re-reading, pondering them repeatedly, a re-thinking on their implications where one might find eventually ideas align themselves, where Levinas' ideas concerning responsibility makes sense, where there is the surprise of epiphany. To gain a deep understanding of Levinas requires dutiful study that seems always incomplete and while such understanding will inform us concerning responsibility, again the constraints of time and accessibility emerge as challenges or obstacles to those who might benefit from such study.

There is potential difficulty and the danger of misreading Levinas if we take his words and phrasings too literally, try too strongly to tie them to the surface features of our practical experience or the common use of certain terms. This is a difficulty I faced repeatedly in bringing the words of my participants along side Levinas' words in the articulation of this research. There is a need with Levinas to trace back from the words and phrasings he uses and this tracing has a subterranean feel, where one must delve repeatedly, mining for the nuances of what he intends.

For better or for worse there is no casual reading nor application of Levinas. There seems no easy access that makes his ideas comfortably available and accessible to educators to people who might benefit from his ideas in making sense of their lives and responsibility. There appears to be no simplified version of Levinas nor of the 'language' he employs that can entirely alleviate the challenge in closely examining Levinas' thought, nor perhaps should there be for challenge allows for growth. However, there are helpful writers such as Bauman (1993; 1995), Blades (2005), Caputo (1987), Chinnery (2003), Davis (1996), Derrida (1999; 2002; 2000) and Todd (2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2003c) and others on whom one can rely or perhaps must rely if one is to benefit from Levinas thoughts and the notion of welcoming accessible and therefore helpful.

If less helpful in practical terms welcoming and Levinas' thought are helpful in presenting a challenge to our thinking whether this solidifies or buttresses our current thinking concerning responsibility or prompts us to change how we understand responsibility. In either case we learn something more concerning the relation of self and Other, a lesson where hopefully our understanding and enactment of responsibility gains some sophistication. The need for such sophistication seems warranted and crucially necessary in our struggles as educators amidst the multiplicities of personal and ethno-cultural identities we encounter in contemporary society and schooling. Levinas does offer us an alternative understanding of responsibility that can help us gain wisdom in finding our way as we struggle with the demands of Others who themselves are caught up in the pull "of binding ethical code...of the ambitious modern project of universal moral certainty" and "the arrogantly 'postmodern' declarations that 'everything goes'" (Bauman, 1993, p. 248).

As educators we are also caught up in this pull in the everyday reality of teaching and learning and Levinas offers us a place, however shifting and tentative, to think again about our responsibility, to welcome the Other in her many faces, to attend to the difference we encounter, and to hopefully enact a less wounding or less coercive pedagogy. He offers us the opportunity to understand, if not to confirm, our embodiment as ethical beings whose ethical horizon is filled by others, others who give purpose to us and perhaps define us, an opportunity for understanding borne in the horizon our sense of moral capacity, in the face-to-face encounter with other human beings as we respond to the call of the Other.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interpretation Guide Evidence Table

Name _____ Transcript _____ Date Done _____

Additional _____

Notes _____

Interruption	
Vulnerability	
Learning	
Hote Hospitality	

Appendix 2: Initial Interpretation Guide

Specific Interpretation Questions Used in Re-searching Responsibility as a Welcoming of Cultural Difference.

Main Research Question: To what extent do educators understand welcoming of cultural difference as responsibility arising from the call of the Other?

There are four main features involved with Levinas's notion of welcoming the Other; interruption, openness-vulnerability, learning from or being taught by the Other (who is our "Master") and hospitality. Levinas discusses all of these, however Todd further develops the notion of welcoming as learning from or being taught by the Other and Derrida expands on the idea of welcoming as hospitality and more specifically hôte (the welcoming host who is also a guest in their own home or dwelling).

A. Interruption - How is the interruption of self by the Other realized?

1. Interruption involves the disruption of sameness by the difference of the Other.

- Are there examples or evidence of interruption? What expression does such interruption take (i.e. disruption of beliefs, practice, sense of belonging)? What forms of the Other interrupt (i.e. person, program, cultural value) and do some provoke a greater sense of interruption? Where, when and how is difference involved with interruption encountered? How does interruption affect their understanding of responsibility and do educators reconsider their responsibility? In what ways does their understanding remain the same? In what ways does their understanding change?
- What remains undifferentiated? What is considered the same? How is sameness resistant to the interruption posed by difference? Are there outcomes to such resistance? What are these outcomes? How is interruption thwarted, limited or denied?

2. Interruption involves the unsettling of the security of the self (identity) and our attempts to totalize (surmount, envelope and dominate) the difference of the Other.

- What unsettles the security of sameness? How is security of the self challenged by the Other? What form does this challenge and insecurity take (i.e. confusion regarding belonging not belonging or claims to knowledge and its use)? What is the form the Other which most poignantly unsettles the self? Where and when does such unsettling happen? What is the extent of such unsettling? Where does such unsettling lead if anywhere?

B. Openness & Vulnerability - How is vulnerability to the Other realized ?

If, how and to what extent?

Points to consider:

A response to the Other where the Other's independence and moral ascendancy (height) embodied in their difference are accepted and affirmed (personal and ethno-cultural). A vulnerability which opens possibility beyond the norm of self, role and school.

1. Independence of the Other. The other beyond our control. A continuance of interruption. The presence of interruption remains. (This is seen again)

There is a realization that one cannot confine and collapse the difference of the Other into the sameness of one's own reality, that the independence of the Other is always beyond one's control, and the Other remains separate from us for we can never be the Other.

Questions:

- Are there examples or evidence of educators of affirming difference; of accepting difference in ways, which minimize the collapse of difference into sameness (of dominant culture beliefs, values, program etc.)? E.g. providing students with opportunities to complete work based on their unique circumstance, which go beyond the accepted norms. In such situations how do educators avoid the confinement and collapsing of difference? What supports educators in such avoidance?
- Are there examples of affirmation of the independence of the Other? E.g. participating in cultural ceremony and prayer held despite the secular nature of public schooling. What is the extent of such affirmation? How do educators understand such affirmation as their responsibility?
- Are there examples of educators in vulnerability? Where and when does such vulnerability occur, with who and how? What hinders openness and vulnerability? What catalyzes educators in their vulnerability?

2. Moral Ascendancy The "one-for-the-other" before the "for-one's-self": the concerns/needs of others become/are higher

- Concern and need is understood more on their terms, on their ground. Leaving one's ground/place. (practice, value, beliefs)
- Substitution occurs, is not replacement, not enabling, allows the opportunity for the other to work out their reality. (a response that always results is an increasing debt which we cannot avoid a vertigo of response in which there is increasing responsibility (our being for the other increases) which we cannot fulfill but to which we must respond nonetheless.
- Sacrifice (the loss of comfort, privilege, prestige)
- Responsibility Beyond Boundaries (exists beyond boundaries of privilege, classroom, school, personal situation, even death)
- Risk: Vulnerability implies Risk: What do they risk? Initial level-physical, financial. More fundamental: act oppressively, unjust, failing in to help, become an Other unknown to them which solidifies and urges them in their responsibility.
- Third Party protects us in our vulnerability, see's that justice is also ours.

Interruption extends to Vulnerability -Vulnerability extends to hospitality

C. (A difficult) Learning - How is Learning from and being taught by the Other realized as welcoming?

Points to consider:

1. Welcoming involves the self's capacity to learn from the Other who becomes our teacher (the master who brings the gift of learning). Learning comes from the exterior (the stranger, the difference, the Other) and brings more than I contain.
2. Where the needs and approach of the other overwhelm me we find the freedom of the Other and the foreignness of the Other (the master) which teach.
3. The gift of learning is difficult to receive.

Questions:

Are there situations where educators are “overwhelmed” by the difference of the Other in which learning occurs? E.g. the difference existing in a student’s request to know more about “puppy soup” and what is involved in Lakota ceremony in which a teacher reconsiders their cultural understandings. What form does this learning-teaching take? Are there circumstances more than others, which provoke educators to learn from the Other what their responsibility entails? E.g. the recurring exposure of the educator to the intimate link between the culture of poverty and many First Nations culture. What are these circumstances, when and where and with whom do they occur? E.g. Teachers alter their course content and procedure in response to the challenges emerging from the transience of students or students lack of resources. What do educators learn in such encounters (about responsibility)? How does what they learn influence their actions and understanding as educators? What seems lacking in their response if anything? In what ways do educators avoid learning from the Other (avoid the gift of learning the Master brings)? Are there circumstances which hamper educators in receiving the gift of learning the Master brings? How does the gift of learning challenge the educator to think outside herself and compel a response from her? What constitutes the Master and where is he or she found?

D. (A difficult) Hospitality - How is hospitality and specifically hôte realized as welcoming?

Points for consideration concerning hospitality and hôte.

Educators are supposedly hospitable to the Other; receiving the guest, the visitor or stranger with liberty and goodwill. Hospitality demands a welcoming of whomever or whatever may be in need of that hospitality. However,

1. To be hospitable involves a tension between relinquishing everything we seek to possess and call our own (program, practice, identity) even as we must retain these possessions and claims as a condition of hospitality.
2. To be hospitable one must have the power to host and makes claims of ownership even as one is called upon to give up such power and claims in order to be hospitable.
3. To be hospitable the host must establish some form of identity.
4. To be hospitable the host must have some sort of control over people they host but to be hospitable means also to relinquish such control and judgement.
5. The hôte who receives (the host) is also hôte (a guest) in their own “home” because of the interruption by the Other; where they are no longer the sole arbitrator of what happens

Questions:

What are the conditions of hospitality or hôte? What are their limits and boundaries?

How is an educator’s responsibility worked out through hospitality or the experience of hôte?

What claims to ownership (i.e. values, beliefs, practice, epistemology) are made? What is the strength of these claims? What claims are relinquished? What is reclaimed? How do educator enact such claiming or reclaiming? How is such claiming or reclaiming realized (enacted or understood)?

What claims of identity are made (i.e. roles, ethnicity)? What claims are given up? What is reclaimed? What is left unresolved? What are the boundaries of such claims? How do educators understand the basis for such claims or reclaiming? How do such claims affect

educator's sense of self in this school community? How do such claims affect their actions?

How does control exist (where, when, in what forms)? What control is given up? What control remains? What boundaries of control are created, maintained, strengthened, reduced or eliminated? How does such creation, maintaining, strengthening, reduction or elimination occur? What is the effect of these on their actions?

How do educators experience themselves as hôte (a guest in their own "home")? What circumstances or situations are involved in transforming the hôte (receiving host) to one who is hôte (guest in one's own home)? When and where does a sense of hôte occur?

For example, white educators experience of altering curricula and program to align with First Nation and Métis cultural values and epistemology and the challenge this brings to the educators own valuing.

Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form

**Faculty of Education
University of Victoria**

Participant Consent Form**Pedagogical Responsibility and the Welcoming of Cultural Difference**

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled **Pedagogical Responsibility and the Welcoming of Cultural Difference**, which is being conducted by Tim Molnar.

Tim Molnar is a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by phoning (250-721-3224) or emailing him at tmolnar@uvic.ca

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D degree in Education. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. David Blades. You may contact my supervisor at (250) 721-7775 or email [dblades@uvic.ca](mailto:d blades@uvic.ca).

The purpose of this research project is to gain a deeper understanding of how educators understand and enact their pedagogical responsibility in the tension of cultural and epistemological difference.

Research of this type is important because in the interplay of different expectations and ways of understanding educators often struggle with how they are to respond to others, and how they might determine a proper course of action which is both respectful and supportive to individuals, cultural groups and ways of understanding. In such situations understanding what occurs with educators and how they are in relation to others seems a crucial aspect to understanding contemporary educational setting where cultural difference exists. This research seeks to explore how educators both envision and enact their responsibility with/in the tension of cultural difference.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an educator who has participated in an educational setting where people found their way amidst the tension of cultural difference. In this context exploring your experience and understanding offers insight into to how an educator envisions and enacts their pedagogical responsibility.

Please let me remind you as I did in our telephone conversation that your participation is desirable, however, please feel no pressure to participate on my behalf. There are others I can ask to participate and the research will proceed.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research your participation will occur over several months.. Your participation will include meeting with me twice to discuss your experiences and understanding of responsibility. Each conversation will take about 1 hour and will be tape recorded and later transcribed. I will provide transcripts of each conversation to you. These conversations and transcripts are entirely subject to your modification if you feel uncomfortable with what is portrayed. I will also provide a brief summary or profile of understanding of our conversations to which you can respond to help clarify your understandings.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience for you as it requires approximately 2 hours of your time over several months for conversation and some additional time if you provide feedback on transcripts and conversation summaries.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. (see reverse side of this page)

The potential benefit of your participation in this research includes having the opportunity to examine and reflect on your own practice as an educator, which is an opportunity for growth in terms of both personal and professional understanding.

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be given a small gift. It is important for you to know that it is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research participants and, if you agree to be a participant in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive. If you would not otherwise choose to participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study I will again seek your consent if I wish to use your data.

While your anonymity in this research is not entirely guaranteed since I know you, and others may observe your participation in conversation with me, I will protect your confidentiality and the confidentiality of your information by fictionalizing your name and to some degree disguising your circumstance as well as being sensitive to reporting any private identifying information, which may threaten anonymity or confidentiality.

I anticipate the results of this study will be shared with others through my dissertation writing, scholarly journals and conference presentations.

Your data will be kept secure in suitable filing cabinets and be accessible to only my self. If I choose to have some of the interview materials professionally transcribed I will require that a confidentiality agreement concerning your data be signed by the transcriber. Otherwise, all your data from this study will be destroyed after 5 years (for example by shredding paper materials or erasure of electronic data).

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Tim Molnar and Dr. David Blades (see contact information above).

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and his supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Name of Participant *Signature* *Date*

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