

Impact of an Adventure Education Experience on Collective Teacher Knowledge
and Teacher Identity

by

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BEd, University of Alberta, 2000
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the experiences of five teachers who lead and participate in adventure biking trips with students. The narrative case study was framed by the author's autoethnographic writing: her personal narratives about leading adventure education trips, teaching experiences and reflections on the concept of learning. The meaning four other trip leaders made of their adventure biking experiences was investigated through conversational style interviews characterized by open ended questions and a list of issues to be explored. The purpose of the study was two-fold: to discover what meaning teachers make of adventure bike trip experiences and what happens when teachers collectively explore that meaning in relation to their teaching practice.

The voices of the participants uncovered four meaningful elements of the trip experience: personal challenge, shifting perceptions of students and student learning, the opportunity to shed the teacher facade and positive collaboration with colleagues. As the participants collectively reflected upon these meanings they began to examine their in-school teaching practices in relation to the trip spaces. Tension between the two spaces opened up a dialogue where the participants began to challenge their teaching identity, enabling them to imagine their classrooms in a different light.

The results of this study point to the need for teachers to have opportunities to participate in unique and novel teaching experiences (such as the adventure education trip) that hold within them the potential to initiate change in practice. In order to challenge education experiences, time and space need to be provided for teachers to reflect and develop teacher knowledge that can transfer into the development of positive, effective learning communities with colleagues and in their classrooms.

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Teaching is the art of assisting discovery.

Mark van Doren

We cannot live better than in seeking to become better.

Socrates

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE INITIAL YEAR OF TEACHING

Locked within teaching experiences are multiple stories that hold within them new knowledge and understandings. Uncovering those understandings is a critical component in the professional development of teachers, opening up the possibility for change in practice. The catalyst for unlocking those stories is reflection; teachers sharing their stories, challenging them, and grounding the new understandings in classroom practice. The following is my journey, along with four colleagues, through the reflective process as we uncovered the meanings that were held in an adventure trip, challenged our teaching beliefs, and discovered what it means to teach and learn.

“I am different and it feels so good!”

“I, Jillian Spurill, a normally non-athletic person, climbed to the top of a mountain today!”

I never knew of the power of adventure education experiences until I began to hear the testimonies of students: their affirmations of change, a new sense of self. The students on my adventure bike trips were beginning to construct a new way of knowing themselves and in my eyes their transformations were dramatic. This new way of learning and teaching was in sharp contrast to how I had viewed teaching in my first year of being in the classroom.

As a beginning teacher, isolated in the science lab, I was surprised one day by a proposition from a colleague: “Would you be the female supervisor to accompany the grade 9 leadership class on their cycling trip?” Being somewhat naïve as to what I was about to delve into, I, the enthusiastic first year teacher, readily agreed to embark on this

five day adventure experience. Little did I know that this experience would forever alter my beliefs of teaching and learning.

Throughout my initial year of teaching, I struggled to develop a teaching identity. I was so caught up in planning and organizing lessons and disciplining students that I never took the time to reflect upon what the true meaning of teaching was for me. I often stood in front of my classes lecturing and correcting assignments; and as much as I want to believe that I was engaging the students in their own learning, I was not. The students and I were going through the motions: I was giving them information and I expected them to remember it. We were not connecting this information to their lives because I was not helping them make those connections. We were simply learning “stuff.” I am not sure how I fell into that trap. As a student teacher and education undergrad, my developing teaching philosophy had always placed experience as the essential component of learning and teaching. In fact, I introduced my pre-service philosophical statement with the following quote: “The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires. William Arthur Ward.” Yet, where I found myself in that first year of teaching was far from an experiential learning/teaching environment. Instead I was a deliverer of information. I was predominantly a transmission teacher that I had not wanted to become; I was feeding them information and hoping that they would learn. I was doing exactly what Dewey (1938) identifies as the traditional teacher where learning means the “acquisition of what already is incorporated in books and in the heads of the elders” and what is taught is thought of as “essentially static” (p. 19). I was not helping my students make the links but was trying to dictate knowledge for them. I think that is

the reason I felt uneasy in the teaching profession. My reality of teaching was in tension with the vision I had formed in university.

By December of my first year I was sinking. Like many first year teachers who end up feeling overwhelmed and exhausted due to their new responsibilities and disillusioned by the realities of teaching (Cibulka & Nakayama, 2000; Renard, 2003; Richardson & Placier, 2001), I was ready to call it quits. I recall sitting in my principal's office discussing a career change, a return back to school to take pharmacy. I was advised to stick out the remainder of the year and then reassess the situation come June. And so, I continued to teach that year, delivering information to my science students and surviving the trials of them testing me. As I look back on it now, I think that the personal distance I established with my classes contributed to the discipline issues that arose. Being a new teacher, I kept a large boundary between my students and myself. They knew me as Ms. Ference, their teacher, but beyond that I did not share much with them. Just as I did not let them know me, I also failed to get to know them. Without the personal connection, I developed a learning environment that was stale and formal which factored into my unease of teaching. Simply put, we were not having fun! I also felt isolated professionally. I was hidden away in *my* classroom, teaching *my* classes and rarely did I feel as though there were others around who could relate to me. I felt the need to prove myself as a new teacher to the veterans of the trade. The social structures of school emphasized that isolation (Diniz-Pereira, 2003; Richardson & Placier, 2001). The bike trip changed everything for me. It provided me with a chance to experience teaching in a way that connected with my teaching philosophy. It is the reason that I continued to teach after a trying first year, and why I still teach today.

The Bike Trip

As I lived and experienced that first bike trip and subsequent trips since, I have been intrigued by the discovery that occurs within the students. I see the pride in their faces as they complete a 60km ride; I hear the jubilation in their voices as they summit a mountain peak; and I feel their sense of accomplishment as they reflect and write of the journey they have undertaken. This physical experience pushes students to boundaries that many had never known and in doing so, students began to build a new sense of self. They are experiencing something new, a challenge to them physically, mentally, and emotionally, and they are active participants in this challenge. As teachers, we act as facilitators, aiding the students as they engage and discover new insights about themselves, others and the world around them. The learning I observed on the first trip was an affirmation for me, a realization that experiential learning and teaching is possible. I just needed a space in which to do it.

As a result of adventure education experiences, I have begun to reexamine my beliefs about teaching, students, and learning. For example, on the trips I found a space where teaching and learning connected to my ideal vision of what teaching should be. I was connecting with students on a level I had never allowed before; I was able to show a more human side of myself given the environment in which we were. They needed to know me as more than just their teacher; they needed to be able to trust me and I also needed to get to know them in order to help them succeed. Reciprocal relationships developed on that trip; ones of respect, admiration, and pride were something I had yet to experience in my classroom even though it was what I needed.

The new stories that I was forming of my relations with my students did not mesh with the ones I had known away from the trips, those relationships that I had in my classroom. A gradual transformation had occurred. I have started looking at ways to make sense of this new image of myself, of my capabilities, and of how I see myself professionally. I have begun to reconstruct the story of who I am as a teacher and a learner.

Objectives

I want to share my experiences of being a leader of adventure education excursions and through this sharing, encourage other leaders to reflect upon their own practice. I have often questioned why it appears as though the adventure education experiences have had such a profound impact on my understanding of teaching practice yet it does not appear to have as much of an impact for other leaders. In reflecting upon this question with a co-leader of the adventures we have noticed that the two of us have been in a lasting dialogue surrounding the experiences since the trips. We have continued to share our stories of the adventures, of our memories of the trips, and of how we notice change in our teaching practices and beliefs. What follows are some stories that start to unpack these changes.

Stories of teacher change

I had been taught in university to be wary of how much I share with my future students and that I must set up defined boundaries to prevent “issues” in the classroom. As I began teaching, I found that my boundary was well defined. It was a sterile environment that I was creating. The desk that was between me and my students symbolized the boundary that I had defined. On the bike trip there were no desks to stand,

or maybe I should say, hide behind. Away from the confines of a classroom and undressed of my teacher clothes and look, I began to open myself up to my students and in return they shared themselves with me.

I had never been much of an athlete growing up - I left that to my little brother, who has been able to make a career out of his success in the sporting world. I can still feel the anxiety in the pit of my stomach as I recall the challenges that I faced on the first bike trips.

“Hills.”

The energy is oozing out of all of us as we anxiously wait for the remainder of our group to join us at the parking lot. Our ride today begins with a steep decline, one that our guide has suggested that all of the students walk their bikes down. However the leaders, he has told the group, will be able to ride down it. “Oh no,” I thought to myself, “I’m not sure that I am ready for this. Yes, I have prepared more for this trip than the first one; yes, I am better prepared for what I am about to embark on, but with a huge hill to start the day and in front of all of the kids I’m not sure I want to do this.” The self doubting begins to invade and leech away all of the confidence that I had at the beginning of my day. I take my borrowed bike and begin to ride around, up and down the road, some quiet time to think about this impending hill. “Maybe if I look like I know what I am doing, I will be okay,” I try to reassure myself. I need to distance myself from the students, I need to psyche myself up as they are depending on me. I am their model, their example. They know that the other leaders are strong, that they can beat this hill. Me, I’m not sure. I am the test. If I can do this, I think that they will believe that they can accomplish the task at hand. All of these doubts that are running through my mind are derived from the non-athletic images that I have of myself. I am a dancer, not someone

who races down gravel hills on a mountain bike. But today, I need to be that person, that fearless kamikaze who is willing to take the risk and just let go. As I continued to pace back and forth on my bike, a colleague joins me. He has sensed my apprehension. "Just go for it Jen!" he advises, "They are watching you, they believe in you and I know you can do it. Just let yourself go. Just do it." It would have been much easier to permit myself to take the safe road, to allow myself to walk down the hill with my students but I didn't. I stayed on my bike, I tackled the hill and I came out a champion. On that day the junior high ballerina, who hadn't challenged her image, became a "fearless mountain biker."

Afraid of failing and lacking confidence in my abilities, I was placed in an uncomfortable and unfamiliar space on the bike trips. The fear that I felt and still feel at times I see in the eyes of many of my students, who, like me, are not the star athletes and are placed in a situation that is foreign to them. Having shared the same anxieties I can relate to them. Before the trips, I would have never shared my insecurities with my students for I believed it would make me vulnerable. Vulnerable to what, I am not entirely certain, but vulnerable just the same. I allowed students to formulate their own stories of who I was rather than sharing it with them myself. I did not tell them that I did not consider myself athletic, nor did I share with them that I was nervous and scared at the thought of biking and hiking in the mountains. I think that if I had, I would have found the connection that I was lacking in the classroom. My students were not able to connect with me because they did not know me. I now share my story with my students allowing them to see some of my vulnerabilities and insecurities and the ways I have worked to overcome them. I have found that sharing my experiences with the students

invites them to do the same; it brings a normalcy to the fears and anxieties that they are facing.

Discovering the power of a shared experience was a new teaching space for me. I was feeling a connection with the students that I had never felt before. Initiating conversations with my stories serves to invite the students into a dialogue and a connectedness that we had not had before. On our adventures the students began to see their teachers as more than teachers and we, as their teachers, began to see our students as more than students. Our separate worlds began to intertwine while the trust between us grew. I felt that I was now truly a “teacher.” I had stepped away from the desk that had separated me from my students. A new space for teaching and learning opened up in front of me.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of researching adventure leader experiences is to encourage fellow teachers who act as adventure leaders to reflect upon their own experiences and make meaning of them. By recognizing our own experiences, I venture to suggest that we will be better equipped to facilitate ‘meaning making’ for our students. We, as leaders of these trips, need to ask ourselves what impact the trips have had on our teaching practice. To answer these questions, reflection by leaders is critical; we need to encourage each other to reflect upon our personal meaning of the trips, to reflect on the learning environments we create for our students (Richardson & Placier, 2001). According to Cibulka and Nakayama (2000) “the adult learning community should model for students what it means to be a learner” (p. 12). We focus so often on how the students are affected, but rarely do we focus on ourselves. At one level my stories or personal narratives are offered

as an invitation for readers to live my experiences with me and to connect them to their own; and at another level they will be used with adventure leader teachers to invite them to construct their own stories, to open up a space for a personal examination of their beliefs about learning, students and teachers. The focus of this research is to take a closer look at what leaders recognize as being key elements of the trip in relation to their beliefs about teaching, students and learning. Both my stories and the stories of four other leaders will be used to explore what the trips mean to the leaders along with if and how it has shaped their teaching practices.

The Research Questions

The following questions shaped my research:

1. What was the intended nature of the adventure biking trips?
2. What meaning did I make of the adventure experience?
 - a. How have these trips changed the way I see myself, the image of myself as a teacher, and as a person outside of the adventure trip?
 - b. What impact have these experiences had on my teaching beliefs and practices?
3. What meaning did teachers make of their experiences of an adventure biking trip with students?
4. What happened when teachers collectively explored the meanings of an adventure education trip in relation to their teaching practice?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW: ADVENTURE EDUCATION AND TEACHER KNOWLEDGE

To examine how teachers construct meaning from adventure education experiences it is critical to understand both the areas of adventure education and teacher knowledge.

Adventure Education Experiences

Adventure education programs are generally defined as programs that frame themselves around activities that have built into them an inherent risk, that risk may be physical, social, financial, or intellectual (Miles & Priest, 1990). The risk is undertaken as a means to achieving a goal of self discovery that cannot be attained in another means. According to Miles and Priest the defining characteristics of an adventure program are that of self discovery; learning, growing, and expanding one's vision of the human potential. Change taking place is a premise of adventure education, not necessarily a cause and effect relationship but it serves as a vehicle to increase one's personal awareness leading to personal growth and development (Priest, 1990). Adventure programming applications fall under various categories, each one dependant on the intended outcomes sought by the leaders and participants. The programs may be categorized as recreational, educational, developmental, or therapeutic (Priest & Gass, 2005). The focus of this study is on the educational adventure programming which is "aimed at understanding concepts, enriching the knowledge of old concepts, or generating an awareness of previously unknown needs through adventures" (Priest & Gass, 2005, p. 23).

Purpose of Adventure Experiences

Learning is the fundamental basis of adventure education (Miles & Priest, 1999). The purpose of the adventure experiences is not simply the physical action of the trip but rather taking that action and creating an experience, through inter- and intrapersonal relationships (Priest, 1990). The interpersonal relationships focus on the social dynamics of the group. The intended outcomes in this area include: enhanced cooperation, more effective communication skills, greater trust in others, increased sharing of decision making, new ways to resolve conflicts, improved problem solving, and enhanced leadership (Priest & Gass, 2005). The intrapersonal relationship targets the emotional development of the individual. The potential outcomes of this relationship include: new confidences in oneself, increased willingness to take risks, improved self concept, enhanced leadership, increased logical reasoning, and greater reflective thinking (Priest & Gass). It is important to recognize that in order for these intended outcomes to come to fruition, adventure education experiences need to be planned and designed accordingly. Gass (1999) notes that beyond the immediate activity there needs to be a focus on how that activity will relate to future experiences. In order to facilitate those connections leaders need to be responsible in designing their programs so that the experience becomes more than the physical actions of the adventure.

When designing such experiences the work of John Dewey (1938) becomes the guide:

Experiences, in order to be educative, must lead out into an expanding world of subject matter....This condition is satisfied only as the educator views teaching and learning as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience. This condition in turn can be satisfied only as the educator has a long look ahead, and

view every present experience as a moving force in influencing what future experiences will be. (p. 87)

In the case of our cycling adventures the hope is that the participants will take the experience and construct meaning from it and situate the meaning within their own lives, allowing them to draw upon it as they enter future experiences. The adventure bike trip falls under the category of experiential education; one gains knowledge through experience (Dewey, 1938). As the bike trip is designed, the leaders and I are intentional in the planning to ensure that the experience is an educational one. Careful planning is imperative as Dewey has cautioned educators that “the belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative” (p. 25). In order to be educational, educators need to be intentional in their program design, setting up the experience to be meaningful. To produce a meaningful experience the experience must connect the learner with future experiences (DeLay, 1996; Dewey). Our goal, as leaders, is to encourage our students to challenge themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally through a series of unique activities in an unfamiliar environment. The trip provides students with the opportunity to become more aware of themselves. We encourage them to begin to more closely examine their strengths, their weaknesses, and their abilities to overcome fear and doubt; to challenge their determination, their self talk, and their abilities to set and achieve goals as they reflect upon the activities on the trip.

The desired outcomes of the trip are, therefore, not simply a greater understanding of cycling and hiking but rather a deeper understanding of themselves. Embedded in our adventures are frequent opportunities for students to reflect upon their

experience, to write and discuss what they have accomplished. Dewey (1938) recognizes reflection as a key ingredient for an educative experience because it enables participants to look for the inherent meanings in the adventure that will become part of one's repertoire for dealing with future experiences. The premise is that they can turn the physical action into an experience from which they will construct meaning, a new sense of their physical, social, emotional, and natural worlds.

In designing the experiences, there is a need to ensure that the learning that happens on the trip is not limited to that specific trip environment. Connecting new understandings of oneself back to the home environment can be a limitation to such experiences. There are temporary communities (Slater, 1984) that developed on the trips which change upon the return home, and in that, the experience can lose its impact when removed from the surroundings of the cycle adventure. One of the reasons that transference is difficult is because it is often misunderstood by the leaders as there is a lack of knowledge of the availability of methods to promote transfer (Gass, 1999). The adventure has taken place in an environment that is different from where future learning will happen and connecting the two worlds can be challenging. To enhance transfer, leaders must ensure that participants engage in pre-trip reflection (goal setting, visualization, etc), ongoing reflection during the experiences (small and large group discussion, journaling, etc), and post trip reflection - all of which are aimed at helping students make connections between the experience and their own lives.

Unless we assist our students in providing our own linkages, bridges and connections to their learning, the utility of much of the education we care and

work so hard to bring about it put away in the equipment room along with the ropes and backpacks. (Gass, 1999, p. 233)

Impact of Adventure Trips

Adventure education has been known to influence participant self perception, self concept and self awareness (Fiddes, 2003; Garst *et al.*, 2001; Hattie *et al.*, 1997; Kornelson, 1998; Patterson, 1995; Sibthorp, 2003). These studies investigated how adventure trips impact participants physically, behaviourally, and emotionally. The results of those studies suggest that there is a positive relationship between adventure education experiences and students' sense of self. It is found that novel and challenging experiences offer the participants opportunities to discover themselves in a way that had never been offered to them (Fiddes; Garst *et al.*). Other studies have also been conducted to look at the long term impacts of such experiences, to see if and how participants transfer the meaning back into their everyday lives. In his narrative case study approach, Fiddes found that all of his participants came home with a renewed or heightened sense of self efficacy which has led them to partake in other activities that they otherwise would have avoided. The four students described a sense of having a "new normal" (Fiddes, p.122). The images they held of themselves had shifted and they perceived themselves as physically and socially different than before the trip.

Although a significant amount of outcome-based research and some process-based research has been done to support the benefits of adventure based experiences; one needs to be cautious of romanticizing the impact. In a review of the literature Brown (2006) notes that while there are many studies to support the substantial claims for the educational achievements in adventure education, the overall picture is not as clear. A

meta-analysis study conducted by Hattie et al. (1997) looking at the effects of adventure programs did not show the same overwhelming support for the reported benefits. The meta-analysis was based on 1,728 effect sizes drawn from 151 unique samples from 96 studies, and the average effect size at the end of the programs was .34, indicating only minimal influence from the adventure program as measured by psychometric instruments. Although the meta-analysis revealed that adventure programs can obtain notable outcomes and long lasting effects, it was clear that adventure programs are not “inherently good” (Hattie et al., p. 77). Outcome-based research is limiting due to the difficulties in defining personal development outcomes such as self efficacy and self esteem (Hattie et al.). As well, reliance on self reporting hinders research in this field. Based on systematic reviews it is clear that one needs to be cautious of claiming that it is only through adventure experiences that these outcomes are evident. Many of the benefits that are presented as outcomes of an adventure experience have also been shown to occur in other in-class experience based activities (Hattie et al.). It is not so much about the actual activity but rather the processes within that activity (challenge, risk, teamwork, feedback) that influence the outcomes and effectiveness of the adventure programs. It would be wrong to claim that that the adventure bike experience is the only way in which students can challenge themselves within the context of school. However, in addition to recognizing that these outcomes are possible in other in-class educational experiences, one should not underestimate the impact of adventure trips, where the voices of the participants through their journals and conversations have provided insights to the benefits of the experience.

One of the most under-researched and critical features of adventure programming is the effect of the instructor on all elements of the trip including climate, learning, impact, and environment (Hattie et al., 1997). Leaders have the potential to impact the outcomes of the adventure experience as their philosophies and beliefs influence the structure of the programs.

Role of the Leader

The leaders of adventure education programs have an enormous responsibility to provide their students with experience that is both safe and meaningful. Firstly, it is the responsibility of the leader to ensure that students have a clear vision of what they believe is the purpose of the experience. Without a clear philosophy, leaders place their participants and themselves in a vulnerable and dangerous situation because there is no direction for the experience (Priest & Gass, 2005). Therefore one of the roles of the leader is to ensure that they have a clear understanding of what they want to accomplish and how it should be accomplished. We ensure that students are engaged, challenged, and able to make connections, allowing them to transfer learning when they return home.

Leaders direct the learning process by serving learners in a number of ways: as a translator, initiator, trainer, and maintainer (Priest & Gass, 2005). Being a translator involves working with students to familiarize them with technical jargon and more importantly to familiarize them with a new vocabulary to use in their reflective practice. As initiators, trainers, and maintainers it is important for us to prepare students for the trip and aid in their success. This involves some directed learning by helping students with the skills necessary for a safe experience. In addition to those technical roles, leaders are facilitators for learning. As discussed earlier, it is the responsibility of the leaders to

help students make meaning of their experiences, not by telling them what they should be learning but instead by facilitating their discovery. Hammerman (1999) describes an effective leader as follows: “the wise instructor and leader recognizes the value of allowing learners to experience the joy and thrill of learning by themselves” (p. 204). There is much research focused on how leaders and teachers can design and prepare successful and educational adventure experiences for their students (Miles & Priest, 1990, 1999; Priest & Gass, 2005). However little has been written about what happens to teachers when they facilitate these types of learning experiences with their students and the impact the trips have on their personal and professional identities.

What Happens to the Leaders on The Adventure Trips?

Kornelson (1998) conducted a study investigating the outcome of a school-based adventure education/therapy program on both the students and the teachers. In her study, the focus was mainly on students’ experiences; however, she did touch on the teacher outcomes and found the teacher leaders were affected by leading the program. They were able to transfer what they were learning through guiding the program into their everyday classroom environment. One of the teacher participants found that the knowledge he garnered in the adventure program regarding group development was taken back to his classroom, stating that it “helped a lot for things that I’ve done with groups, adults and kids, inside and outside of school” (Kornelson, p. 204-205). The teacher also noted that what he learned in the experience would transcend the boundaries of school and move into his personal life as well. Given that this was not a main focus of Kornelson’s research, further research into the leaders’ experiences is warranted.

Carlson and McKenna (2000) explored the impacts of using personal narratives with student teachers in conjunction with an adventure experience. The pre-service teachers were involved in two sessions at the university, a weekend program at an outdoor center, and an evaluation at the end of the program. Throughout the weekend adventure experience the student teachers were exposed to the realities of students' experience on an adventure trip. According to the researchers, "this exposure served to thaw preconceived notions of teaching and learning" (Carlson & McKenna, p.24). The process of writing their narratives initiated a reflective cycle which encouraged the participants to take an immediate experience and find meaning in it that could be used in their future teaching practices. (Carlson & McKenna). Through personal, written reflections, researcher found that student teachers constructed new knowledge of themselves and the way they planned to teach. Carlson and McKenna's results show that prospective student teachers' beliefs of students, learners, and teaching had shifted. However, the student teachers were on the trip in a student role, not as leaders of a group.

The focus of this study was on the leaders of such trips. The role of the leaders is often investigated as to what training they require and how they should plan the trip for their students/participants (Garst et al., 2001; Priest & Gass, 2005; Sibthorp, 2003); but there should also be a focus on how the experiences affect them personally and professionally. The leaders of the adventure experiences partake in the same activities that the participants do. They are active participants in the experience; therefore, it would seem that they too would be impacted by the adventure program. Although the studies conducted by Kornelson (1998) and Carlson and McKenna (2000) show evidence of teacher change, specific examples of how their teaching practices changed has not been

noted or discussed. An understanding of how changes in belief lead to changes in practice could be used by other leaders to reflect upon their own experiences guiding such trips. In order to investigate the impact such trips have on the teaching practice of the leaders, it is important to look at the notion of teacher knowledge and belief.

In a study of two physical education teachers Dyson (1996) focused on representing teacher voices to describe and interpret the physical education program, Project Adventure¹. The teachers in the study shared their knowledge about the programs structure and their specific goals. Taking a student-centered approach and working to educate the whole child, rather than focusing on traditional skill development in physical education, was congruent with both the beliefs of the teachers involved and with the objectives of Project Adventure. An alignment between the teachers' philosophy and the structure of the program resulted in success for this innovative approach to physical education. In addition to the Program Adventure philosophies being implemented into the physical education curriculum, the voices of the teachers provided information about how the programs objectives could be incorporated into a school-wide curriculum (Dyson). Dyson's investigation into the values and beliefs around teachers' experiences in the physical education program produced knowledge that teachers can use from the practical knowledge of the two participants in the study. This study provides evidence for the power of teachers' voices and the knowledge that is held within teaching stories. There is a need to continue to represent teacher knowledge, to show how teachers make meaning in relation to learning, teaching, and students from such adventure experiences.

¹ Project Adventure is a school curriculum based on the philosophy of adventure education. The focus of the program is the education of the total person: mentally, physically, emotionally and socially. The major tenets of the program are challenge, problem solving, risk, trust and cooperation, which are foundation for learning in the schools within this study (Dyson, 1996).

Teacher Knowledge

Before one can look at how teachers develop knowledge, one must first determine what is teacher knowledge. There are multiple perspectives generating tensions within the academic community, the teaching community, and between the academic community and the teaching community (Cibulka & Nakayama, 2000; Munby *et al.*, 2001). “The root tension lies in the different views of what counts as professional knowledge and even in how to conceptualize knowledge” (Munby *et al.*, 2001, p. 878). Borko and Putman’s (1996) review of teacher learning cites Grossman who defined four categories of teacher knowledge, expanding on Shulman’s definition of pedagogical content knowledge. These four categories incorporate a teacher’s subject expertise, pedagogical knowledge, practical teaching knowledge and experience.

1. What the teacher knows and believes about the nature of the subject and what is important for students to learn
2. Knowledge of students’ understanding and potential misunderstanding of subject area
3. Knowledge of curriculum and curricular materials
4. Teacher’s knowledge of strategies and representations for teaching particular topics

With an understanding of what teacher knowledge is comprised of, the interplay between subject content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge incorporated with an understanding of student learning, how a teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge develops, and how teachers come to know what it means to teach needs to be examined. By investigating how teacher beliefs are formed and by exploring teaching experiences

through the processes of writing and sharing personal narratives; the origin, the development, and the shifts experienced in these four knowledge categories can be explored.

Teacher Beliefs

The area that is critical in this research is how teachers come to know what it means to be a teacher and how they form their beliefs of student and teacher learning. The knowledge category that this study will focus on is the first of Grossman's knowledge descriptions; teachers beliefs about learners and learning and how those beliefs are formed and changed. The knowledge and belief structures that teachers hold have been linked to their past experiences, their knowledge growth involved in learning how to teach (Calderhead, 1996) and by their personal experience of teaching (Munby et al., 2001).

Working within the realm of social constructivism, it is recognized that many of the beliefs that teachers bring into the profession are shaped by society's construction of what it means to be a teacher. Teachers observe and internalize the external constructions, which shape and form their beliefs about what it means to be a teacher. Vygotsky, as cited by Wertsch (1985), explains this internalization process, the formation of a higher mental function, hence the formation of our beliefs, as follows: "When we speak of a process, 'external' means 'social.' Any higher mental function was external because it was social at some point before becoming an internal, truly mental function" (p. 62). What it means to be a teacher develops before the occurrence of any formal teaching education. Being students in a classroom throughout our educative years, we

develop an idea, a belief of how a teacher behaves and does their job. This construction is taken with us into our formal education where it will either be enhanced or challenged.

Carter and Doyle (1996) reviewed the use of personal histories as a means of delving into teacher beliefs and found that teachers use their own experiences to guide decision making for their teaching practice and interpretation of teachable moments. As teachers enter the working world of the classroom, they will again either continue with the practices that they have held to be identifiable with teaching or they will shift their beliefs as they encounter new teaching experiences that compel them to question their practices and beliefs. The catalyst for teacher change and development is to make their implicit belief systems explicit by intentionally reflecting on teaching methods, by examining unquestioned beliefs that influence their teaching practice, and by taking ownership of their professional growth (Calderhead, 1996). In order for change to occur there is a need to explore and unpack teacher histories, uncovering the origin of their beliefs and find a social support system and space in order for change to be implemented.

Personal Narratives

Construction of knowledge that can impact teaching practices and beliefs requires teachers to unpack their experiences of the adventure bike trip. One of the ways of uncovering the nature of teachers' knowledge and beliefs is through personal narratives. Personal narratives can serve as a vehicle which enables individual discovery, allowing teachers to take their formal knowledge, personal goals, and life experiences to enhance the understanding of an event (Carter & Doyle, 1996). According to Neumann (1997) it is through stories that one derives meaning for themselves, their lives and for others. Instead of dissecting life, as is the way of the scientific method (Bateson, 1989), narratives allow one to recognize that life is a product of experience. As one encounters

new experiences, their stories become more complex and the new stories intertwine with existing stories. The new experiences involve students and how they learn.

When old stories and new stories do not mesh there are two possible outcomes: 1) teachers can ignore the new stories and continue their practice unchanged or, 2) teachers can reexamine their beliefs, re-write their story and the result of reexamining those beliefs may lead to teacher change (Carter & Doyle, 1996). The more traditional normative-reeducative approach to understanding teacher change assumes that individuals act on the basis of sociocultural norms to which they are committed and in order for change to occur individuals need to alter their normative orientations and develop new ones, hence a new normal (Richardson & Placier, 2001). Through the use of personal narratives, Carter and Doyle argue that teachers will be able to recognize the meaning in an experience and be more receptive to new possibilities that previously would have gone unnoticed. The reflecting and re-examining process is cyclical, for it leads us to new experiences which will again initiate the reflective process. “Stories inform beliefs which enable understanding of teaching knowledge to develop which in turn creates new actions, new stories that lead to changes in beliefs” (T. Hopper, personal communication, July 9, 2006).

Sharing narratives.

It has been recognized that only minimal attention has been given to learning from the personal stories of others (Carter & Doyle, 1996), thus identifying a need to look at how the personal narratives of one teacher may impact those of another. Narratives invite us to engage with stories of lived lives, asking us to dialogue with them and encouraging us to see the possibility of that life for ourselves (Sarbin, 2004). When

well executed narrative research can provide a space where readers can take the insights and envision how they can be applied to their own situations., (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As teachers share stories they can help one another develop teaching knowledge for knowledge depends on both the school environment and the individual in that environment (Munby et al., 2001). As colleagues, teachers share their insights and experiences as a means of expanding and initiating reflection of their teaching practices. Butt and Raymond, as cited by Carter and Doyle (1996) concluded that collaborative autobiography, the sharing of teachers views of their professional practice and beliefs over time, both enhanced teaching practice and motivated the ongoing search for professional development opportunities. When the opportunity for sharing, discussing, and elaborating on personal teaching experiences takes place, learning occurs is also supported by the research of Cibulka and Nakayama (2000).

In sharing my personal narratives with co-leaders of the trips I am suggesting that I will be able to ignite a personal exploration into the meaning the trips have had on other leaders of adventure experiences, in particular how these experiences form the context of the lived curriculum of schooling and how a teacher acts to enable learning to be meaningful. Richardson and Placier (2001) suggest that “learning from experience often leads to change in tacit knowledge that becomes expressed only through reflection – a process that is enhanced through dialogue” (p 909).

Learning Opportunities for Teachers

Reconstructing one’s narrative by reflecting upon one’s experiences in the world of education is at the core of learning to teach (Carter & Doyle, 1996). The learning process for teachers is continuous, it does not end once formal education is complete.

Teachers are exposed to new learning opportunities throughout their careers, both formally and informally. Borko and Putman (1996) identified features of successful learning opportunities for teachers. The following characteristics summarize their findings:

1. Addressing teachers' [existing] knowledge and beliefs about teaching, learner, learning, and subject matter;
2. Providing teachers with sustained opportunities to deepen and expand their knowledge of subject matter;
3. Treating teachers as learners in a manner consistent with the program's vision of how teachers should treat students as learners;
4. Grounding teacher learning and reflection in classroom practice; and
5. Offering ample time and support for reflection, collaboration and continued learning. (pp 700-701).

As teachers experience teaching and learning and as they interact with their students and colleagues they are exposed to various informal learning opportunities. By exploring personal beliefs surrounding teaching and learning and sharing personal narratives, the doors of teacher learning and knowledge expansion can be opened.

Summary

Adventure education experiences have been shown to be opportunities that have engaged students physically and mentally. By their design, the actions taken become educational experiences because leaders purposefully plan the trips to include such characteristics as novelty, challenge, and critical reflection. Short term and long term impact upon the participants of these experiences have been recognized, however little

attention has been given to the impact upon the leaders of these trips. For the leaders the adventure education trips have the potential to offer a new arena for teaching. As leaders construct and share their stories of the trips in relation to their other teaching experiences they develop teacher knowledge that transfers from adventure trip to classroom, from unexamined beliefs to new possibilities in their practice. Together the leaders reflect upon their teaching practices and beliefs from the shared experience of the adventure trip. As I begin to acknowledge that *something* has changed for me as a leader of the trips I am compelled to examine this phenomenon further in order to look at what and why teaching has changed and to ask others of their experiences in the field of adventure education.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

A qualitative research approach was most suited to the goals of this study. According to Merriam (2001) “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p.6). The purpose of this study is to look at the meaning I have made of my adventure education experiences and the meanings others make of their trips in response to mine. An autoethnographic process allowed me to investigate my experiences of the trips leading to the formation of my own personal narratives. This reflective process initiated a case study of adventure education leaders drawing on narrative inquiry. There were three main components to this case study of the phenomenon of how adventure trips affect the teaching beliefs of the participating teacher leaders:

1. An autoethnographic process examining my experiences as an adventure education teacher, unpacking meanings that I have made of my experiences in reference to changes in my teaching practice and beliefs.
2. A case study of adventure bike trip leaders using a narrative inquiry approach, sharing personal narratives with other leaders of adventure education experiences to engage them in the unpacking of their stories.
3. Narrative meaning making of the sharing process, the power of sharing personal narratives as a means of encouraging others to reflect upon the impact of adventures in relation to teaching practices and beliefs.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography is the process by which researchers produce narratives of self by analyzing their own experiences (Sparkes, 2002). Autoethnographic writing was a genre that allowed me to present my personal tales of adventure programming in schools. As a genre, autoethnographic tales represent life experiences: “at it’s best it is able to provide access to the multiple subjectivities of social life and a range of embodied feeling, emotions and reactions to others” (Sparkes, p. 99). For the reader the “auto” or “I” in autoethnographic writing is best thought of as a “geographic marker,” a “here” rather than a “self,” the self then becomes a “positional possibility” (Pelias, 1998, p. 10). It enables the reader to connect to the experiences told by relating them to their own experiences, seeing how the narratives represented fit into their lives. This form of writing promotes dialogue, encourages connection, empathy and solidarity and is to be used rather than analyzed (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Sparkes, 2002). It can be used by the readers as a catalyst for personal reflection upon their own experiences.

As I began to reflect upon my experiences as a teacher and adventure leader, I recognized that my beliefs of teaching and learning have been impacted by leading the adventure experiences as exemplified by the narrative on page 6. Writing and reflecting upon these experiences allowed me to unpack the multiple meanings the trips had for me. By locating myself in my research, I invited other teachers to reflect upon their journeys and unpack how they have been influenced by our shared adventure trips. In focusing on working with students we, as leaders, often do not study ourselves. Our own reflections of the adventure are left for last and in neglecting the internalization of the experience, we lose the opportunity of personal and professional enrichment (Bateson, 2000, p. 241). The autoethnographic process allowed me to explore my stories of adventure education

and through sharing personal narratives offered the same opportunity for other adventure education leaders. Experiences told through my voice invited others to connect to me as a peer and colleague, not only as a researcher.

Narrative Case Study

A case study design was selected for this investigation because as a method, case study designs offer an opportunity for researchers to achieve a comprehensive understanding of both the situation and the sense participants make in response to that situation (Merriam, 2001). This served this study well as the purpose of this research was to investigate the meaning leaders have made of their experiences on an adventure bike trip in relation to their beliefs about teaching and learning. Rather than focusing on finding a specific outcome or confirming a predetermined hypothesis (Hattie et al., 1997), case studies allow researchers to investigate through discovery: focusing on process and the interplay of multiple variables to obtain a greater understanding of a phenomenon. The key characteristics of a case study: particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic, (Merriam, 2001) coincide well with the purpose of this study which is to achieve a greater understanding of the adventure bike trip and its impact on teachers. The strength of a case study lies in its ability to engage readers in an examination of their experiences in light of insights offered by the case (Merriam).

As a case study develops narratives will inevitably be encountered as “experience happens narratively”(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 19). Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) state that stories are the fundamental means for describing human experiences and therefore research that incorporates narratives enables a greater understanding of an experience as a whole. Narrative researchers embrace narrative as both a method

(analyzing and understanding stories) as well as a phenomena of study since inquiry begins in experience informed by theoretical literature or an understanding of the experience with which the inquirer began (Pinnegart & Daynes). By sharing and analyzing personal stories of the adventure trips the participants and I engaged in a dialogue on teaching spaces and beliefs about teaching and learning. Analysis of our narratives allowed themes to emerge around the central idea of adventure education and its impact on teacher knowledge and identity. In addition to emerging themes, portions of the narratives were brought back to the participants after the initial analysis to challenge them to see their stories in a new way. Telling and re-telling their stories engaged the participants in the study to begin to see their teaching stories through a new lens and to imagine new possibilities for their teaching practice. The temporality of their stories was evident with temporality being a key feature of narrative inquiry; understanding that people, places, and events in process are always in transition (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin *et al.*, 2007). “People live stories, and in telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxvi). In essence, a narrative case study allowed me to investigate the adventure bike trip phenomena as it related to teacher knowledge and identity through the telling and retelling of participant narratives.

Data Collection

The collection of data occurred in two phases of the study: 1) the construction and meaning making of my narratives, and 2) the sharing of those narratives with co-leaders of the adventure experiences.

Constructing Personal Narratives

Authors of autoethnographic research write from the first person, recalling their experience in a way that invites the reader into a dialogue with the text (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Pelias, 1998). As they delve into their stories they draw on their experiences from multiple perspectives, forming a core of written narratives that facilitate interpretation from a variety of perspectives (Sparkes, 2002). The instigator for my research paper was a collection of personal narratives, reliving critical moments of my career that have led me to adventure education; they reflect the memories of the adventure trips and my classroom experiences since going on the trips. To unpack my experiences and write my personal narratives I drew on my emotional recall of the events using photographs and journals to initiate the memory process. According to Ellis and Bochner (2000), the author of these stories (the researcher) starts with her personal life, paying attention to her physical feelings, thoughts and emotions and tries to understand the experience that she has lived through. This form of reflection is described as systematic introspection and emotional recall (Ellis & Bochner). According to Sparkes (2002) writers of narratives need to draw upon the emotions of the experience through dramatic recall, strong metaphors, vivid characters and unusual phrasing. Through this descriptive writing the reader is invited to be emotionally engaged in the event with the author.

As I recalled my stories of the trips, I used journals, conversations with family, friends and peers (not involved in the study as participants) as well as photographs as field texts to re-story the adventures. The power in a photograph is that they capture an image and help to unfreeze memories (Bach, 2001). “A photograph is not only an image, it holds a story, an interpretation of the real, a trace of life, of something that is held as

unchanging” (Bach, 1997, p. 44) . I found that photographs were critical instigators for my recollection as they acted as a catalyst for my story telling.

The Sharing and Debriefing Process

Once I completed the autoethnographic process, I then invited other adventure education leaders, who have shared in this experience with me, to engage in a dialogue of the trips. These conversations were instigated by my narratives and probes which initiated their story telling which are the foundation of the resulting case study. During our interviews I talked with the participants about their experiences with the adventure trips and during the conversations my narratives were shared. My stories were used to initiate the participants’ own story telling and were shared as prompts when necessary to maintain the flow of the conversation. I sought to engage them in a dialogue of what meaning they made of hearing my stories in relation to their own story. The narratives they shared in the first conversational style interview were analyzed. As the meanings the trips had on their teaching practice began to emerge I asked them to reflect upon their stories in the second interview two months later. The meaning they made of the experiences is represented as a realist tale in this study where the voices of the participants are at the forefront of the research (Sparkes, 2002). By using participant voices, “realist tales can provide compelling, detailed and complex depictions of a social world” (Sparkes, p. 55). Unlike the traditional realist tales, characterized by a disembodied author, I have located myself in the research as a participant through the autoethnographic portion of the study.

Research participants

Four co-leaders with whom I had shared the multiple adventure biking trips volunteered for the study. Three of the teaching colleagues were male and one was

female. All four participants shared in at least two bike trips with me. Two individual conversational interviews were conducted with each participant with approximately a two month span between them. A follow up e-mail was sent following the interviews to allow for any further, subsequent insights into the research process to be shared.

The interview process

The purpose of the interviews was not to answer questions but rather to engage in a conversation through which an exchange of knowledge took place. According to Merriam (2001) less structured interviews support the belief that individuals view the world through their own lenses based on their personal beliefs and experiences. The intended outcome of these conversations was a co-constructed meaning, based on the other leaders' unique stories of the adventure education experience and a look at how my narrative stories influenced the meaning making process. The conversations were not intended to simply have the participants relay information to me and for me, but rather to share experiences and engage in talk for the benefit of both the researcher and the participant. The conversational style interview was the approach I took and it was characterized by open ended questions and a list of issues that I wanted to explore. Neither the exact wording nor order of the questions was determined ahead of time, rather they were developed as the conversation took place. Throughout the conversations I added in my own stories at times to initiate dialogue, to establish and maintain the reciprocal nature of the conversation, or to continue the flow of the dialogue. The interview guides (see Appendix A) were used as a framework for the conversation but were not followed sequentially. The direction the participant took the conversation determined the ordering and wording of the probes. The specific purpose of each session and the interview guides can be found in Appendixes A and B

Data Analysis

The collection and analysis of data is an overlapping process in qualitative data analysis. Merriam (2001) notes that there is a wrong and a right way to analyzing data in a qualitative study. Leaving the analysis to the end is the wrong way, the right way to doing it is to do it in conjunction with data collection. As I analyzed and reflected on my experiences, wrote my narratives and analyzed the conversations held with co-leaders of adventure education trips, relationships between experiences began to emerge. After the initial interviews were conducted, an analysis of the transcripts was completed. The emerging themes were shared with the participants during the second interviews (see appendix B) enabling them to clarify, address ideas brought up by each other, and reflect upon their responses and my analysis of the interviews. This form of member checking gave the participant an opportunity to readdress or further discuss key elements of the trip that were pertinent to their experiences (see Appendix A). A combination of paper memoing and computer assisted coding was used to analyze the data collected throughout the study. I used NVivo software (Bazeley & Richards, 2000) to chunk and code my data.

Use of NVivo

According to Bazeley and Richards (2000), using NVivo makes it possible to “manage, access and analyze qualitative data and to keep a perceptiveness on all of the data, without losing its richness or the closeness to the data that is critical for qualitative research” (p. 1). I used NUD*IST NVivo software for the following purposes:

1. To organize and code my participants interviews.
2. To manage developing themes through the coding process.

To analyze the data collected through the sharing process I used NVivo software to look for common relationships and patterns that arose. The goal for this portion of the research was to find the emerging trip meanings for the other leaders, connect them to mine and make meaning of the sharing process.

The data was coded into nodes which acted as containers for a particular topic or concept. As multiple nodes were developed, topics or subtopics emerged and the nodes were organized into trees under those categories. Throughout the coding process, annotations noting asides or comments on the data were attached to the text as well as memos which reflected my thoughts as I read the text. These annotations and memos were another source of data that were coded and analyzed in the research process. Shaping the data, by creating nodes and trees, promoted a constant dialogue between myself (the researcher) and the data, allowing for the emergence relationships and themes (Bazeley & Richards, 2000). Shaping and organizing the data in this manner allowed me to map, search, model, synthesize, and analyze the data.

There are advantages to using computer assisted qualitative data analysis programs but there is also a need for caution. Merriam (2001) suggests that although many advantages of software programs have been recognized such as speed and organization, one needs to be aware that the program can also map the data in unexpected ways. I was cognizant of this as I analyzed the data and throughout the process I consulted with a colleague familiar with the software and coding process.

Ethical Concerns

Although I am a research subject and I wrote my tales in the initial phase of the study, I was indirectly writing about others as well. Those people who were a part of my

experiences were also a part of my narratives. To protect their identity and maintain anonymity I changed the names of the settings of the narratives and use pseudonyms for the people involved in my stories.

In the second phase of the study, I conducted narrative research within my own culture. I was working with my co-leaders, asking them to open up about the meanings the trips had for them. I asked for their time and their input in order for me to complete my research and in exchange I shared my thoughts and findings with them. There are many spheres of their world that I do not share with them. I share the teacher and adventure experience culture with them and for some I share a gender culture, but because of the multiplicities of our lives, I cannot fully 'understand' their experiences. An advantage was that I am already in a relationship with them outside of this research study and this relationship also extends beyond the research time. However, having this existing relationship between myself and my colleagues could have proven to introduce other complexities into the research process. I was careful to listen to their stories and to what they said. I was conscious of my desire to incorporate my already existing story of them into the story that they were telling and retelling. I am not an outside researcher. I am their colleague, their friend and I am also a character in their stories and they are characters in mine. This could have proven to be a limitation in their ability to be completely open in their talks with me. They may have hesitated to talk of their disappointments for example, moments during the trips that I let them down. They too have a story of me: they know how passionately I feel of these adventures. This could have influenced how and what they chose to share. It was important to me to be aware of this as I began to dialogue with them and write of their stories.

There was also a richness that our close relationship provided. As we shared the experiences, we could relate to one another as we had *some* understanding of what each of us had endured on these excursions. We had already shared our stories informally, the lines of communication had already been opened. As I engaged in conversations in a ‘researcher’ capacity, I was conscious of providing them a space in which they felt comfortable sharing all stories, not only the ones they may have thought that I wanted to hear. This environment was set up at the initial meeting, with me re-informing with them the intents of the research and emphasizing that their open and honest dialogue was welcomed.

Agreeing to share their stories in a public space could also have been a concern for participants. I collaborated in generating and sharing in their story. They were trusting me to represent their stories. To ensure that I have represented their story as they intended to tell it, I shared my interpretation of their insights with them in our second sessions. This allowed them to edit, expand or clarify upon any part of the narrative. I was empathetic to their wishes of sharing or withholding their stories. Participants were given permission to request that one or any of the narratives not be included in the study, without having to divulge the reason, although none of the participants made this request. Maintaining the dignity of the participants was a priority in this study.

Judging Authenticity of Qualitative Research

A challenge for representing research this way was to ensure that my writing was evocative, that it would draw the reader into my experiences and the experiences of the other participants and invite them to reflect upon their own experiences. Authenticity in narrative inquiry and autoethnography is determined by whether or not the text evokes a

feeling in the reader that the experience being described is authentic and believable, the stories need to resonate with the reader (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin et al., 2007; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Sparkes, 2000). The work must seek verisimilitude, that it speaks to a truth of an experience. Generalizability is questioned in this genre because it is the differences from shared experience that allows meaning to be understood, the difference allows more diverse interpretations and personal reflections. Sparkes (2000) defends the generalizability of this genre by asking those judging to evaluate it according to whether it speaks to the reader about one's own experiences in ways that allow reflection and new insights. If there are many rules and restrictions applied to the evaluation of this form of writing, many potential works could be dismissed. This is reiterated by Ellis and Bochner (2000) who states that, "if you're too bound up with rules, you probably won't do anything interesting" (p. 750). In addition to Sparkes, Clandinin et al (2007), defend the ability of narrative inquiry to be socially significant by ensuring that in the research process researchers are cognizant of the work of others in the field of qualitative research.

A common criticism of the autoethnographic process is that it is self indulgent, therapeutic writing that is not scholarship (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The claim of self-indulgence is countered in that the text is written from the first person but the goal is to allow the readers to reframe their own lives in response to the insights provided by the text (Sparkes, 2002). As mentioned earlier it is not the "I" of the researcher that is being presented but rather the "here" of the experience, allowing readers to position themselves within the experiences of the writer. The dialogues and meanings that emerged as a result of the sharing process between the participants and me are social stories adding to the

credibility of my stories as they speak to a common understanding. It is less about self indulgence and more about social construction. Ellis and Bochner summarize the purpose as follows:

The usefulness of these stories is their capacity to inspire conversation from the point of view of the readers, who enter from the perspective of their own lives. The narrative rises or falls on its capacity to provoke readers to broaden their horizons, reflect critically on their own experience, enter empathetically into worlds of experience different from their own, and actively engage in dialogues regarding the social and moral implications of the different perspectives and standpoints encountered. (p. 748)

It is these conversations that will assess the credibility and value of this research study. The space and time that this research created for reflection by the participants on teacher knowledge and beliefs allowed new possibilities to be articulated, re-affirmed new insights and inspired the potential to make education and teaching more meaningful.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT WAS THE INTENDED NATURE OF THE ADVENTURE BIKE TRIPS?

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the intended nature of the adventure biking trips. In case study research it is important for the readers to have an understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 2001). A description of a typical trip is also shared to shed light on the leaders' experience. The narratives and insights that are shared are a culmination of my stories, field observations, and journal notes resulting of my experiences with the adventure bike trip.

Key Elements of the Trips

Various elements are critical to incorporate into an adventure trip when impacts on self efficacy are a desired goal (Fiddes, 2003; Garst *et al.*, 2001; McKenzie, 2003). Self efficacy impacts will vary depending on the individual; for example some students will experience an increase in social confidence, for others it is an increase in self perception, and for others an awareness of physical capabilities. The activity, the physical environment and the instructors are aspects of the adventure trip that have an influence on student learning (McKenzie, 2003). Within those categories, Garst, Scheider and Baker (2001) and Fiddes (2003) identify certain characteristics that have been shown to promote positive changes in participants. The themes described below fit into three components: personal, social and contextual based on their interrelatedness.

Novelty, escape, duration all work together to satisfy both the contextual and personal components of the adventure experience. Garst, Scheider and Baker (2001) recommend trips be planned for three or more days in order to provide participants with sufficient time to escape their home environment. This provides the opportunity to expose themselves to the emotional, mental, and physical elements of the adventure

experience. Impression management, peer interaction and teamwork are ongoing elements that characterize the social component of the experience. By shaping the trip to include these elements leaders work to provide an experience for students which can enhance their self efficacy and enable them to begin seeing themselves in a new light.

The Origin of the Trips

When I arrived at my junior high school seven years ago, the adventure bikes trips were already a part of the leadership curriculum. The leadership program originated in response to a desire of one of my colleagues to incorporate a leadership course, based on constructivist pedagogy and experiential education background, into the physical education program at our school. “The original philosophy behind the program was to... develop leaders that could encourage others to participate in a socially, physically active lifestyle” (Fiddes, 2003, p. 35). Being a school developed course, the curriculum for the leadership program was developed by the teachers in relation to events of the course. This freedom provided a space for the adventure education program. We considered this curriculum a ‘lived curriculum’, one that is planned in relation to experiences that are shaped by content rather than one based on learning pre-determined content alone. It is based on representations of life and is flexible, enabling us (the teachers and students) to determine the course dependant on the needs of the students. It is a move away from the behaviourist model of directed learning traditionally overused in schools and a shift towards an indirect approach where an exploratory environment is established to prepare students to take control of their own learning. This allowed the students to experience the leadership outcomes, such as teamwork, responsibility, and self control; in doing so they reflected upon those experiences and connected them to their lives both within the

leadership course and away from it. This was a unique and flexible curricular space, where we, the teachers of the course, planned and moved the curriculum to where the students were allowing us a place to incorporate adventure education.

The bike trips were designed as a culminating activity to the course, with the intended goal of “provid[ing] students with the opportunity to experience a variety of different outdoor pursuits, a different venue in which to participate, and the opportunity for personal challenge” (Fiddes, 2003, p. 35). I was invited to participate as a chaperone for the bike trip during my first year of teaching and have since co-taught the leadership class and have continued to conduct the trips with other colleagues.

The Trips

Throughout the last six years, I have been involved in five adventure bike trips as a co-leader and leader. The following is a description, with reflections drawn from my personal journals, of one of our trips used to illustrate what the trip entails and to paint a picture of the adventure. The following sections describe the training stages and preparation components of the adventure biking trip.

Psychological Leadership Development

The planning stages of the trip incorporate mental preparation, empowering students with skills and strategies that can be used to help them during the trip. Activities planned in the leadership class throughout the school year are focused on facilitating leadership skill development. Elementary school mentoring programs, Survivor challenges and passion presentations² are examples of activities that are used to highlight

² The leadership curriculum is designed by the teachers of the course to develop individual leadership skills, teamwork and a heightened sense of self. The mentoring program is a joint program with the junior high and a nearby elementary school. Each leadership student is partnered with a grade one buddy and bimonthly visits see students reading together and working on projects. The goal of the program is to

positive character traits such as passion, dedication, determination, communication, teamwork, flexibility, responsibility, and accountability. Throughout the course of the year the leadership class is also introduced to the reflection process including goal setting, self-talk, and imagery. The five day adventure trip, which involves approximately thirty grade nine leadership students and six adult leaders, is the culminating activity for the course. Using the skills they have developed over the course of the year, students begin the reflection process by setting out their goals and expectations for the upcoming experience. Pre-trip reflections are done the evening before the departure. One of the course mottos, influenced by John Dewey's (1938) work is: 'An experience without reflection is simply an action!'

Physical Training

The 'official' start of the physical training for the adventure trip begins in early April, however students have been encouraged to be physically active throughout the winter, not only in preparation for the upcoming bike trip but to maintain a healthy active lifestyle. Students and staff begin a physical training regime which includes both cardiovascular and weight training. Students are encouraged to buddy up with another person in the class to help each other maintain their work-out regime. A *suggested* fitness plan is provided for the students as a means to guiding their training. The plan is flexible, allowing students who are already involved in other physical activities to simply enhance their fitness level and for others it there to initiate a fitness program in preparation for the

develop a sense of responsibility and accountability and for the students to see the impact they can have on others. The survivor challenges are a set of various activities, mental and physical, that encourage the students to work together as a team. Although unlike the CBS television show, at no time are any of the students voted off. Problem solving, communication, teamwork are targeted in these activities. Finally the passion presentations encourage students to share themselves with others; to allow their peers and their teachers to know them beyond their school persona.

adventure (see Appendix C). Once the roads and cycling paths are free of snow and ice, weekly cycling rides begin. We depart as a pack from the school parking lot at the end of the day, ready to take on the streets of our small town. Although the terrain of the rides does not compare to the mountains we are about to ride, the group bonding begins and we start to connect with one another as riding partners. A camaraderie between the students and with the staff begins to develop as we support, encourage, and follow-up with one another throughout the training. As the late May departure nears, the after-school cycling excursions become more frequent and longer in duration. Some students begin to question their commitment to the trip as nerves and anxiety creep in with the date drawing nearer and the rides getting tougher. As leaders, we continue to encourage and reassure students that this trip will be a success for them. There are some issues that we must address such as parent concerns, student doubts, and teacher questions; but in almost all cases, students remain participants of the trip and committed to the experience. I can recall one student in particular who exemplifies the many dilemmas that can arise as we plan the trip for our students.

“Julie”

Julie was the student that was accepted into the leadership class because she needed a boost of confidence. Julie had struggled to fit into junior high. She was immature in comparison to the other students: still needing hugs from her teacher and, crying in class when things were difficult. Julie was not successful academically either, struggling in many of her classes. Julie’s outward appearance did not help her fit in either. She was overweight and awkward, traits that were not accepted by her peers. She found herself picked on by the other students and worse than being bullied, she was isolated from her peer group. As a

result of her difficulties Julie often found herself in the counselor's office during her first couple of years of junior high. She had a very low self-perception and very little self esteem. In the minds of many of her teachers at our school, she needed an arena through which she could see success personally, socially and emotionally. We believed that she needed to believe in herself and in the eyes of two teachers we felt maybe, just maybe, leadership would help. We felt that Julie would probably just float along in the course as she had in her other previous classes, but we hoped at the very least, being part of the class with its reputation, Julie would view herself as someone special in the school. One of our projects is a mentoring program with a neighboring elementary school. We figured that this was going to be Julie's calling this year. It was here that she'd be able to shine. Never in a million years did we think that it would be on the bike trip where Julie's true colors would shine. Our past experiences with Julie framed our expectations and influenced the lack of faith we had in her abilities.

Our class was comprised of a mix of students, some athletic, some not so athletic. Julie fit in the latter category. We were nervous about taking Julie on the trip but to ensure that the integrity of the trip was sustained, to provide equal opportunity for all, we decided that refusing to take Julie was not an option. We, along with Julie's other teachers, figured that once the training was underway, Julie would decide for herself that the trip was not something she wanted to pursue and would drop out. We began training, riding twice a week for about six weeks before the trip. Julie showed up ready to go for our first training session, decked out in the new gear her dad had purchased for her. As the group departed

the parking lot, Julie cautiously road her bike at the back of the pack. Her inexperience and lack of athleticism resulted in an accident that first training day, falling off her bike while swerving along the trail, we helped her back up, offering advice.. I thought her spirit and enthusiasm for the trip would quickly fade away. However, she returned the next day, ready to ride and once again fell off her bike. This was a pattern that would continue to be repeated throughout the course of the training; each time we went out Julie would fall off her bike, and amazingly she kept coming back! I, along with the other leaders, was unsure as to whether we could take Julie on the trip. She was so dedicated and her resolve so strong, it would be crippling for her if we decided to take it away from her. Finally, a week before the trip and after numerous scrapes and bruises, Julie decided that maybe she shouldn't come on the trip. I, being somewhat selfish, secretly agreed that it would be much easier for us if she didn't join us. But, I thought, what is the purpose of the trip? The answer, what I believe in and why I teach the course, is to show students that they must face their fears and challenge themselves beyond the limits they set. I can recall sitting down with Julie and reminding her of everything that she had accomplished up to this point. I reassured her that the leaders of the trip would ensure that she would be safe and successful; that we would not leave her behind and as a team we would achieve our goals. I also spoke with Julie's parents to see how they felt. They were concerned after seeing scrapes and bruises repeatedly but they were proud of what Julie had chosen to undertake. This was a new and exciting challenge and they were happy with the new found confidence Julie was beginning to develop. And so, after a heart to

heart with Julie and her parents, she took on the challenge and conquered the trip (without falling once)!

I can recall the elation Julie felt at the end of the trip as we were pulling into the parking lot. She was shaking with anticipation; eager to see her parents and tell them of her accomplishments. She had exhausted herself over the past five days and had experienced profound success. Julie's parents were ecstatic. Seeing the pride ooze from her, hearing the jubilation in her voice, and witnessing a newfound confidence were rewards of an experience they had hope she would find. Her father, a cyclist himself, was in awe of Julie's rendition of her feat. In fact, the two of them went back that summer and cycled the trail again!

Julie's story is a powerful reminder for me that all students need to the opportunity to experience the bike trip. Initially I thought it would be easier for the trip if Julie did not come, however during the training sessions I was forced to reexamine why we plan the trip. A goal of the program is to encourage all students to participate and our responsibility as leaders is to design and make the necessary accommodations in order that all students have an enjoyable, safe, and successful experience. There have been other students who had fallen off their bikes over the years, being unfamiliar with their brakes going down hills or because they've hit a bump in the path. Julie was unique in that we had never had a student fall so many times during training. Her inexperience cycling and her lack of coordination were qualities that we worked on with her continuously. Sometimes it was as simple as having her recognize that she had to take her feet off of her pedals when she stopped her bike mid-climb, working on her self-talk strategies to motivate herself, or reminding her that she needed to stay focused and pay

attention to the path she was on. By the end of the training rides and during the trip, Julie had incorporated the basic cycling skills and the self motivation techniques and her mantra: inspired by Dori from Disney's Finding Nemo: "Just keep swimming, Just keep swimming," could be heard as she climbed and persevered through the rides. Access to this trip is open to all students enrolled in the leadership option. We are purposeful in relaying with the students that we will help them overcome what they may perceive as barriers to sharing in the experience, whether they be financial, physical ability, fitness etc. There are times where students are unable to partake in the trip due to various circumstances such as prior commitments, family engagements but all students are offered the opportunity. At times there have been students who have chosen not to come on the trip due to a fear of the unknown and have used another commitment as an excuse, but in those situations as a leaders of the trip we encourage them to find a way but ultimately it is their choice. As Priest and Gass note effective adventure trips are those where the students are willing participants in the activity (2005). Many accommodations have made throughout the years to ensure that students who want to take part in this experience are able to do so. Students who have been unable to afford the costs of the trip have been provided with fundraising opportunities and sponsors have been sought to help cover costs. We have adjusted the level of risk by navigating different cycling trails and routes depending on the physical abilities of the students. We have also accommodated students with sensory impairments making the accommodation for a visually impaired student to ride tandem with a guide. It has been our goal to provide all students in the leadership option the opportunity to partake in this adventure. The challenge now stands

at how we can move beyond the scope of the leadership class and make accessible to the entire school population the types of learning processes enabled by the adventure trip.

Final Preparations: Realization of Unfamiliar

During the pre-trip training students are also engaged in group meal planning, packing preparations, and pre-trip reflections. Students are responsible for planning their own meals; healthy, energy pack foods, which will sustain them for the five days. Their menus are checked over by the teacher leaders, and students then must divide the shopping list amongst the members. For packing students are presented with a space limitation. Students can only bring one duffle bag, thus only essential items are to be brought: hair driers and curling irons were contraband as they take up too much space. As a teacher I enforced this rule. However, the following extract from my journal before my first experience on the adventure trip highlights my shock with this rule and how it called me to let go of my manufactured teacher identity.

How should a teacher look? “No curling irons.”

Who would have thought that grade nine students could be so intimidating? I have an impression to make, a standard to which I must live. Each day of my first year of teaching I have dressed professionally. In order to be a respected teacher, in order to create the necessary boundaries between student and teacher, it is important for me to present myself as a professional. Not only has my dress been important to me, but how I do my hair and makeup also sends a message to the students. I have tried so hard to establish my teacher look.

I am about to embark on a five day biking excursion and have just been informed that I cannot bring my hairdryer or curling iron. Also, one of the goals of the trip is to remove the students from the comforts of home, to take them to the

unfamiliar. As the leaders of the trip, we too have to model the expectations. So, no curling iron for me.

The anxiety that I feel at the prospect of being unable to present myself in a manner that I feel is professional begins to build as we get closer to departure. Not only will I be unable to do my hair, I will also be dressed in clothing that, to me, does not represent the image of a teacher. I am worried that the students will no longer see me as the professional that I feel I am. I begin to wonder how much my teacher image is tied to the outer image that I present to the students. It makes me nervous. How will they view me outside of this environment? Will they still take me seriously?

By the end of May students had been provided with opportunities to prepare physically and mentally and they were packed, ready to embark on the adventure. The following sections describe each day of the adventure told in my voice through personal narratives constructed from my experiences. Although this represents my impression of one of many trips, the key components are representative of the nature of all of the trips.

Day 1 Of The Trip: Apprehension

With preparations now complete, the morning of the departure sees students and staff busy hauling food boxes, coolers, sleeping bags, and duffle bags full of gear into the school for storage, ready to be loaded on to the bus for the noon hour departure. At noon, the energy that had been contained for the morning is released and a flurry of activity begins. Students hustle to the storage room to collect their bags to pack into the bus. Following a six hour journey on a yellow school bus, we arrive at our mountain hostel. The hostel is well removed from town as a means of removing students (and leaders)

further from the comforts of home. From the large picture window in the social area, the mountains are in full view, a spectacular picture of what is ahead. Upon arrival at the hostel, students settle into their dorm style room, bunking with their friends and next door to their teachers, a unique experience for most. The close accommodation between students and leaders adds to the distinct atmosphere of the trip as we rarely, if ever, find ourselves in such close quarters for a five straight days.

An evening campfire is called after everyone has settled into their rooms as away to bring everyone together to share their goals for the next day. As leaders, we anticipate some apprehension from the students and as a means of calming some anxieties we share stories of years past and maintain a relaxed atmosphere as we all gather around the fire.

Day 2 Of The Trip: First Adventure

We begin our second day in a bustling kitchen as students prepare their breakfasts, most opting for oatmeal, yogurt, and cereal, allowing for minimal cleanup. Lunches are also prepared before we board the bus to make our way up to the Nordic Center. Here we will be equipped with our mountains bikes and meet our instructors. Students are divided into four groups based on cycling ability. Student select the group that they are most comfortable in based on their cycling experience. Although at times some decisions are based on peer group, most of the time student choice is influenced by their comfort level. As the groups naturally form, there is a diversity of students within each group. In the experienced rider group both students perceived to be “the athletes” as well as “the non-athletes” will be found. The same can be said for the inexperienced riders. Throughout the year, within the leadership class, it is our hope that we have established an atmosphere that encourages student choice and self-regulation. As well,

we have emphasized that this experience is not about the best riders, or finishing first but rather allowing everyone to challenge themselves and be successful. This allows those who are comfortable on their bikes to move at a quicker, more advanced pace and those who are uneasy about riding to take a more cautious start without feeling intimidated. Throughout the morning students are introduced to specific mountain biking techniques. Many students have not ridden in the mountains and are unfamiliar with shifting and hill riding. Although we train before the trip, this riding experience is much different from the flat paths around home. The purpose of the initial training is to get our bodies physically ready for the cycling adventure and accustomed to sitting on a bike seat for prolonged periods of time. Becoming acquainted with their new bikes (top of the line mountain bikes rentals) and riding in this novel environment proves to be rewarding for most of our students. As we all regroup for a lunch break, some students will reassess their group choice, either they have not been challenged enough or they feel overwhelmed and would like to take things a little slower, and will request moving to a new group. As leaders we encourage students to self-regulate and we will discuss with them their reasoning and consider each case individually and in the past have both encouraged a move as well as encouraged students to continue with their initial choice. After a break for lunch, students depart again for another ride that is less about developing skills and more about riding in the splendor of the mountains. We navigate through single and double track trails, crossing with other groups throughout the afternoon. At the end of the afternoon when it is time to make our way back to the hostel, students walk back to the hostel, a two hour trek to unite the groups. We are conscious of the fact that having separate groups throughout the day could result in the formation of cliques, just as having separate rooms

at the hostel or being spread out during our long rides due to ability can result in a division amongst the group, therefore throughout the trip we are continually evaluating ways to bring the group back together. The walk back to the hostel is one of those methods. This activity was actually result necessity one year because we did not have the bus available to bring the students back to the hostel. Upon reflection we recognized the benefits of walking back as a group so the tradition has continued. Reevaluation of the trip and its components, finding ways to improve and enhance the experience for the students, is a constant element of the experience for the leaders. During this long walk 'home,' students can be heard sharing stories of hills conquered, spills averted and falls which have left their mark as battle wounds on arms and legs. Once back at the hostel, showers and stove elements are in high demand as students want to clean up and eat. After a long day of riding, a campfire is lit and stories are shared as we prepare for the next day's adventure. Bringing the group together at the end of each day to debrief again is a conscious decision to encourage the students to reflect upon the experience as well as a way to reduce the formation of cliques and student isolation.

Students are asked to write a reflection about the day's activity and, as leaders, we provide responses to the students to encourage them in the reflection process.

Day 3 Of The Trip: Shared Soreness

After an early night for most, bodies begin to trickle down to the kitchen to make breakfast and lunches in preparation for our longest day of riding. The soreness of their backsides is apparent as they gingerly sit down. Many wonder aloud how they will sit upon their bike as they prepare for a second day of prolonged riding. As we make our way onto the bus and proceed to the Nordic Center to pick up our bikes, the chatter on the

bus is quieter than usual. Many students gaze out of the windows. When asked, most just say they are thinking about today and what it is going to bring. They have been warned that our first hill is a 'killer.' The ride starts with an 8 km climb, a steep and steady incline on a dusty shale road which, for many, instructors included, proves to quickly deplete energy stores. Once at the top, the next part of the ride, a mountain trail leading from one alpine city to another, proves to be more of a fair ride, a roller coaster, with ups and many downs, leading to a river where we break for lunch. After our lunch break, we finish up the mountain trail and then hit the highway to make our way back to the starting point. The final ascent to the Nordic Center, once back in town, challenges the students to dig deep, to will their legs to pedal when many feel like they have nothing left to give. The students cover a total of 60 km on this journey. In the evening, tired and drained, students make their dinners and we wrap up the evening with a campfire, sharing the trials and triumphs of the day. Many students thank their peers for their support and others recognize their peers for what they overcame throughout the course of the day. They also take a moment in the evening to write their thoughts down on paper, reflecting upon what they have discovered and leave their reflections with the leaders for a dialogue response.

Day 4 Of The Trip: Awe

The final physical feat is an 8 hour hike that includes a mountain summit. Students begin this day again on the bus to Nordic Center. Here we walk to our initial, 'warm up' hike, Grassi Lakes. There are many aching bodies and today's hike is a challenge in perseverance for many. This scenic hike takes us past a water fall and up to a sitting area with beautiful pools of water and porous rock walls, where rocks climbers are

often spotted. After a brief break, we continue our journey to the HaLing Peak trail head. Here the ‘real’ hike begins. This steady climb of switch backs and no plateaus climaxes with a scramble up scree to the mountain’s apex. Atop the mountain peak, students can see for miles and are in awe of their surroundings and their accomplishments. Many cannot believe that they are actually standing on top of a mountain! The energy on the decent is high as students begin to reflect upon what they have achieved over the course of three days. The stories and the laughter echo through and off the surrounding mountains and the aching muscles seem to feel a little less sore. Our final evening is a celebration of the successes of the trip. Students share their favorite moments, extend their gratitude towards others and take the chance to write their thoughts down on paper.

Day 5 Of The Trip: Excited Relief

Our final day begins with a packing frenzy as students scramble to gather their belongings, roll up their sleeping bags, clean their rooms, make their lunches, and board the bus. The trip then culminates with a visit to a local hot spring, a welcomed treat for the aching bodies that have exerted themselves beyond what most had ever done. The ride home fluctuates between quiet alone time and noisy conversations. As we near the school, the energy on the bus picks up and students begin to organize themselves to be greeted by their parents. As we pull into the parking lot vehicles line the street, their occupants anxiously anticipating our arrival to welcome their children.

Follow-up

With the adventure trip occurring near the end of the grade nine school year, the students’ final year before heading to high school, follow up is a challenge. During the month of June many discussion and reflections surrounding the experience take place. As leaders

of the adventure our hope is that students are making meaning of their experience and will be able to use those lessons as they face new challenges. As another means of following up with the students, we include a picture of the mountain we climbed in the report cards that are mailed out at the end of the year with the following quotes attached: “It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves” – Sir Edmund Hillary “You have to fuel your dreams. Align yourself with people who are going to believe in them as strongly as you do” – Anonymous. The hope is that the picture and the quotes will trigger memories of the trips, allowing the students to relive and reflect upon their experience.

However, beyond this, follow up is limited to random encounters with our graduated students throughout the years.

The Leaders

As a leader of the trip my primary responsibility was to ensure the students had a safe and rewarding experience. My role was to be a facilitator of discovery, to help guide the students and support them in their quest for understanding of self. In doing this I discovered *something* about teaching and learning. As a novice leader of the trip, I was only aware of the logistics of the trip, the need to be physically prepared. How to interact and deal with the students in that environment was not scripted. I came into the experience with a vague idea of the trip’s philosophy but as I struggled with the students and succeeded with them, I discovered what the trip was about: experience and self discovery.

I have participated in five adventure trips and as they have grown over the years there has been an adjustment from having three teacher leaders to the current six. The leaders are asked to partake in the trip based on their interest, their physical abilities to

complete the rides and hikes, and their relationship with students in the class. The participants in this case study have worked collaboratively to provide students with successful adventure education experiences. The background of the participants in this study is described below. The participants' names have been changed to maintain their anonymity.

Me

As noted in the introduction and at various other points within this thesis, I came upon this trip as a “fill in” for the female co-teacher of the leadership class who was unable to go on the trip. I was, a young teacher, who had never truly ridden a bike. I had only ever been camping once and I had never been on a field trip before in the teacher capacity. It was a brand new experience for me. Since that inaugural trip, I have planned, co-led, and led four other adventure bike trips. With the departure of the originator of the leadership course and trips a few years ago, I was placed in the lead position which has meant new responsibilities for maintaining the vision and intention of the trips. I have also been responsible for helping some of the new teachers to the trip “learn the ropes,” to help them prepare, and take on the challenge of leading the students in the adventure.

Lance

Lance has been a part of the adventure bike trips since their inception and has participated in all seven of the trips. Lance has been a teacher for more than twenty years and has worked with students of all ages. His role at our school is as counselor and administrator. At fifty-plus Lance is described as “a machine” by the students. He often cycles to school and can be found playing floor hockey intramurals at lunch. He is a hard rider, often in charge of leading the rides, pushing the stronger riders, and showing them

how the “old guys” do it. He had not taught the leadership class but has been involved in many of their initiatives, and in his role as the school counselor is often familiar with many of the students.

Alex

Alex joined our trips about four years ago and has participated in all four trips since. He was enlisted as a teacher supervisor the year his daughter was a student in our class. As a way of sharing the experience with her and as a way of getting involved in the trip, Alex asked to come with us. Since that initial trip, Alex has become an integral part of the experience. Being a former volleyball player, at six foot four, Alex’s presence on the trip has elicited many nick names such as Big Red and Big Bird. Alex has over twenty years of teaching experience working within junior and senior high schools. His role in our school is that of assistant principal and part-time teacher, as well as the junior boys’ volleyball coach. His relationship with the students is often in some authoritarian role, thus the trip allows him to relate with the students on a different plane and allows the students to see him in a new light as well. We call him the “utility man” for he does a little of everything: bus driver, safety/first aid coordinator, chef extraordinaire, comedian, leader, trailer etc. Although he finds himself nearing the fifty year milestone, Alex describes his fitness level as better than ever.

Brock

Brock has been a teacher for almost fifteen years, spending the majority of that time at our school. He is a physical education and math teacher and has co-taught leadership with me for three years. Brock has been an athlete his whole life: running track, playing volleyball, and playing hockey. At six foot four, he and Alex could be

described as the twin towers of the trip. Brock came to be a part of the trips when the founder of the trips was moving to a new school and Brock was to become the other leadership teacher. He came on the trip before that transition year as a way to initiate himself to the trips before having to lead it in the teacher capacity. Brock is also connected to the trips through his children. His daughter was on the first trip that I participated in and has since been an adult supervisor on the trips. Brock's son was in our leadership class last year and the two were able to share in each other's accomplishments.

Jade

With the departure of original trip organizer, we required another teacher supervisor to maintain a safe ratio of students to teachers. We also felt that it was important to balance out the male and female leaders (at the time there was myself and a teacher's assistant who were female and four males). Jade was approached because she was energetic, she connected with students in a positive manner, and she was fit enough to be able to meet the demands of the trip. Jade had only been with our school for two years and had only three years of teaching experience when she participated in her first trip. Jade entered the trip in a very similar manner as I did; a somewhat naïve, young teacher eager to get involved. Like Brock, Jade is also a physical education and math teacher, working with many grade nine classes. She is also an active coach in our school, working with the volleyball and badminton teams. With her role as their teacher in either math or phys ed or as their coach, Jade has many connections with the students in our class.

CHAPTER V

WHAT DID THE ADVENTURE TRIPS MEAN?

The adventure bike trips have the potential to provide leaders with a multitude of experiences that span their personal and professional lives. It has been recognized that student self-perception is influenced by adventure experiences (Fiddes, 2003; Garst et al., 2001). From my own experience and through interview conversations with the study participants, similar impacts appear to be recognized by the leaders. The contextual, personal, and social components that are evident in the trips for the students are significant in the leaders' experience as well. Personally, the trips have challenged each of us physically and the participants reported that a renewed sense of healthy living resulted. Professionally, we are offered opportunities to depart from the school setting and teach in a different manner than we do in our classrooms. The trips expose new ways for teachers to interact with students and encourage a sense of collaboration among peers that appears lacking in the school setting.

The meaning that the participants have constructed of the trips was shared with me as we conversed about the adventure education experience. Although there is a uniqueness to each participant's experience, common themes did surface that bind us together. The following section highlights the themes that emerged from those conversations as well as from my own autoethnographic research: personal challenge, changed perceptions of students and learning, deconstruction of the teacher façade, and teacher collaboration. The insights provided by the participants in this chapter came from the initial interview (see Appendix A), unless otherwise noted.

1. Personal Physical Challenges

Although the primary focus of the trip is the students, with varying degrees the leaders of the bike trip recognize that there is a personal element associated with the experience. The physical challenges, the novelty of the adventure, and the escape from the everyday have been identified as being personally rewarding for the leaders.

For Myself

The bike trip experience has impacted me on a personal level, shifting how I viewed my physical abilities. As recollected in “Hills” (pg. 6 of this document) I had never viewed myself as an athlete. My definition of being athletic was directly connected to being on a sports team. Thus all my years of dancing and subsequent visits to the gym were not viewed as being athletic. Taking part in the bike trip changed the way that I saw myself athletically. The physical challenge of the trip itself surprised me and has since motivated me to become more active. It ignited a desire to continue to challenge myself physically and since that first trip I have continued to mountain bike, have begun road riding, and have also competed in various half marathons and a triathlon. This was a shift for me personally, the novelty and new opportunity that the trip offered provided me with a new insight into what I could achieve. My narrow definition of what an athlete was broadened. This not only changed the way I see myself but also how I view the students.

For Alex

For Alex, the bike trips renewed a desire to focus on himself after years of being busy with his children. “Personally it [the trip] has made a tremendous impact because I have changed my lifestyle.” An active lifestyle, which was present pre-children but had been lacking in the last ten years, is once again a priority.

Over the last 10 years I was involved with my own kids and I had not done the physical training I had done previous years and that [the trip] sparked a tremendous amount of initiative for myself to get back into.

The element of novelty and escape is also present for Alex, being an administrator in the school building, the trip offers him a new professional opportunity because the trips are “not one of the things that, day to day...occurs in my job.”

For Brock

During our initial interview, Brock focused his insights on the students and what he perceived the trip meant for them and as a consequence for his teaching practice. During our second interview, I wanted to see what, if the trips had meaning personally for Brock as the other participants had all commented about the adventure trip.

The trips have instilled in Brock a new appreciation for cycling and provided a physical and technical challenge for him, being a novice cyclist at the beginning of the trips. “Now having been on 3 trips, my skill on the bike is slowly improving. I didn’t fall off my locked-in pedals quite as often last year, so just learning how to ride has been really beneficial” (Interview II).

As well, similar to Alex, the bike trips have helped Brock strive to maintain an active lifestyle. Previous to his first trip, Brock had vowed to get back into shape. After a hiatus from his active lifestyle due to a busy family and injury, Brock had set a goal for himself to get back into shape. The bike trips have served as an end goal, as the motivator that Brock finds he needs to stay on track with his renewed sense of active healthy living.

I need something to work towards and if I don’t have something and I am just training for training sake I lose focus or get lazy (Interview II).

For Lance

Lance describes the personal component of the trip as follows, “What it’s meant personally for me was the ability to...to challenge myself.” For Lance, the trips provided him with moments to personally challenge himself, to get out to the mountains and ride. As he said, “A personal challenge...I’m not going to stop going up this hill...I am doing this for myself..., I’ll get to the top and I will cycle back down to see where the kids are.”

The element of challenging oneself on the trip is significant for Lance. In addition to facilitating student success, his own personal quest to push his limits becomes a reward of the experience. Lance finds taking moments to push his limits throughout the course of the trip satisfies his personal desires to conquer the ride.

I think that there is something to be said for the moments during that time where you are particularly challenged by the activity...just thoroughly challenged...Just for yourself and why not just go for it?

However, even with the desire to push himself finding that a balance is key for Lance, one he wanted to emphasize and clarify the second time we sat down to talk.

There’s a fine line and first and foremost we are here for the kids...I find that if I get myself too much into myself then I have to retract and remind myself, ‘Just a second here, it is for the kids’ (Interview II)

For Jade

The trips introduced an inner conflict for Jade which was a result of her natural instinct as an athlete conflicting with her natural instincts as a teacher.

The need to always want to challenge myself, hiking or biking, to have that personal struggle because that is my instinct and that is what I am versus being

the teacher. There is also the instinct of being the teacher, but my competitive nature that creates that tension (Interview II).

Personally there was a desire to push and challenge herself but at the same time she felt the responsibility to hold back, reminding herself that the trip was for the students.

Switching roles to get kids up the hill, I can't be at the front where I want to be pushing my body, having kids see me in that light. I need to take on a different role, every one of the supervisors had a different role and my role was to be at the back and help those kids up.

For Jade, a competitive, determined athlete, stepping back from the physical challenge to help students was a rewarding challenge. "I knew more about what my role was and...what I need to be saying the rest of the trip was just coaxing up and we did it and...we got to the top and it was awesome, to know that we finished." Her perception of being with the low ability group as being somewhat less satisfying than if she was with the high ability group was a result of her experiences as an athlete and her beliefs about what athleticism is. Initially working with the beginner group was a disappointment for Jade but as she came to see how hard her group worked, the teamwork that occurred, and the success of the students her beliefs and perceptions began to move in a new direction. "We had a chance to kind of bond as a group and stick together and, seeing some of the kids team up and be leaders within the group was really cool." Regardless of their initial abilities, all students on the trip were capable of achieving the goals that the group set out and it was her job as a leader to ensure that she was there to support each student.

Summary

The physical challenge of the trip, the cycling and hiking in the mountains, was a rewarding experience for the teachers. There is a sense that the trip rekindles a competitive spirit for Lance and Jade which was in conflict with the purpose of the trip. Whether it was to personally challenge oneself to get to the top of the hill or feeling a sense of unease working with the beginning group; a fine line needed to be drawn between the personal goals one might have and the goal for the group. For others, the trip provided an opportunity to regain some of the adventure that had been absent. Alex and Lance, both self-described athletes involved in sport their whole life, found the trip to be a welcomed activity to renew active lifestyles and to provide goals to work towards. Unlike the other participants I had not viewed myself as an athlete prior to the trip and therefore the trip was an opportunity for me to redefine athleticism. Although personal challenge is a meaningful element of the trip, at times leaders can feel unfulfilled with the physical challenge because they cannot push themselves completely. It is possible that our personal agendas could threaten the overall experience. However, a clear belief in the purpose of the trip for the students and focus on the role of teacher, it is possible ensure a successful, educational experience is facilitated.

2. Changed Perceptions: “That Was a Flip For Me...”

Whether we were leaving the principal’s office, the counselor’s office or our classrooms, the bike trip allowed us to escape the everyday school setting and presented an opportunity for us to interact, teach and share experiences with our students in a novel setting. We began to see students in a new light and recognized that student learning can be different from the learning that happens in our classrooms. We found ourselves

engaging in a shared experience and from that our connections with our students were strengthened.

New Perception of Students

For Me

I have always been amazed at what the students can accomplish on the bike trips. I am not aware of another challenge within school that asks them to push themselves as they do on the adventure trips. Their ability to overcome many obstacles presented within the course of the five days astounds me and brings forth a new sense of admiration for the capabilities of our students. It is a renewal of my faith in what students can achieve if they set their minds on a goal and pursue it.

As a leader my goal is to help all students achieve success. For some students that means making it up the hill without stopping and for others it means simply making it up the hill with a helping hand pushing on their back. Either way, as I read the journals each evening, students continuously shared that they have challenged themselves beyond their perceived limits. As a leader I am proud I was able to facilitate and witness their success.

When I think back and recall all of the students who have participated in these leadership trips I am filled with a sense of pride. For some it is pride for the physical achievements, for others their social interactions; but for all of them it is the heightened sense of self confidence that is seen in their faces, actions, and spirits and their expression of pride in their successes. It reminds me that I can and should challenge students, be that physically, intellectually, or socially and not limit them which I think I sometimes do. Had I allowed my initial perception's of Julie's abilities to guide my decisions about her and the trip, I would have been doing Julie a disservice. I am more aware of ensuring that

in all of my classes I do not discount students but rather encourage and facilitate a desire to learn and challenge themselves.

For Alex

In a different role, leaving the principal's office, Alex enjoys seeing the students in a new setting and in this different environment. Away from the structure of the everyday school setting he watches as the students reveal themselves. "When we can get out of the classroom, it is really important because the kids buy into that and they end up having a much more enjoyable or educational...experience because they have an opportunity to step out of the classroom and be themselves." The trips enable Alex to see the students in a new light because there is the time to talk with them, to hear of their other interests and accomplishments, things not evident at school. "On a trip like this those kinds of things become exposed because we look at some of their interests...their passions and that becomes the whole person as opposed in the classroom they're just another student." Their achievements, particularly his daughter's, was very rewarding for him to observe. "I was very impressed because she ended up being one of the strongest girls in that whole bike trip...I didn't realize how physically strong she was."

For Brock

Witnessing students achieve more than he initially believed was possible was an eye-opener for Brock. It showed him that students could reach levels higher than he often expected and by providing and facilitating challenges he saw what they could actually accomplish. "I was just sort of shocked and amazed at how difficult it was...in situations that I didn't think we could get them through and all of a sudden these kids are completing the climb on the mountain." When asked to describe memorable moments of the bike trip experience, Brock also retold Julie's story. Witnessing student achievement

is beyond what he had experienced in a classroom and something he has come to expect as we plan for the trips. As Brock describes, “to see the changes in the kids...afterwards they’re so excited about some of the things that they’ve done... I look forward to that.”

For Lance

Wondering whether students would be able to achieve success on the trips was at first a concern for Lance. Since completing several trips and witnessing the determination of students through falls, cuts, and hospital visits³, Lance’s perceptions of the students’ abilities to succeed have shifted.

I’ve sort of shifted from concern about the numbers of cuts and bruises,
...worry[ing] about who is not going to be able to do it [because] they all do it
and they all do it with band aids.

The level of admiration for student success is predicated by a perceived ability to accomplish the task. The students who struggle but continue to show their determination throughout the experience renew a belief for Lance of the resiliency of the human spirit.

I must admit it has given me the belief that...every kid has a source of strength
and courage that will supersede their particular needs...I think with kids, I’ve seen
the very weak, the very meek just struggle through it.

At the same time that there is admiration for student success there is also frustration with students who complain but are perceived as being capable.

I am sometimes still surprised by my own sort of prejudices where I think whether
it is male or female and someone is an athlete, [my response to their struggles
would be,] ‘Quit whining and you should be able to do it.’

³ On occasion there have been accidents that required a hospital visit. One year a couple students skidded out on dry gravel and it was necessary to seek medical assistance in cleaning the road rash. A sprained ankle has also sent a student to the hospital for an x-ray to ensure that nothing had been broken. The visits are mainly precautionary, to make certain that they students are safe and healthy.

Recognizing his prejudices has allowed Lance to better work with all of the students on the trip, reminding him that each student deserves attention and feedback on the trip, regardless of their perceived capabilities.

For Jade

Having completed the course of the trip the previous weekend with a group of friends, Jade was impressed with the physical accomplishments of the students. Beyond the physical, observing student self perception flips were significant for Jade: “I think that was really cool, [the] sense of accomplishment being able to say, ‘yeah, I can!’ In their journals...I can’t believe how many people said ‘I didn’t think I could do this!’” The students’ abilities to overcome the physical and mental challenges of the trip allowed Jade to shift her own perceptions of the students’ abilities. Although there are times when Jade wanted to provide the students with “an out,” allowing them to quit, she began to recognize that they were capable of more than she often gave them credit for.

Summary

All participants recognized that the students’ achievements they witnessed paled in comparison to other experiences they have been involved in. Most of us were surprised by the students’ accomplishments on the trip which suggested that we did not have faith in their capabilities, but I believe it is more of a reflection of the lack of challenge, in an activity to which the students are committed, that is presented to them in the traditional school setting. Students do not get the opportunities to seek out challenges the way we do on the trip, and when we first participated in the trip it was difficult to comprehend asking students to push themselves so hard.

At times our perception of student ability can inhibit our ability to provide for all students. Strong riders or athletic students are often not given as much attention as those

who are struggling. Our perception that they may not need the same amount of encouragement is at times questionable. Thus as a group of leaders it is important for us to debrief each day; talk about the students and work to ensure that every student on the trip, regardless of perceived ability receives ongoing feedback. Our dialogues with students through the journals and in small groups are ways we work to achieve this goal.

Re-defining Student Learning

For Me

The trips enable me to teach in a new way, a way that I had desired but had not been exposed to because of my perception of the absence of an appropriate space and environment. I felt confined in the walls of my classroom, confined to delivering information to my students and yet I longed for a discovery, experiential approach. The bike trips enabled me to teach in that manner; to facilitate student learning, encouraging students to discover, and reflect upon their own learning. Throughout the course of the trip I engaged in conversation with the students asking them to describe their experience for me. As we dialogued I challenged them to think of where they could use these experiences when we return home.

It was exciting to see student insights as they wrote to us in their journals, to hear them talk about their self discoveries and their new understandings of themselves and others. The two quotes which introduce this thesis (p. 1) are the product of journal reflections and they exemplify for me the discoveries that occur for the students throughout the course of the trip. The following is a post trip journal entry written by a female student for the school's newsletter, reflecting some of her insights about the trip experience.

We returned from the trip a little sore and a little sick, but mostly sad that the journey that had brought us infinitely closer and more mature, was coming to an end. We had departed as a class unit with our own limited comfort zones and returned as a small functioning community, unafraid of testing our boundaries and exposing our true selves. Even now, weeks after our arrival home, the trip lives on through various accounts of the hilarities and feats that float through the school's halls. I cannot use enough clichés to fully portray the trip's impact on us, as young adults and our class as a whole.

The insights that the students come away with after the trip are powerful and to me they exemplify what school should be about. It should be a place where students discover themselves, where they are excited to learn, and can take the knowledge that they gain forward as they move onto new experiences. On the trips I began to take on a new role, facilitating the discovery rather than directing it as is the classroom norm.

For Alex

Alex sees the power of learning through experience based on his own experiences. "As a person like myself...I will learn more from an experience if it is a practical experience and in this case, the cycling, or learn from doing as opposed from learn from watching." He describes the power of learning through shared experiences as a natural process, one that is fun and through reflection meaning can be made. The element of fun is critical in this area for Alex. "We share the whole process and the students are going to be able to buy into that because they see that it can be fun. Educational, they don't care about that part, it is an activity that they can have some fun at and the learning just naturally occurs." Alex also acknowledges that not all students find the experience enjoyable, due to the physical and social challenges but learning still occurs. "Were there

some students that didn't enjoy it? Occasionally that'll happen depending on their experience but on the same note, did they learn anything, because it doesn't always have to be enjoyable." As a leader on the trip, Alex recognizes that his role is to share and facilitate discovery rather than deliver lessons to the students. "We are all experiencing the same thing even though the leaders are leading but not in the sense that 'Here is what we are doing, now you all follow us'." Alex has seen new understandings, an increase in self-perception, being shared back in the school environment where students have taken their stories and used them in their language arts classes. They have something memorable to talk about; they have a desire to share what they have discovered.

It's very transferable because with those journals we have had students that have come back from the trips, and they have written and shared their insights, whether it is their author of the day or their essays for their PAT exams for example⁴. They have been creative and because they have been able to relate directly to the...experience...it becomes real for them. They can now write a story on...their own experiences whereas other students that haven't experienced that, they grapple for something that they hope that somebody might listen to.

For Brock

For Brock, the trips provided a space for learning that contrasted with how he viewed typical classroom learning. He believes that his students are truly learning on the trips as the experience will live on with them beyond the return home however his view of his math class is that they are simply taking in lessons in order to write an exam.

⁴ The author of the day is a writing assignment that is part of the language arts program at Alex's school. The PAT exam is the provinces achievement test.

If learning is being to be able to remember some of the things and the lessons that you [do] then I guarantee you that the kids [will] remember a lot of the things that they did on the trips for a long time. In the classroom, if you are just doing the regular routine and curriculum...they'll remember long enough to write a test but they're not going to remember anything that they've done in math class.

Brock describes how the trips provide opportunities for student growth that are not always as attainable in his normal classroom routine: "I think there are some things that are a little bit more intangible that you can't just write a test to find out what they know."

For Lance

For Lance, the trips provide students with spaces where learning is accomplished in a safe place. The trust and the camaraderie that is fostered on the trip amongst the student and the leaders create a successful learning environment that is not always present at school.

They felt safe and felt safe to try. They felt safe to fail. They felt safe to share.

They felt safe...If you can feel trustful enough to fail, when no one is going to laugh at you and someone is going to come and pick you up and help you move along, I really think that it epitomizes really what we are trying to achieve.

Within this trusting environment, the trips become more about the self and discovery of one's self rather than the academic and curricular outcomes that are regularly associated with school. As a result of Lance's reflections that occurred during the time between our interviews he wrote the following summary on his view of student learning,

When we are into the moment of the physical challenge, of personal discovery, it is a question of overcoming oneself in relation to it, then we realize it, then we

affirm ourselves and then we realize ourselves; who are we in relation to the dimensions of those physical challenges (Interview II).

For Jade

For Jade, the trip encouraged a new way of understanding student learning which is in contrast with how she operates in her math classroom. As she describes:

I am the math teacher, I have all this knowledge about math and you guys don't know very much, and I'm giving it to you because we're not on the same page.

Before participating in the trip, all Jade knew of this experience was that it was "something hard that the kids could be proud of after" (Interview II). She was unaware of the complexities of the trip, unaware that the physical challenge was the vehicle for the experience that could develop students' a sense of confidence and increased awareness of the world around them. Students often stated in their journals that they felt like they could now accomplish any challenge that they were presented with. After viewing the trip as a new type of learning and teaching experience, Jade's perception of the trip and her understanding of teaching changed. Jade refers to this shift as a "flip." She was sharing in the learning with her students and it was a new approach for her.

In a situation like this, the whole idea of a physical activity, being away from home, there's no longer that separation between math teacher and student. Instead there is a supervisor who is doing the exact same thing as you and may not even be doing it as well as you so in that sense I felt, I could better relate to the kids.

On the first of her bike trips she struggled with the need to be effective, to know her role to help the kids accomplish their task. "I was just learning but at the same time and it hurt to think that I am a teacher, this is my job and I should be able to handle this situation but I didn't, so I was frustrated." Jade describes how she struggled with how hard she should

push the students. Should she allow them to quit or continue to encourage and help them through the ride?

I didn't put it in the way that, 'You have to do it,' 'There's no way out,' 'Here are your options.' In a sense it kind of flipped a switch for me, seeing the motive of this trip, there's no questions about if you are going to do it. You're going to do it, you're capable, your body's capable, you've just got to plug through slowly but surely. So that was, that was kind of a little important moment for me I think.

Seeing students learning in an environment that contrasted with her math classroom was meaningful for Jade. Sharing in that learning experience "flipped" some of her views of what teaching and learning could be. One of Jade's most memorable students on the trip was a popular football player, whose sense of self was defined on the football field. The physical challenges of the trip did not intimidate him as it did other students but the environment had a significant impact on this young man. Jade was given the opportunity one evening to read his profound insights and respond in his journal.

I think that this was such a special experience for him. I'm reading in his journal and it was almost a revelation to him that he loved the mountains. This [the mountains] was where he felt at home and he compared it to playing football. And as much as we think he loves football he was so at home there. It was such a great, great feeling to read his journal and I remember writing a big long thing about what I saw in him because he's got so much potential: he's such a athlete, got such a great personality and he's got such motivation. To be able to say, 'Hey, don't lose sight of this, keep this with you, know that you can do anything, and have high hopes for yourself. If these are the choices that you want you've got to

make sure every decision that you make; from the friends that you're with, to the decision that you make in certain situations, that it's going to affect this goal.' I was really excited to read his journal and see how it [the trip] affected him.

Summary

Our perceptions of how students learn began to shift as we experienced the trip. Away from our classrooms and the predominantly direct teaching methods and being immersed in an experiential learning environment opened our eyes to a new approach to student learning. Facilitating discovery by providing students with choice, opportunities to reflect and problem solve, to explore the nature of the experience and to make personal meaning. Although there are direct teaching methods implemented on the trip: cycling and hiking skill acquisition, nutrition, and hydration lessons the intent of these lessons is not to control the learning but to lay a framework for the experience and to establish a high level of safety. Teachable moments where we can help students make connections to their own lives through casual conversations along the trails, talks around the campfire, small and large group debriefing, and responding to journals, were all ways we worked to make the experience of the bike trip educational. Unlike the over use of direct teaching methods used in our classrooms, the focus on teachers as the giver of knowledge with students being passive recipients (DeLay, 1996), the trips enabled us to be more indirect, use teachable moments that present themselves, helping students learn how to learn.

Shared Experiences and New Connections

For Me

Letting my guard down and stepping out from behind my science desk allowed me to create connections that I had not been able to achieve up until that point. Perhaps it was the natural setting, the departure from the rigid structure I had set up at school, the

relaxed dress that I was in, that changed my whole demeanor. I was no longer just their science and leadership teacher, delivering information to them. We were sharing in an experience. That first bike trip revealed to me that in order to build the connections I was lacking in my classroom, I needed to share myself with the students (step out from behind my science counter, engage in learning with students not be the ‘expert’ telling them what to learn) and in doing so, they would begin to share themselves to me.

I can recall riding with a group of girls on the first trip I did. It was my first year of teaching and as I have described earlier, I shared little with my students and here I was, alone with four grade nine girls, whom I had not taught, riding switch back after switch back. Over the course of that time I can remember talking with them; sharing my stories of junior high about school, boyfriends and parents, and talking about what it is like to be a teacher as well as the activities that I like to do outside of school. Sharing those stories, both to pass time and to let the students know me better, created an atmosphere that enabled the girls to open up as well. They talked about their perceptions of school and being a teenager. They revealed to me their apprehensions about me, a young, pretty teacher, coming on the trip. They thought I would take the boys’ attention away from them. Their perception of me had been dictated by what they saw at school, they mentioned that they did not have a chance to get to know me before the trip and that they enjoyed getting to ride with me. Through this dialogue I was able to gain a better understanding of them and of my students in general. That sense of connection fulfilled a lacking element in my classroom. As I retell this story I am struck both by the girls’ openness and honesty but also by their initial perceptions of me as a leader on the trip. The girls felt that I threatened the social structure of the trip, perhaps it was because I was

a new addition to an already formed group or perhaps it was because they did not know what to expect from me as a leader of the trip. I was not their physical education teacher, I was not involved in athletics in the school and so I did not fit the mould of an adventure leader, who predominantly is male and has experience as adventurer participants (Hattie et al., 1997). The students' perception of who I was in relation to them on the trip was a hurdle that I needed to overcome. I wanted them to see me as more than just the female supervisor and their willingness to share their thoughts opened up an avenue that allowed me to show them who I was and make connections with them. At the time I did not address their comments, allowing only my actions to shift their perceptions of me. Looking back, I see that their perceptions of me may have changed but the gender constructions, of women needing to be attractive for males, were not addressed. That teachable moment was lost, however in recognizing that, when similar moments now arise now I will be prepared to dialogue with the students about their beliefs and perceptions. In a space where students are willing to share, the power such conversations hold is remarkable, they are the conversations that are not forgotten. By continuing to lead and in taking over the trip I hope that I can begin to deconstruct some of those gender stereotypes. I am not the female phys. ed., not a female trying to be attractive to males, but rather an active female teacher who can also lead a bike trip.

For Alex

Alex correlates the new connections he develops with the students on the trip with having shared an experience with them. "On a trip like this you're right in the trenches with the kids and it's a different environment." Being in the trenches with the students and sharing his expertise in the area of outdoor survival has enabled Alex to connect with the students on the trip in a way that is different from the school space. Having an

opportunity to share his passions with the students encourages and permits conversations and sharing that otherwise would not happen in his school office.

The leaders also have that opportunity to share who they are with the kids and when they find out that I've got twenty-five years of teaching experience, I'm a hunter, I'm a fisherman, I've done this, I've ocean kayaked, I've hiked here, I've done this process, I've done deep sea fishing... and all of a sudden those experiences come back and there is an exchange. As in any conversation someone shares their experience then that is an open invitation for someone else to share their experiences and that opportunity rarely exists in the school because of time restraints and a host of other reasons. But on a trip like this the opportunity is there and it is tremendous.

For Brock

Brock found that sharing the experience with the students enabled them to initiate and divulge more than what they normally at school. He recalls some “pretty cool conversations that never would have happened any other time.” The interaction in the journals between students' thoughts and the leaders' responses encouraged many of the students to reveal some of their understandings to us.

When we started to respond, they felt like they were actually writing to us and I was really impressed with some of the insights that they had into themselves. You still have some that are just giving you fluff but there was a lot of journals that had some really good insights...a lot of growth that happened.

For Lance

Lance describes the power of the shared experience as follows: “I think the fact that you both are sharing pains and joy. That really makes this kind of unique experience

memorable.” Being able to share the experience with the students enables a more reciprocal relationship to form as we are learning and challenging ourselves together. “They see us either challenging or laughing or being challenged or bruised up...so they can relate partially what they are going through.”

Within these new connections students’ willingness to share their thoughts and insights with the leaders has been an important element for the participants however unlike the other leaders, Lance is surprised not by the willingness of the students to share but instead by the hesitation of some of the students to open up. In a space that is overflowing with reflection and insight, Lance is often taken back by the students who do not appear to want to share what is happening for them.

After doing a few of the bike trips, I guess what surprises me is the unwillingness of some students who don't really share and open up and I think that's the challenge... I think that we have overall more kids that do open up [to]...us adults and the other students but there are always some who tend to be reserved and distant and that always sort of surprises me.

Recognizing that this form of learning and discovery is new for the students, in the second interview Lance provides some insights as to why certain students find difficulty in sharing their experiences,

And I think a reflection of why kids don't share is that it's a personal discovery and they just don't have the dialogue and the experience, the language to be able to talk about that. It is not text book and for a portion of them it is a foreign way to learn (Interview II).

For Jade

The trips were the first time when Jade felt as though she was given the opportunity to share in an experience with the students. “I don’t think there has ever been any trip where you take on the role of leading kids through something difficult and sharing that experience with them.” As she comments, “they’re totally open there.” As previously described, Jade sees herself in the classroom as the expert who provides her students with the curriculum, whereas on the trips she begins to share in the learning experience.

I could better relate...it is a situation where we are hanging out together, having breakfast together, its a little more casual, and maybe because we’re brought down to their level...and in a sense we’re equals and we’re all experiencing the same thing...I think that allows them to be a little more open.

Experiencing the trip together also initiated conversations between Jade and students that are not present to the same extent in the school setting. On the trip,

going through the same thing allows us to... open up a little bit more and it allows us to share when we’re going through some of these struggles...[it] allows more little opportunities that throughout school you don’t have a lot of time to sit down and chat and really get to know, especially those students that you don’t normally talk to. Out there you get to share these experiences and get to know them better.

Jade recalled a moment that she shared with one of the girls on the trip where she revealed her passion for singing and discovered that the student was also a singer. This student had been struggling up a long climb and Jade was frustrated because she did not know how to help her. The student wanted to quit, she was ready to go home and yet Jade knew she could not allow her to stop. She knew she needed to connect with this girl but

did not know how to. She did not think they had much in common; she had not bonded with this student in her classroom and was unsure of what to do. So Jade simply began to ask the students questions about her life and her interests and Jade shared herself and her interests and in that she discovered a connection that she had never seen before.

Summary

Being able to share the bike trip experience with the students was a product of experiential teaching. Instead of establishing hierarchy where the leaders have all of the answers and the students do not, an atmosphere was created where students explore and discover the meaning in the experience along side their teachers. The connections that resulted in this reciprocal relationship are different from the connections that we establish with most of the students in our classrooms. Although Lance found it frustrating that not all students opened up and expressed how they felt and Brock acknowledged that some students still write ‘fluff,’ it remains important for us as leaders to recognize that this new way of teaching is not only new for us, but is also a new experience for students. They are not used to learning in this manner where they are being called to be reflective, to find the answers within themselves. It is up to us as teachers to help them in this new relationship: one of sharing and facilitating rather than distancing and dictating.

3. “More than just a teacher...” Breaking Down the Teacher Facade

There has been a difference in how we, as teachers, administrators, and counselors, represent ourselves within the four walls of the school and who we are, as leaders, on the bike trip. The trip space offers the leaders a unique setting that encourages different interactions with students - a more relaxed environment, a shared space which has been contrasted with the school setting. There was a difference in the way we

perceived ourselves and in the way we were perceived by our students. We became less of the teacher façade and more of a human self in the eyes of our students.

For Me

When I started teaching I believed that my private life and my experiences did not warrant a place in the classroom and yet I was frustrated with the lack of connections with students. By leading and facilitating self discovery on the bike trips, I was forced to reveal glimpses of myself to the students, sharing with them personal stories of facing and overcoming challenges, acting silly and goofy as they struggled up hills to help distract them from negative thoughts, and nurturing, consoling and encouraging them as they faced doubt in their abilities.

As I removed myself from the classroom and relaxed with my students I began to recognize that the image of the teacher that I was in my classroom was not what my students needed. Up until the trip I believed that I was showing my students enough of who I was; I was kind and caring and I did my job teaching them. However as I participated in the trips I began to see that I was not being enough of my true self in the classroom. I was holding back because I believed that if I shared too much of myself my students would no longer see me as their teacher and I would lose the respect they had for me as a teacher. What is ironic for me is that the teachers I most respected and liked moving through school were the ones who did share the personal side of themselves and yet I was the opposite of them. I think the origin of my belief about creating distance was a combination of two things: 1) my own insecurities, not believing that I had much to share with my students and 2) my perception of the classroom management lessons we were given in university cautioning us about sharing too much of ourselves with students,

especially if we were young teachers in a secondary school as it could bring us too close to 'them.' What I have come to recognize now since removing some of the boundaries I had so clearly established is I have stronger connections, less discipline issues, am having more fun in my classroom, and the level of respect has increased. The more that I shared myself, my interests, my adventures, my stories (as they connected with the teachable moments in my classroom or on the trip) the more of a teacher I have become.

For Alex

Recognizing the new perceptions that the students were obtaining of him has encouraged Alex to share more of himself with his students.

The walls are definitely coming down and each trip that you go on, each group of people that you work with I realize that I am more comfortable with being me every year, every trip, every time that I go through this process because I don't feel that I have to put on a false front, to say that I am an administrator in the building, I have to wear my three piece suit everyday and I demand respect. No, I believe that I can go out there and be personable with the staff and the students and relate with them and talk to each and every person and build the respect by treating them with respect.

The relaxed atmosphere of the trip and the opportunity to share his love for the outdoors enabled Alex to open himself up to the students more than he normally would at school.

They see the person that can do a lot more joking around, the person that can see a lot more of the humor in each and every situation because in a role in the classroom, in the office, there is the disciplinary role, there is a crisp clear structure taken up and going away from that, I learned to let that go unless really

needed...they get to see the real person that I am' what my interest are, how I interact with people; letting them know more of who I am. (Interview II).

The benefits of sharing his passions with the students was evident as he received positive comments from the students who expressed their surprise at the person he was compared to how he represents himself at school. Students are often caught off guard when Alex tells of his hunting and camping adventures. They are intrigued by his knowledge of the outdoors and the trivial facts he is able to dispense at a moments notice. They enjoy being around him and often encourage his storytelling. As Alex reveals, he enjoys being able to share his life experiences with the students.

I felt confident that I would be able to share a lot of that [my expertise] with not only the staff...but also with students. I think one of the biggest, most memorable moments or portions of that particular trip were a few comments that some of the students had made: 'Gees, I was really, really impressed with Mr. Jacobs'...they now see me as a different person; they see me as a person as opposed to the school's administrator or as a non-personal person with responsibility.

For Brock

Like Alex, Brock was surprised by the student feedback as they commented on his behavior on the trips. His perception of who he was in the classroom did not mesh with the students' perception which has caused him to reflect upon his classroom identity.

They definitely saw me different and even after, in the last couple of year too, there were of a number of comments about me singing or doing goofy things on the trip and they never expected that from me, and its funny because I never thought of myself all that different in class, but obviously, it is different.

Brock also acknowledges that being on the trip encouraged him to show more of himself. Students become privy to different sides of him that are not on display in his classroom.

I think the students really get a realization that we're just real people too and because there is always that stigma that you're a teacher and then all of a sudden you're kind of normal too. You make jokes and goof around and swear under your breath, things like that.

For Lance

For Lance, the trip is an escape from the façade of professionalism: the dress clothes, and the rigid demeanor which the school structure seemingly dictates. Outside of the school building Lance finds that we are allowed to “just present ourselves as ourselves.” The relaxed, active self that Lance feels constrained to be in school is on display on the trip and for him there is a sense of self-confidence that comes with that. “It makes me feel good [that] someone is able to see me as the person that I am.” Lance makes the observation that all people enjoy the opportunity to be themselves.

Isn't that what we all strive for? Wanting people to see who we are for who we are, because we don't have to pretend to be this or that for those moments they see who you are and they like who you are...I think as individuals it does not matter what the setting is we want to be who we are, we want to be seen for who we are.

In our second interview, I asked Lance to explore the reasons he believes the trip enabled him to share a more multidimensional self with the students. Lance believes that being one's more human self on the trips is possible because of the shared experience that is happening and the setting in which it is carried out. Engaging together in the challenge, being together in the natural setting, sharing the housekeeping duties enables him to share

more of his personal self because as Lance notes, “I think because of that you’re more, at least I am, I am more like them at that moment” (Interview II). Removed from the student expectations and student assumptions of adults and sharing a learning experience with them, Lance feels that he is perceived as more than just the old school counselor. Lance shares with the students his passion for cycling and the mountains, they are able to see him in his element. His nick name, “Billy Goat,” is evidence of his mountain man demeanor on the trip.

They respond to you differently in school because now that you’re a little older they don’t speak to you in the same casual manners than they used to. However once I am there [on the trip] and they get to see me in my element, they soon take more of an interest, its okay to share personal kinds of stuff that may not be accepted and they may not even care about during the course of my day. (Int. II)

For Jade

“I was really excited to be on the trip because I could share my energy.” The trips provide Jade with an opportunity to share her passion for activity in an environment that was not dictated by a rigid curriculum but a flexible one. Like the others, Jade feels a sense of restriction when it comes to sharing herself in the classroom but the relaxed atmosphere of the trip encourages her to open herself up to the students.

I’m not so worried about getting through curriculum and making sure they are on task...I can sit back, especially when we are back at the hostel, and enjoy myself a little bit more and open up and share some things.”

Home sickness is a feeling that Jade can relate to, she recalls many summer camp phone calls home, begging her parents to come and pick her up. Jade was able to share this story

with a young girl on the trip who was suffering the same feelings. In opening up about her life, Jade willingly exposed herself and was able to build a connection with that student. Jade acknowledges that shifts in student perception of teachers and the shared experience itself enables her to be share more sides of herself on the trips as compared to in her classroom. Upon returning from the trip, students often reveal to Jade that she was different on the trip than in her classroom. They appreciated her more because they were able to get to know her better because she talked with them.

Maybe because they don't see you so much as a classroom teacher, you can do that [open up] and have it not be weird. Just being in that that situation, going through the same thing, allows us to open up a little bit more.

Summary

Our conversations illuminated the importance of how our students view us and the opportunity for them to see the more human side of us rather than the teacher façade they have developed of us. The intrinsic rewards of being recognized as being entertaining, well traveled, adventurous, strong, fun, are meaningful elements of the experience. The students' perception of us as "just teachers" broke down over the course of the trip which was evidenced in journal entries and in conversation that commented on the teachers as being real people too. By recognizing that we shared a more human side of ourselves on the trip we also acknowledged that we have created a teacher façade in our classrooms. Our beliefs about appropriate professional boundaries, our personal insecurities, and our perceived roles dictated the façades we had created. On the trips those façades began to be stripped away.

4. “I Love The Teamwork...”

Spending five days together in the mountains surrounded by the majestic splendor of nature and the energy of thirty-five junior high students created a unique space for teachers. Planning and facilitating the bike trips presented the leaders with an opportunity to collaborate and work together for a common goal. Helping students accomplish an incredible challenge and witnessing a type of learning that is not always present in the typical school setting became a shared experience for the leaders of the trips. These types of experiences opened up a new avenue for collaboration and collegiality among the teachers. All of the leaders recognized the team focus of the leaders as being one of the most significant and meaningful components of the bike trips.

For Me

During my first year of teaching I felt very isolated. Although I was surrounded by a great group of people in the school there was little dialogue about teaching, other than day to day tales of students’ escapades or classroom episodes. I felt like I was hidden in my classroom, left to teach and not doing a very good job of it. I struggled, unaware that there were others around me who also shared the same tensions that I was feeling. Being a part of the bike trips and sharing that teaching experience with other educators showed me that there were teachers out there like me who wanted things to be different. We were able to share and participate in a teaching moment together which is rare in the school setting. Beyond designing assignments and exams, we were actually teaching and learning together. There was an element of team that I had not felt in the school setting. We were engaging in a positive experience and collaborating together to provide an amazing opportunity for students. I was no longer alone in my classroom and

it felt great. The collaboration, the bouncing of ideas off one another was inspiring and motivating. Collectively, we created a learning and teaching space that was filled with energy, trust, and mutual respect which has bonded us as a group of teachers. These bonds, which developed because of a shared experience, make our professional learning community even stronger.

We have continued to collaborate within the school building: working together on school initiatives, team teaching classes, co-coaching school teams, and sharing ideas with one another. There is a sense of openness within the group that welcomes dialogue and reflection, not only about the trip but about teaching in general. Informal discussions between the leaders about teaching challenges can often be heard in classrooms, hallways or in the staff room. A heightened sense of trust and comfort has resulted.

For Alex

The bonds that have developed between the leaders of the trips have been an important element of the shared experience for Alex.

There have been relationships and friendships that have been built because of the common denominator of planning and organizing the trip... We are doing things as a staff, as a group of lead teachers, to be better prepared and so the camaraderie, the collaboration, the training, the planning of that whole process become, for me, an integral part.

By sharing the bike trip experiences Alex has found that his professional relationships with the other leaders move beyond boundaries that normally define working relationships, move towards a friendship that extends outside of the school setting. “You

are working with someone [and] you have built some friendships not just collegiate processes or people that work in the same building...That to me is extremely valuable.”

For Brock

Each person taking on a role, working together towards a common goal is significant for Brock. Facilitating an experience together for the kids brings him closer to the leaders with whom he shares the experience.

I think we've been really lucky that we've had a group that's meshed so well and everyone sort of picks up different jobs, everyone knows their role and those are...the people that I'm most comfortable spending time with now and it has a lot to do with spending several days on a trip with them.

Since Brock has participated in the trips for a few years now, the novelty of the teaching experience has lessened somewhat and now sharing the experience with his colleagues is one of the most rewarding parts of the trip for him.

I think what I look forward to most is spending time with the group of leaders that we have. We always have so much fun; its three or four days of laughing and having fun. Some of the stuff you kind of dread; 'Okay, I'm going to have to drag this kid up the hill' and you anticipate where your problems are going to be but now that I've done it enough times I can get through that stuff...the main thing that I look forward to are the days we spend together.

For Lance

The shared purpose, “working together from the viewpoint of, ‘it's for the kids’” is important for Lance as well. From Lance's viewpoint the team aspect of the trip enables the leaders to help out and strengthen one another. “It certainly makes it easier on

us, easier on me, when I am surrounded by good people, solid people, funny people, nice people, efficient people, people who just help and do things.” In addition to working together, Lance explains how time spent recollecting and reflecting at the end of the day as a group of leaders strengthens the trip: “Time to share what happened between ourselves and the students and what was said during our own little down time is often quite humorous which I think keeps the trip...well oiled and still fulfilling and enriched for the students.”

For Jade

As mentioned previously, Jade is an athlete, a competitive spirit who has been a part of a team all of her life. Being on a team of leaders all working together to provide the students with a rewarding experience is one of Jade’s favorite parts of the trip. Jade focused on the team element in both of our conversations, emphasizing the importance of being connected with her colleagues.

I always look forward to the interactions and between us as colleagues, that we get have that time together, that we get to know each other, that we have those suppers together. I love being part of a team, especially with people I respect and admire and being a part of that, it just feels good (Interview II).

Her fondest memories of the trip are at the end, when we congratulate one another on the successful trip and the bonds that are established as a result.

At the end of the trip, we always do the hugs and that is one of my favorite parts. To know that we took these kids through this trip, we worked together, it was a team. The whole idea of being part of a team, I love that!

Summary

The opportunity to work together as a group of teachers to provide a successful experience for students was a significant component of the experience. I think it is such a predominant element of the trip because rarely are we offered such an opportunity professionally. As with any group it is important for us to be cautious of the group dynamics, ensuring that everyone is clear of the trip's purpose and their role. At times we can become too comfortable having planned and executed many trips and it is necessary to regroup and reestablish our focus. Another challenge is maintaining our team dynamic when we return home. So often we fall back into the routine of school and the temporary community that we established during the course of the trip remains temporary. However, as a group, we have made an effort to maintain a dialogue and in doing so we are faced with another challenge; the formation of a professional clique. We need to be cognizant of the fact that we have been given the opportunity to engage in a unique teaching experience that others have not had and instead of isolating ourselves because of this difference it is important for us to find ways of encouraging other teachers to develop and take part in similar educational experiences.

What Does This Mean For Our Teaching Practice?

The power of an adventure experience extends beyond the students by encompassing and impacting the leaders of these trips. What has been perceived by the leaders as key elements of the trip were recognized because they contrasted with the school environment. We were given an opportunity to experience teaching in a new light. This new light was significant because it was different from the other teacher experiences that we have known. The bike trips offered a new space for both personal and

professional growth; a place where we could imagine teaching and learning as something different.

The four themes that have emerged reflect the meanings we have made of our bike trip experiences. The trips have provided us with opportunities to push ourselves personally. They have challenged our perceptions of students: their capabilities, how they learn, and how we can connect with them. The trips have presented us with a chance to be more human-like in the eyes of the students as we share more of who we are with our students and each other. Finally, there was a renewed sense of team, a learning community that developed as a result of a shared experience between colleagues. These elements are meaningful because they are in contrast with what our school space offers. The perception that the school space does not allow these opportunities needs to be examined. Although the trips provide us with these meaningful elements, the benefits are lost when the trip experience remains separate from the rest of our teaching practices. We need to use these insights to inform our teaching practice and so I am left to wonder: Have these understandings been brought back to the school space? Has our teaching practice and teaching identity been affected by the trip experience and the subsequent reflection upon it?

CHAPTER VI

SO WHAT? – UNCOVERING OUR COVER STORIES

The bike trips provided teachers with an opportunity to engage in an interactive educational activity that enabled instructors to explore their teaching practice in the areas of physical education, adventure education, and experiential education. It permitted us to expand our knowledge in these areas and through this discovery we were learners alongside our students. These characteristics connect back to Borko and Putman's (1996) elements of a successful learning experience for teachers and demonstrate that the adventure bike trip has the potential for being an invaluable learning experience for the teachers that lead the trips. Missing from our trips was the element of teacher reflection.

Prior to this research study, many of the teachers' understandings from the trip were simply left to rest with them, unexamined. According to Balach and Szymanski (2003) "teachers, in particular novice teachers, become bogged down by day-to-day minutia rather than viewing their profession through the lens of their intellect" (p. 26). The lack of reflection upon our practice did not allow the individual teachers' experiences to be uncovered. Through this research it has become evident that these trips are meaningful to the leaders and can be learning experiences for them. Each participant in this study has recognized that learning has happened for them. We were placed into a teaching and learning environment that was in contrast from the one that was our daily experience. This contrast allowed us to imagine teaching and learning from a different perspective. However, when we returned to school and the traditional setting, we were held back from change as our stories of classroom teaching did not mesh with that of teaching on the trip. As we began to reflect upon this and imagine school from a previously unexamined viewpoint there was a potential for change, bringing our new

understandings into the classroom. Without this reflection the trips would stand alone as a separate entity having little impacts on our practice.

The follow chapter illuminates how dialogue between teachers, the telling and retelling our stories, opened our minds to imagining school differently. During the initial interviews the conversations surrounded the meaning the trips have had on each participant and contrasts to the school space were introduced. After analyzing those initial narratives I began to ask myself why these stories were being told and looked for insights as to what was holding us back at school. I began to see ways that the narratives could be looked at in a new light, one that could allow us to create a space in school that could be similar to the one on the trip. The intention of the second interview was to unpack some of the narratives that the participants shared. As the participants began to unpack their narratives, they examined their teaching practice and uncovered some beliefs about teaching and learning. Through this process we collectively began to challenge the beliefs that were holding us back from making our classroom spaces similar to trip spaces. Found throughout this chapter are insights from both sets of interviews, as noted as the end of the quotation.

Power of the Experience: Confidence to be the teacher you want to be

As leaders of the trips we recognized its benefits as we contrasted it with school spaces. The trip was a learning experience as it provided and renewed understandings of teaching and learning. It showed us an alternative for the way that we do things in the classroom. We were teaching students through the power of experience, allowing them to discover new understandings about themselves and others. In doing so, we as leaders acknowledge the trips as a learning experience for ourselves. We were participants with

the students in the learning process and thus were gaining new insights. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the leaders have found that the trip opened up doors to teach and learn in a new way. Experiencing this first hand was powerful because until one actually engaged in experiential teaching and learning it can be difficult to comprehend. Brock explained this as he described his first encounter with the trip:

I guess I struggled a little bit with knowing that you wanted to push kids to the point where they could fall a part and I couldn't see why you would want to do that. And I still have a tough time seeing kids get to the point where they are in tears and they don't want to go but seeing the results after they actually force themselves does make you realize that there is something going on here. They are learning something about themselves (Interview II).

I can relate to the students Brock described above because on my first trip I was at the point of tears partially due to the physical challenge but more importantly because of the emotional toll of encouraging a student who did not want to continue. It was our first day of riding and we had just climbed hill after hill arriving at a pristine lake marking the midpoint of our day. We had battled the wind the entire way up and were looking forward to the gradual descent with the wind at our backs. None of us could have predicted that the winds would shift and instead of a leisurely ride back to the hostel we had to work hard. I was at the back of the group, riding with a female student that I had not known until the trip and we were unable to see anyone ahead of us. I can remember the frustration and disgust in her voice as she stopped every few meters, wanting to quit. I did not know how to deal with this situation, how was I supposed to encourage her to continue when I did not want to keep going? Slowly, taking many rests and with me

convincing her that we were almost there, we eventually made it to the checkpoint only to find a few students and one leader waiting for us. The rest of the group had already departed for the final stretch. I can recall keeping my sunglasses on because I did not want anyone to see the tears as they streamed down my face. I was exhausted and angry, having felt abandoned on my first ever field trip and left to struggle in an uncomfortable situation. Having to rely on myself and my own strengths however was a confidence booster. As I look back on that moment now, I feel a sense of accomplishment for having made it through that ride. I guess I did not have any options at the time; we needed to get down the hill back to the rest of the group but knowing that I could fight through it mentally and work with a student to help her persevere was something I did not know I was capable of. That moment along with many others that first trip have impacted my teaching practice as I have been more willing to take on new challenges and try new initiatives that I would have normally shied away from. After the first bike trip experience I took on more responsibilities with student leadership initiatives, eventually teaching the class. I have been more innovative in my science lessons experimenting with various labs and lessons. I have more confidence in my abilities to connect and encourage students something that I struggled with my first year of teaching.

Moving beyond meaningful elements that make the trip enjoyable, the participants all agreed that they have come away with some new understandings of what it means to teach and learn. For Brock, it instilled in him a confidence to try new things and go beyond the boundaries he had set up for himself.

Learning about myself as a teacher, overcoming the physical part and having the confidence to know that you can take a group of kids...I never would have

expected to be able to do before. You start to expand the thoughts to what other things can be done. We can go beyond this and do more challenging type of activities, not necessarily things that I would have thought that I would have been doing 15 years ago when I started teaching (Interview II).

The trips were also an eye opener for Brock as students began to share their classroom perceptions of him. He was surprised he was been seen as rigid and boring, something he had wanted to make sure he did not fall into after watching his uncle in a classroom.

I think my teaching is changed due to these trips....When I was a kid my hero for awhile was my uncle who was a grade 7 teacher. When I got to junior high he was in my school and I actually ended up having him for a class and I couldn't believe how different he was in a classroom. He was just straight and not joking and when I knew him he was always joking around. I always thought I don't want to be like that and then when I went on that first trip and then kids were talking about... my monotone voice and classes being boring...I was like, 'Holy cow, I've kind of become like him.' I'm kind of stiff in my class and that's not what I wanted to be. So I think I've made a more conscious effort to be a little bit more relaxed and tried to connect with the kids a little bit more....It's an eye opener to talk to the kids in a really relaxed setting like that and find out what they really think about the way you do things (Interview II).

Recognizing that he had become his uncle was profound for Brock. Reflecting upon the comments the students were making allowed him to see himself in a different light, one with which he was not comfortable. It has encouraged Brock to change how he interacts with the students in his classroom, it has been a shift in his practice.

For Alex, the trips have provided him with new understanding about the power in sharing himself with the students. The connections that he developed on the trips with students had been significant for him; and upon returning to the school setting, Alex tried to bring some of that into his classroom.

When I get back and realize that there are different connections that you make with the students and what worked and what didn't work and there is a shift towards a lot more of those techniques...it comes back to a level of comfort, what we feel comfortable disclosing about ourselves and still maintaining that structure. If you are more yourself then the students will respond better (Int. II). Relating his teaching experiences and knowledge to tools in a toolbox, Alex viewed his new understandings as new tools that he has added to his collection.

Every situation where we deal with students and other staff we take a look at what works, what we need to improve upon, what may not have worked...and we add those aspects to our toolbox. If I have five or ten or twenty different strategies for how to deal with a certain situation, how to motivate a child, how to assess a child, how to get them to challenge themselves and so on then I believe that makes me a better teacher (Interview II).

Lance recognized that through the trips he has become a better facilitator of learning, helping students make connections which has made the trips meaningful in themselves. Lance described his teaching style as more of a facilitator than a deliverer of information and so the trips enabled him to move away from the more rigid structures of the classroom and build upon and learn more about facilitating student discovery.

I think what the learning is for me is it gives me an opportunity to get reacquainted with these concepts. I find that I'm a little more effective because of the practice of making those emotional moments, the euphoria or tears, a teachable moment. To get there a little quicker, to work with it and as a result, I am able to serve those objectives...more effectively with the kids (Interview II).

Jade found that her leadership skills have improved and her connections with students have been strengthened as a result of the trip. She has more confidence in herself, which has enabled her to imagine taking on new challenges that she would have past up previously.

I have been a stronger leader having been on the trips and having watched you guys...and maybe I have even felt threatened you know as a teacher to go do like a big thing like that but now I feel more confident going into many other situations because I am less intimidated because I have been through it before...I find that I am a stronger leader, I have learned strategies and behaviors that make me a more effective leader...learn more about some of the kids. Some of these connections are pretty special. I guess having been on the trip before, when you are making connections you appreciate them a little more (Interview II).

Shifting Perceptions: New understandings of teaching away from staged school learning

For the leaders of the trips, there existed contrasts between the trip spaces and the school spaces. The contrasting ways in which we interacted with students and viewed student learning initiated for us an opportunity to shift our perceptions of teaching and learning. The adventure experiences enabled or encouraged each of us to teach differently

on the trips. We opened ourselves up, made new connections, and shared in the learning with our students.

The leaders of these trips recognized that by opening up with their students and showing them more of who they are, the connections that were built with the students were stronger. Richardson and Placier (2001) identify students as being the most important agents of socialization for teachers. “Teachers and students engage in a process of mutual socialization that changes the teachers’ approaches, language use, expectations, and instructional methods” (p. 924). Through the trips, the leaders and the students shared a learning experience with each other and in essence were thereby connected. This shared experience was perceived differently from the learning that goes on in school.

Traditionally in school there is a division between teacher and student, where the teacher delivers information to students who require the material. Teachers tend to be closed off and can set up boundaries in order to maintain discipline and in return students also hold back. The personal relationships and connections that resulted on the trip were instigated by an environment that encouraged sharing and dialogue between both students and leaders. As leaders, we learned that we can share ourselves more wholly and still maintain a level of respect with the student. In fact, we saw that the respect that was garnered in this setting was greater than what we achieved in the traditional school. The reciprocated relationship that was built was based on trust and mutual respect.

As well, the trip enabled the leaders to see learning differently. We saw the impact that an experience such as the bike trip had on students. Alex talked about the ‘realness’ of the learning environment on the bike trip:

There is real life and then there is staged. And I think that the traditional classroom is very staged. And when we remove the students from that environment and we take them out on a trip like this then we end up giving them an opportunity to experience real life...essential it is real. They are going to learn a lot more about themselves, about others, about the environment and then they take something out of that back into their own lives (Interview II).

Teaching by facilitating learning rather than delivering was a shift for many of us. We were seeing students more engaged and excited about learning, we saw them discovering new things about themselves and others, and we have see them years later still talking about their junior high bike trip. During our conversations, Lance reminisced about a student with whom he has continued to cross paths and during these encounters the dialogue is always centered on their shared bike trip experience.

He often shares that he's never had an educational experience as that one was. He is now in this third year university and since grade nine year he hasn't had any particular challenging moments and he has never had any lasting memories as that experience. He always brings that up, it was the physical challenge of being able to sustain the energy day after day. To him, it was such an accomplishment that he always goes back to that...and the fun associated with that (Interview I).

These experiences were powerful, yet as a group of leaders little of what we have learned was being brought back into our classrooms. For Brock the trip revealed a new approach to teaching but he was quick to describe why things were not changing in his classroom.

Its like being in school your whole life and getting out and realizing that there's a whole new world out there, a whole big road that you haven't really experienced

because you've just been in this classroom this whole time. So you come back from there [the trip] and you feel like in a rut and you're frustrated and you want to try some different things. So I try and do different things and then after a while you just get back to that old time pressure and so it's back to the routine. (Int. 1)

Changing school learning: What's holding us back?

Although most of us went back to school sharing more of ourselves with our students, we did very little in our classrooms in the way of experiential education. The type of teaching that we do in schools has been prescribed by past learning experiences. As students most of us were taught in a traditional school setting, learning through information delivery. Brock remembered how he was given information and little of his learning came way of experience. The few times he did have experiences in classes were his fondest memories of school.

I know for myself the only 'real thing' that I did was my PE 30 trip, and you remember it but you didn't really accomplish all that much, there was no barriers that you got over, it was just a couple of days out, hanging out, do a few things and, but you just remember those things for a long time. I still remember a grade 8 Outdoor Ed. trip that I did back in Grande Prairie, and there some little parts of that, that you still remember and you keep, and you can affect the kids in a way that they remember things in the years to come (Interview I).

The memories that stood out for Alex were also those that connected to hands-on learning and yet those were not the courses that were given the greatest priority as they were the 'elective' courses. As we moved through the education system, the majority of our experiences involved direct teaching methods where information was delivered to us and

it is the teaching methodology by which we have been influenced. These are the stories by which we teach. The beliefs and structures that we ascribe to are influenced by our past experiences and dictate how we, ourselves, teach in the system we moved through (Calderhead, 1996; Carter & Doyle, 1996; Clandinin & Connelly, 1988). Clandinin & Connelly (1996) describe these lived stories as being comprised both by our stories of experiences and by the stories told of us as teachers on our school landscapes.

Olson and Craig (2005) explored the impacts of these stories and how they shape teachers as well as prevent them from changing their approach to teaching and learning. These stories, called cover or sacred stories by Crites (1971), introduce “one way to explain how individuals come to terms with contradictions between the stories they desire to author and the stories expected of them by others” (Olson & Craig, 2005, p. 164). The new understandings that the leaders of the bike trips brought back to school were often in conflict with the understanding that they had in the school setting. There was a desire to approach teaching differently in the classroom, however, our cover stories held us back. Through our conversations we began to uncover our cover stories and challenge them. In challenging these stories we began to imagine a new teaching space.

Our Cover Stories: Curriculum driven v Relationship driven

In schools we carried out cover stories. The need for discipline, the constraints of the curriculum, and the image of professionalism all held us back from trying something different, something new, or something unique. These cover stories are social constructions that we have come to know from each of our experiences as students and teachers. As educators is it important for us to examine these stories, to look at how they are impacting our schools and our own professional development. As Olson and Craig

(2005) warn, refraining from bringing these stories forward can lead to a stagnant school space where change becomes very difficult. By challenging social constructs of teaching and schools, educators have the potential to open up new avenues through which to tell new stories of teaching. When only one story is allowed to be told and the other stories are left to remain in the shadows, the possibilities for change are lost. The participants identified many reasons why it was difficult to make our classroom spaces more trip-like when we examined the trip and how to connect it to the other spheres of our teaching practice. These were the cover stories that we were living at school.

Lack of Time

Time is a crucial element that seemed to prevail as the strongest constraint to implementing our new understandings of student learning back into the school setting. There was a perception that it takes more time to connect with the students and to come up with activities that are experience based rather than information driven. As Brock described, “I think the biggest detriment to experiential learning is time” (Interview II). In my conversation with Jade, I talked about the tensions that I felt coming home from the adventure trips.

For me, I find that I get back from the trip and I feel this tension, this frustration because I know how effective it is being on the trip, teaching through experience and having those connections and then I get into my classroom where I’m dictated by curriculum and there’s a bell schedule and I teach 32 kids and I need to get through a certain amount of stuff and there’s all these other things that I need to do and I get frustrated because I know that I should be doing it, but in my classroom I don’t feel like I can do those things in the school space we’ve created (Interview I).

The time demands on teachers are high and appeared to be holding us back from change. Alex cited time as one of the reasons he found connecting with students more difficult at school as compared to on the trips. “We are limited by the amount of time that we spend with these kids” (Interview I). On the trips Alex found that he had time to share himself with the students, time to dialogue and connect which contrasted with the lack of time he found available to do the same at school.

We have, for a module, 75 hours and in 75 hours we need to cover this curriculum whereas on a bike trip we have our 30 or 75 hours as far as structure and in all that time we may only need 15 hours of actual time. The other or the balance of the time becomes relaxed time, it becomes connecting time between the people; the students, the staff etcetera. At that point is when the comfort level really increases because now you get to know the person and it is different than in the classroom where it is curriculum driven versus relationship driven, you get to know the people (Interview II).

Time was a major barrier for Jade as well. There was a sense of frustration because with the demands placed on a teacher there was not the time for her to implement the type of learning she saw on the trips into her classroom, at least to the extent she desired. “Its time, its other commitments, I don’t think it is because I don’t want to or because I am nervous to. I don’t think it is because kids aren’t open to it, those are all there. It is really a shame, so you do it when you can and you just have to be happy with that” (Interview II). She compared the time she has to share learning experiences with the kids on the trip with the time she has for students at school. She highlighted that the trip spaces allowed

her to focus primarily on the kids taking her away from the other multiple demands that pulled her away from that focus at school.

Coming back to school I would love to stay and focus on a million things at once because you want to give 110% to every single thing but you can't. Some of the learning that happens [in school] is a product of all the other stuff that is going on all around which, 'do I feel right about it?' No, but it is reality and I like to think I am doing the best...that I can but there are so many other things going on that it is hard to focus, it is hard to do a great job. On the trip if there is one person that needs help you have all the means to fix it...The time that is available is huge and allows for a lot of other things to happen...part of being on the trip pulls you away from it [the busyness of school] as there is nothing else to do there, no other extra things, you are there and you're more focused on it (Interview II).

Curricular Demands

As classroom teachers, we found the curriculum demands placed upon us by the provincial government restricting for experiential programming. There is a mandate to 'cover' certain objectives over the course of the year and there always seems to be a rush to do so. The curriculum for the leadership class had an experiential foundation, developed at the school level. This allowed us as leaders to take those objectives and implement them on the trip more readily and easily than in the mandated curriculum of our other courses. Lance described the attempt to implement an experiential program into our current curricular framework:

I certainly think that can be done but in some respects I just don't know if the type of curriculum, as they exist for predominantly all subjects, allow for that. I think that is the obstacle. When we're out there [on the trip] the curriculum is the sky,

literally and figuratively, and it is really great to do that and we see the benefits of growth in different dimensions by the students. To capture that in the classroom would be just awesome but you would always be answering to the more structured curriculum (Interview II).

Alex described his perception of the government mandated curriculum as being very structured; pen to paper type learning that inhibits the experiential learning that could be beneficial to students.

It is a structured environment to the point where students have their curriculum, there's the assignment, they can take it home and get it done and bring it back in and for the most part its all mind work...the school is a very structured environment, curriculum driven and...just based on the structure it [experiential opportunities] are not necessarily there (Interview I).

Brock also saw the potential to bring experiences into the classroom but felt restrained by the curriculum and the time it took to implement and create those activities.

I guess for myself I feel sort of bound by the curriculum a lot of time and you have to get through certain things...I know that there are some real creative math people out there that have come up with some things that follow the curriculum but are still experiential and I've always been sort of open to those things but again it comes back to time crunch and you've got to get through 'x' amount of things (Interview I).

For Jade, the curricular demands held her back from engaging in more activity based teaching. She recognized that there is a need to add them to her classroom teaching but the material she is required to cover acted a barrier to that implementation.

It is curriculum, if we had more time in the classroom you could be...a better, different teacher. Maybe that sounds like I should be better, a different teacher ...the fact of what we have to get through, there is so much to cover and you lose sight of doing some activities that are really engaging for the kids because mid year, right or wrong, the focus is on what I have to get through (Interview II).

Need for Discipline and Structure

There is a perception that teachers require a certain level of classroom control obtained through structure and discipline in order for students to learn optimally. As the participants of this study explained, that structure and discipline occurs to the detriment of sharing ourselves with the students.

Brock found that when he began to share more of himself he felt as though he was losing control of his classroom, something that he was uncomfortable doing.

I always felt like you had to be in control all of the time and every once and a while when I would try to crack a joke or do something kids would start laughing and then they all start chattering away and you tend to lose control of the class...so I didn't do it. I don't know if I have the confidence to allow that little bit of freedom...where it is just a little more light hearted, joking around.

(Interview II)

For Alex to find structure in the classroom conducive to experiential learning is difficult.

I find it is somewhat difficult over twenty five years of teaching to set that kind of environment because you end up still having to structure the rules of the classroom and even if you reorganized your classroom into circles or into pods it still very structured environment and in my thinking of that it is difficult to get the students to be really motivated. Yes, this is a requirement of a class or of a course,

but how do we get that structure more relaxed? Sometimes it can't, just because of the nature of the environment or the situation that we are in...Because the students are expected to have a fairly tight set of structured rules ...they are also bound by that same restriction as we are as staff...it is a different atmosphere ...Structured in the sense that students need to be very quiet and listening to certain things at certain times. If it becomes too noisy then others can't concentrate. The nature of content and the course requirement is different.

(Interview II)

Structure and discipline proved to be a barrier in the leader's capacity to share themselves with students as they did on the trip. Jade's response to the questions of, "Do you share yourself differently out there, on the trip, than you do in your classroom?" was:

Yes, number one because I think as far as discipline issues, when you go to the classroom you've got to keep kids focused and you've got to get through things and there's the whole idea of discipline and the kids are good on the trip. There aren't any discipline issues that usually can't be handled easily (Interview I).

Lance found it difficult to share his relaxed self because "in the school environment certainly my role is still some administration where you sometimes have to play the discipline roles and that kind of thing" (Interview I). The student's perception of how he should behave tended to dictate how much he shared with the students.

Professional standing and connecting with students

Perhaps it is due to their administrative roles in the school and the professional image they believed they must maintain that restricted both Lance and Alex from sharing themselves more wholly and connecting with students at school as they did on the trips.

For Alex, taking on different roles on the trip contrasted with the roles he was expected to carry out in the school setting. Alex recognized the power in opening up to the students on the trips but found it difficult to be that same way in school as it challenged his beliefs about the role he was expected to carry out in the building.

I find that once you get back into a classroom, my role changes. As an administrator I have certain roles and responsibilities; as a teacher I have different roles and responsibilities; as a leader, not the key leader but as a support leader on the bike trip I have again different responsibilities. Depending on what those responsibilities are...I am still myself, there is a different level of responsibility which changes some of the approach, how I react to the students. (Interview I)

Lance held that in school there is a perception of how teachers should look and behave.

I think the parents would have a certain expectation that we as teachers would be professional and keep a certain amount of respect and expect them [the students] to refer to us by our surname...I don't think that they would necessarily want us to be just hanging around with their kids. In a typical school day I think administration probably would want some sort of professional standing between us and them but on this particular trip there doesn't have to be that (Interview I).

The idea of this “professional standing” acted as a barrier to sharing ourselves with our students. It is the same professional stance that I felt in my first years of teaching, when I stood behind my science counter and shared very little with my students. It is also the same “professional standing” that prevented Jade from sharing herself with her students.

I remember early in my teaching career, I always felt you keep your personal life separate; they don't need to see pictures of your boyfriend, they don't need to see

pictures of your family. That's separate; they don't need to know that about you because that's none of their business...I don't know where that came from, maybe just the idea of what a teacher does; keeping that privacy. Maybe it was that I felt like I didn't want people to know all about my business, I didn't think it was necessary for them in order for me to communicate the curriculum. But the more I teach the more I'm seeing that's so important. The kids love that and I'm doing that a lot more and I guess it might be a reflection of the trip. (Interview I)

Lance described this professional standing and the idea of professionalism in the schools as a façade that was not present on the trips and yet there we were as professional, if not more so.

Basically in my opinion there are superficial levels of professionalism here [at school] obviously shirt and tie. You know we try to have a more physical kind of professionalism which isn't out there because we're just in sweats, the hair's messed up, so certainly from that viewpoint, the silly façade is stripped away but the most important sense of professionalism is, whether there or here, one of 'do we respect the students?' 'Do we embrace inner trust?' They are still our first and top most priority and I think those are always there anyway, but we're just not in a shirt and tie in order to show that (Interview II).

Summary

In their research Olson and Craig (2005) noted the many teachers do not even consciously recognize that they are living cover stories and that "part of learning to live cover stories is to downplay what we know, even though our actions are driven by the 'real' story" (p. 178). The real story for the leaders of the bike trip was the effective learning and way of teaching in which they engaged and witnessed on the bike trips.

Through their investigations Olson and Craig suggest that space be provided for teachers to share and reflect upon all of their stories; for without that reflective process, teachers will continue their teaching practices on an unexamined foundation. During this research process I began to ask myself and the research participants to challenge their cover stories, to imagine a space to integrate the new stories they had written on the trips.

Challenging the Cover Story: Imagining something different and becoming multi-dimensional

In order to have professional change teachers need a shake-up of the cover story, they need to undergo a renovation. In the initial conversations with the participants the same stories were being used to explain why we were not implementing experiential learning into our classroom even though we recognized this educational process as being effective in comparison to our traditional teaching. During our second conversation we began to challenge those stories, asking ourselves to imagine it differently. Bringing those stories to the forefront and recognizing how we used them to create barriers for change allowed us to also remove them as obstacles. Up until this time, as a group of leaders, we had not truly reflected upon our experiences. As Jade described:

I needed more time to reflect on what can I do or what did I learn about myself. I think I am going to learn a lot about myself now but I didn't have enough time even after we got back (Interview I).

Without reflecting upon the meaning the trips held for us, the new understandings we were discovering remained hidden and the trip stood alone as a separate entity, disconnected from the school space. Many of us returned from the trip with ideas for next year's adventure but we did not think about how we could take the experience and use it

to improve upon other areas of our teaching practice. Brock described this sense of disconnection:

I haven't really necessarily equated it all of the time. I get back to my math class and it's always kind of an out of body experience the first day back after the bike trip. You see the kids and you go back to the normal routine, in class it's just a little detached I guess (Interview I).

Once we began to reflect upon the meaningful elements of the trip and challenge the obstacles we perceived as being in the way of that type of space at school, we were able to imagine our teaching and learning environment as more 'trip-like.'

At the beginning of this process Brock saw time and curriculum as major barriers but after continued dialogue and reflection he began to recognize that it could be possible to implement a trip-teaching philosophy into his classroom.

I think I'm starting to get to the point where I think it doesn't really matter if you get through everything in the curriculum. I think what matters is if the kids get a pretty good grasp of most things that are there and they come out with some solid things that they've learned, that they've done (Interview II).

Brock also began to see a change in his classroom practice, he shifted towards a more shared learning environment, sharing himself with the students and making connections that ultimately were more conducive to learning than his previous classroom space.

I don't mind spending 20 minutes in math class talking about snowmobiling or something, whatever is interesting for the kids. If you end up with a meaningful conversation that the kids are engaged in and asking questions and are talking or

giving their little stories then I don't mind doing that because it is a teaching moment, they're interested and so let's go with it (Interview II).

For Alex, who maintained that school structure and discipline held him back from sharing himself with the students, challenging that perception enabled him to imagine his 'trip-self' in the school space.

Yeah, I think that it [sharing more of myself] would be beneficial and I think that it can happen. I think it is up to us.... We learn a little bit more about ourselves and what works and what I think it comes right back to is a comfort level or comfort zone. Do I feel comfortable and confident to let my strict aspect or structure aspect that I have in the classroom go? If I can ease off on that, how will my students respond? I guess in putting some thought into that whole process and seeing how the kids react and respond on the trip then I would say 'yes I can see the benefit'....Presenting yourself as a real person....As a staged teacher you are just a one dimensional at the front of the classroom but as soon as you move away from that one dimensional screen you become a three or multi dimensional person that becomes real and who they interact with (Interview II).

Lance's perception of what the students expected of him at school as compared to on the trip was restraining him from sharing himself at school. The trip setting and activity allowed Lance to move beyond the teacher facade and he recognized that the students responded positively to that. However, at school he believed that it did not really matter to students if he shared himself. As we challenged that perception, Lance began to see that there may be a place for his "trip-self" in school and that it was not so much about

what the students expected but more so the insecurities or perceptions that he brought into the school setting.

I don't feel that I should...if it is in the school, go out of my way in order to show something of myself. I don't mind doing that but if you're going out of your way to do it, then sometimes the kids can look at that and say; "Oh, what is he trying to prove?"... I guess I never ever wanted to be seen as showing off so as a result I tend to sort of hold myself back...I don't want them to view me as trying to prove something or trying to be young. We...may be downplaying ourselves, thinking that they wouldn't want to see it or hear it or that kind of thing. So really the joy for this educator on that kind of trip is that I can just be who I am and the kids can see who I am and I think that is awesome and of course that helps me to try to facilitate those teachable moments (Interview II).

Through our conversation, Jade began to imagine the potential for experiential learning in her math class. "I think depending on what you are teaching and depending on the class that you are teaching, I think that there is potential for this" (Interview II). In recognizing its potential, Jade began to incorporate discovery learning in her math class, a shift from the giving of information approach she was accustomed to.

For a measurement unit I ditched the unit exam and we are doing a project where they [the students] had to create a 3-D container for Pepsi for a Pepsi contract and they had to come up with a commercial for this and I loved how excited kids are. I find it fun to talk about it and see some of my kids perk up that won't normally perk up. Before going into this I spent a long time wondering if we were going to get through this. It is quicker to do the test than teach this as a self-directed

learning but it has been great because they have been working great and getting through it [the curriculum] and still understanding it. I might be a touch behind but the benefits outweigh that and that is what I have to keep reminding myself of and I will do it again next year (Interview II).

In joint conversing and reflecting, the participants and I were able to begin uncovering the cover stories and by doing so began to imagine our teaching spaces differently. We started to move away from the curriculum and discipline excuses, seeing the potential for change in concert with stories that once held us back. As cited by Olson and Craig (2005), Ritchie and Wilson state that “when teachers are given the opportunity to compose and reflect on their own stories of learning and of selfhood within a supportive and challenging community, then teachers can begin to resist and revise the scripting narratives of the culture and begin to compose new narratives of identity and practice” (p. 178). Through reflection and recognition of the things that were holding us back from teaching and learning most effectively, we began to open ourselves up to the possibility for change. In a written reflection that he brought with him to our second interview Lance summarized that the ultimate goal is to gain some wisdom.

Wisdom is gained...ultimately if you can get a kernel of wisdom from this then I think that's the salient kind of goal of all of this. And to me that just comes from within, from modeling, from experiencing, from challenging, from everything. “Can you concretize an experience, the feelings behind the experience?” If you can then I think it comes through as some wisdom (Interview II).

Leading to the Now What?

As we collectively reflected upon meaning of the adventure bike trip experience we were compelled to ask ourselves how our teaching practice has been impacted. Although we recognized the power of the experience and facilitated student learning in a new way, what became apparent was a realization that our classroom teaching and in-school personas were not meshing with our trip identities. We were continuing to live out the school cover story; allowing curriculum demands, time restraints, discipline issues and perceived professional image to dictate our practice. As we began to reflect upon our experiences and uncover and challenge our cover stories we were able to begin imagining a space for change. As teachers we were able to connect the trip experience back to school and thus have begun to take those new understandings and mesh them into our evolving teacher identities.

A key element and ingredient that was missing from our trip, one that would have enabled us to more effectively incorporate our new understanding back to the classroom was reflection. We did not sit down and talk about what we were understanding and seeing; we did not take the time to look at how the trips had impacted our beliefs about teaching and learning. We recounted often but reflected little. As Dewey (1938) and Borko and Putman's (1996) research review made clear, reflecting upon the experience is when learning will occur.

CHAPTER VII

NOW WHAT?

Addressing the last research question, “What happens when teachers collectively explore the meanings of an adventure education trip in relation to their teaching practice?” this chapter will examine what can be done to enable teachers to fully explore their teaching practices in relation to new experiences that they share with students and colleagues. We have recognized that the adventure experience offered new understandings about what it means to teach and learn, and through this research process we have begun to imagine teaching in our classrooms differently.

This chapter highlights some key components of this collective research process that enabled the participants to begin looking at their teaching practice and imaging their teaching spaces and identity differently. There is a need for teachers to experience teaching in unique ways along with reflection that encourages new insights that challenge our cover stories. In addition to those experiences, teachers require a space in a community where they can dialogue. It was with these elements that the participants in this study were able to begin shifting their beliefs about teaching and learning.

A Step in a New Direction - Activation of Practice

Change has begun, a step in a new direction for teachers who have experienced something different in their profession. The participants in the study talked about actions that they have already undertaken that reflect the new understandings they have developed because of the bike trip experience. In my science classes I have begun to engage students in a critical examination of the topics we explore. Rather than passively taking in information, I have worked with the students, encouraging them to be active participants in their learning. I have structured my lessons so that curricular outcomes are

now tied to real world issues, such as global warming, natural disasters, and environmental sustainability, as a way of facilitating learning so students make connections to their world rather than having independent pieces of information that have no ties to anything outside of the classroom. I have worked to create an environment that provides teachable moments (similar to the bike trip) where students are discovering something new about themselves and the world around them. I have tried to use the mandated curriculum as a spring board for this initiative rather than focusing on its perceived restrictive nature as I had previously. Both Brock and Jade commented that they have implemented some experiential learning objectives into their math classrooms. Jade's self directed Pepsi Can assignment allows students to discover math principles at work in the "real world." Brock has taken a similar approach to teaching scale drawings in math. He has had the students build snow sculptures to scale, again applying math concepts in an experiential way. Alex has found that he has structured his assignments differently, allowing them to be more conducive to a shared learning environment, one where students are making connections to their lives and interests. In his information processing class, Alex has students select any area of interest to produce a power point. This has allowed students to work on a topic that has meaning for them and enables them to share that passion and interest with their peers and teacher. Thus he has cultivated an increased level of trust and comfort for himself and his students. Lance has found better ways of facilitating meaning making for his students rather than simply engaging in the activity with them. Throughout the trip and now at school, Lance finds himself debriefing with the students. He engages in dialogue with them, helping them to reflect upon their experiences.

All four participants and I have begun to share ourselves more freely with our students in the school space as well. Recognizing the power in the connections that were being made on the trips has enabled us to look past the perceived barriers of structure and discipline and allowed ourselves to open up. We have seen students respond positively to this change; they are more engaged in class, there is less need for traditional discipline measures, and the relationships with the students have become reciprocal with both teachers and students sharing. Ultimately, this has enabled a teaching space in the school that, rather than being dominated by structure and discipline, has instead turned in the direction of a shared learning and teaching experience.

Each leader, including myself, has begun to challenge our cover stories, recognizing that we have used the perceived restrictions of time, curriculum, discipline, and professional image to hold us back from moving in a new direction. We have stirred up some perceptions that we had of our teaching identities, imagined new possibilities for our practice, and are now left to take the next step. How we mesh these new understandings with our old constructions will determine whether change will happen in our classrooms. There appears to be a desire for change and it will be up to each one of us to take what we now know and allow it to become intertwined within the story of who we are as teachers. As a learning community, it will be important for us to continue to talk about the challenges and changes we face and for us to support one another and maintain a dialogue that encourages reflection and new imaginings. Informal debriefing between participants is an ongoing process however it is important for us, as a group of leaders, to ensure that we set time aside to continue this reflection process. Gathering for dinner, riding together, or going for drinks after school all provide opportunities for us to

continue to collectively reflect upon our experiences. Our beliefs have begun to shift because we have started to unpack where they came from and have the social support and space that enables change.

It is evident that adventure can and does exist in schools - it just requires us, as teachers, to facilitate it. We are refining our practice, reflecting on it and examining ourselves and, as Horwood (1999) describes, by taking on this challenge we are being as adventurous as our students. Although adventure bike trips instigated our discovery, they are not the only way to provide adventure in schools. They served as the vehicle for change, they kick-started the reflection into our teaching identity. Adventure is a component of school, both on the bike trips and in our classrooms; we simply need to see it as such. "What is essential is the wholehearted, wide-eyed spirit of adventure in both teachers and students, who, together, seek to do their utmost with their hands, heads and hearts" (Horwood, 1999, p. 12). Witnessing the power of the experience, the new insights gained, and the shift in practice for the participants through this research, has prompted me to examine the components that have encouraged this process.

Need for Experiences

It is important to recognize the power of teachers' stories and the abundance of knowledge that is held within them. Kindled in each teachers' multiple stories are understandings that they have accumulated throughout their years of being students and teachers (Calderhead, 1996; Carter & Doyle, 1996; Richardson & Placier, 2001). Along with each person's individual experiences, the vision of who one is in the classroom is also a product of social constructions and the cover stories maintain traditions even when one understands learning in far more enabling ways (Diniz-Pereira, 2003; Olson & Craig,

2005). Brock and Alex told stories of their high school experiences, talking of their enjoyment of classes that were engaging and hands on. Lance has taught a broad spectrum of courses and different groups of students and has described his style as unconventional. Jade talked about not wanting to share herself with her students, believing that a teacher's life is private. We have formulated our teaching identities through these stories and have come to know who we are in our classrooms because of them. Our identities are dynamic and fluid constructions that depend "upon the continuity of experience through time, a continuity bridging even the cleft between remembered past and projected future" (Crites, 1971, p. 302). As we continue to develop our teaching knowledge we need to be provided with experiences that can be storied, new experiences that challenge and ask us to reflect upon the stories we already know.

Often times, teachers get into a rut, accepting that traditional methods of teaching are the only way to do things. It is the familiar, it is a comfortable space and without experiences that show that things can be different, there will be a tendency to continue teaching in an unexamined and one-dimensional manner. The need to escape the normal routine of school can paint a picture of the school space as being a prison. Throughout our conversations, the participants of this study and I commented on feeling restricted. We have allowed ourselves to be confined by our cover stories; the perceived mandates of curriculum, time, discipline, and professionalism. However the school space does not have to be prison-like. We are able to change that space and one way of doing so is to allow ourselves to experience teaching differently and imagine taking a sense of that back into our classrooms. The participants of this study have begun to make their classroom spaces less prison-like and more trip-like.

Adventure experiences, like the bike trip, enabled the leaders to experience teaching in a new space, physically and metaphorically. It brought about new understandings and imaginings for the classroom learning space which before that time was a very ingrained structure. The participants of this study have begun to recognize the meanings of their trip experiences and the impact it has had on their teaching practice. These trips have become a valuable and critical component in the ongoing development of their professional identity.

Without these experiences, our school would have been missing something. Both Brock and Jade felt as though they were stronger teachers and leaders in the school because of the trips. They said that they felt more confident now, after doing the trips, to take on larger projects at school. The trips and subsequent reflection upon them have enabled Lance to better make meaning for his students, whether on the trip or in his classroom. Alex recognized that because of the trips he has made an effort to relate and share himself more with his students. These experiences were powerful and hold an important space in the lives of the leaders. It is essential that schools continue to develop programs such as this, not only for the benefit of the students but as well for the teachers. We have seen the impact experiences such as the bike trip have on students. If more teachers engaged in various adventure type trips or other experiential based activities, access to these forms of experiences would be greater for the students. As Julie's story exemplified, teachers need to be aware that all students should and can benefit from these types of experiences and with more teachers involved and shifting their practice, a greater number of students would be impacted. In addition to that, engaging in these forms of activities can enable us to approach the learning in our everyday practice in a new

manner. Unpacking my own beliefs and engaging in a reflective process through autoethnography enabled me to more critically examine my teaching practice. The trip offered me many teachable moments that I had not experienced in my classroom. My challenge was to find a way to open my classroom practice in order that it may elicit similar teachable moments. My classroom practice has become more experiential based because of what I have learned about teaching and learning from the bike trip. Although it is my leadership students who partake in the adventure bike trip, I have begun to shift my practice in order that my other students, be that in science or fitness and games, are also engaged in experiential learning. I am shifting my identity towards a facilitator of discovery rather than a deliverer of information; even 'simple' practices such as questioning have changed for me. Rather than telling my science students what we are going to learn at the onset of a new unit, we engage in a conversation about what they think and hope they will be discovering in the unit. This provides them with the opportunity to own the unit, to engage with the material with an early inquiry rather than having me dictate to them about what we are about to 'cover.' For me, it provides an insight into their areas of interest within the topic so that I can incorporate it into our lessons, and it allows me to gauge their background knowledge on the topic and any misconceptions they may have. I have worked with my students, in a shared learning experience and have become less of the teacher façade and more of a human being. The personal distance that was once there has been reduced and I now hear students say that I am not that different on the trip than at school. They no longer have to wait for the trip to get to know their teacher. By unpacking my cover stories and the perceived restrictions schools placed on me I have changed, I feel like a better teacher.

Teaching in an educational climate that focuses on curriculum, accountability, examination results, liability, legality, and insurance can make it difficult for programs such as ours to proceed. We recognize, as with all activities at school, there are inherent risks associated with our bike trip experience. We are challenging the students physically, pushing them to their perceived limits. They are hiking up a mountain and standing at its peak. But prior to the trip and throughout the trip we are cautious and diligent in ensuring that at all times safety is the priority. Constant monitoring and evaluation of the students and the environment occurs throughout each day. The leaders of the trips are aware that there is a potential for danger on the trips just as there is if one were to take a group of students to the swimming pool on a field trip, or simply driving the school bus to a volleyball tournament. With the required safety guidelines, emergency plans, and precautions we have in place, we feel confident that we have set up a safe environment for the students. As leaders, we want to encourage teachers to participate in trips such as ours, to provide other students with experiences. However, there is a resistance to do so because of the fear of liability, a hesitance because of an experience that is unknown. As Brock described in our conversation, some teachers are unwilling to take the liability risk that is associated with adventure trips.

You talk to Joe⁵ a little bit and, after his experience, he was just totally shocked and flabbergasted that we take kids there and I guess his reaction was kind of surprising, he couldn't believe that we take kids on this mountain and said, 'You're crazy and my career could be over, one kid take a slip or whatever' and I never really thought of it that way (Interview I).

⁵ Name changed to protect the anonymity of the person referred to in this reference

It is important to remind teachers that the trips are safe, that they are set up to ensure the safety of the students. As Priest and Gass (2005) note, “to maximize safety, adventure professionals structure risk in a manner that causes participants to perceive it as being enormously high while in actuality it is much lower and more acceptable as a medium for producing functional change and growth” (p. 18). Adventure experiences can be facilitated that challenge students and push them to their perceived limits while maintaining a safe environment. In addition to reassuring other potential leaders of the safety, it is also important for leaders of these trips to share the impacts the trips have on their teaching identities. Being a part of the experience, actually living the practice, is the key to change. Through our adventure biking trip we were given an opportunity, like we devise for our students, to take theory and put it into action. We have acknowledged that we are better teachers for our students because we actually experienced teaching and learning in a place other than the classroom. Reading about it, listening to stories of others, although intriguing, does not enable change. In order for change to occur we needed to experience something different. We came into the adventure because new supervisors were required; and, other than Alex who had participated in outdoor education trips, we had not previously experienced teaching in this form. None of us were fully prepared for what we were about to embark on. Without prior experience we could not appreciate what we were getting ourselves into. The discovery process that each of us found ourselves working through enabled our prior knowledge to become intertwined with these new experiences. The new understandings that developed as a result have begun to emerge through this research process. Upon reflection of the trips, all of the leaders agreed that, although it is challenging and at times frustrating, allowing new

leaders to experience the adventure trip in its rawest form, without copious amounts of pre-trip preparation and mentoring, was the most beneficial and rewarding way to experience the trip. Obviously, general trip expectations and logistics were required to ensure student safety; but beyond that the leaders recognized that being allowed to discover a way of teaching, without a prescription, was critical and empowering. Lance affirmed this notion in his suggestion for preparing new leaders:

You know at the end of it, I interestingly enough, think that obviously the new person should know the logistics and be made aware of the organization but I would favor the least said on what you're going to experience the better. Then you are getting it as a personal discovery because you have to get it. You have to experience it; you have got to experience it for what it is without pre-structuring, without the sort of pre-notions (Interview II).

The meaningful elements of the trips - connecting with students, shared learning, and sharing oneself - were products of discovery. Alex addressed this aspect of experience through his reflection: "The actual connections that are made, the discussions, the interactions between staff and students, the opportunities to learn about who everyone else is and the sharing of those stories, I think that that is a discovery process" (Interview II). It was imperative that our trips were safe for students and that the leaders were equipped to ensure that safety. However, how we facilitated student success and connected with them to make the experiences meaningful and memorable was an art that could not be taught but was discovered as we experienced the trips. Ultimately, the trips became experiential learning opportunities for both the students as well as the leaders.

It would be irresponsible and naïve to suggest that all teachers, or even all students, need to partake in an adventure bike experience to reap similar benefits as the leaders and students who took part in our trips. In fact a criticism within the literature of adventure based programming is that it can be elitist, suggesting that only through significant perceived risk and skill based competence will benefits be recognized (Brown, 2006). This trip was a vehicle for introspection and change for the participants in this study, however, whether it is an adventure bike trip, an outdoor education excursion, a band camp experience, a European Spring Break trip, involvement in a Drama Production, or the multitude of other experiences that are available in the school space, if designed with the educational experience elements, with ongoing reflection, and connection to future experiences, I would suggest that similar outcomes as those seen in the leaders of the trips would be possible. Teachers need to be presented and encouraged to participate in activities, like the bike trip, so that they can, at first hand, see and experience how effective experiential and shared learning can be.

Many professional development initiatives to promote experientialist and constructivist methods of teaching tell teachers what to do without facilitating the opportunity to put it into action, to experience it. Teachers are being taught in a direct way how to teach indirectly. Cibulka and Nakayama (2000) criticize such professional development activities noting that they are often chosen for teachers and are structured in a way which disconnects teachers from initiating their own learning. Some teachers view professional development as extra work added to an already overflowing cascade of tasks. In their case study of constructivist teachers, Seguine (2002) found that staff development initiatives were most effective when addressing specific needs of teachers.

“The path toward constructivist classrooms is one in which teachers will be involved in a journey of self-discovery and a new way of perceiving the task of teaching that facilitates deep meaningful learning” (p. 29).

Telling our Stories – A Need for Reflection

Teachers need to be researchers of themselves, reflecting upon their lived stories and experiences. One of the areas where we failed to develop ourselves as teachers and leaders of the adventure program was the lack of reflection that happened on and about the trip for ourselves. As Borko and Putman’s (1996) research shows, there is a need for reflection in order for the experience to be a true learning opportunity. Until this research process, the leaders of the trips were not asked to reflect upon how the trips had impacted their perceptions of teaching and learning. They had never had an opportunity to use the adventure education trip to challenge their storied assumptions about teaching.

There is a difference between reflecting upon an experience and recounting it. Whelan et al. (2001) explain that as teachers we often tell stories without reflecting upon their meaning for our practice and are left without any new insights once the story has been told. Telling tales of the trips mainly encompassed a recounting of the trials and triumphs of the students and leaders. We most often shared what had happened to us with our co-leaders and with the staff upon returning to school. Recounting the stories of the trips, although enjoyable and important for camaraderie, did not allow us to imagine a possibility for change. Jade confirmed that such dialogues, although entertaining, have not caused her to reflect upon her practice.

As much as we talk about it after and share those experiences, we share based on the kids not about what we learned for ourselves and I think that in order for it to be effective for us to use we had to change that (Interview I).

Although the stories shared affirmed the success of the trips, those affirmations were not able to illicit new possibilities for teaching in our classrooms. As leaders of the trips, discussions surrounding how the trip had affected us or the new understandings we had made were not initiated. We left the stories and the adventures on the surface, not delving deeper to find the meaning in them. In doing so, we were unable to uncover the true power of the adventure experience. Throughout my discussions with the participants and in my own reflections I have found that the true meaning of the trip and the understandings we have about teaching and learning began to be uncovered as our talks about the trips moved away from a recounting of the tales and towards the meaning the trips held for us.

This study prompted the leaders to contrast the trip spaces with their classroom spaces, encouraging them to challenge the cover stories they were living out in the school space. Imagining something different, examining their practices, and seeing possibilities for change have been a result of this research process. “In order for storytelling to be educative, we as storytellers need to learn to retell and relive our stories in new ways leading to changed practices” (Whelan et al., 2001, p. 147-148).

I was fortunate enough to have been in constant dialogue about the trips with a colleague. Through our conversations about the trips and the impacts they had on us, I was involved in the reflection process from the onset of the adventures. I was challenged to see my teaching in a new light; to see that in order to have the impact that I wanted in

my classroom, I needed to step out from behind my science desk. I was in a state of constant reflection, re-evaluating my practices and my identity as a teacher. My priorities shifted and I tried to make my classroom spaces more like my trip spaces, opening up with the students and facilitating their learning, trying to imagine teaching and learning spaces as fluid entities, open to the possibility of change.

The participants in this study were positively impacted by the reflection process that was instigated by our conversations. They were willing participants, wanting to share their insights and through this research process were being given a space to voice them and reflect upon them. For Lance, the experience was a chance to “rekindle” the trip moments and “reinforce the legitimacy of reflection...to set time after for the staff to just reflect and share” (Interview II). Reflection was an ongoing process for Lance throughout the research project as was evidenced by the written reflections he brought with him to share during our second interview. Lance concluded that we can make our learning experiences better and “we do it through dialogue, reflection” (Interview II). Alex found that the reflection process initiated an examination of his teaching practices and talking about the trips “reopened the reflection process” allowing him to see different ways of working with students in his classroom (Interview II). He too brought notes that he had jotted down in anticipation of our first conversation and for our second meeting. Having the time to sit down and talk about the trips because of the research process was a welcomed conversation for Jade, one that was desired but until this opportunity presented itself, time had not permitted. The reflection process for Brock had been ongoing since the trips because we had been in a dialogue together due to the nature of our shared teaching assignment in the leadership course. However, the discussions surrounding the

trips before the research conversations revolved around the students and how we could better meet their needs in the course and on the trip. In the research process, Brock was asked to approach his reflection in a more overt and challenging way as a means of examining his teaching practice in relation to the trip experiences. This was a new way of viewing the trip and one that began to encourage him to imagine his classroom space differently.

As Jade mentioned, reflection acts as a reminder of the things we want to be doing better, a chance to ignite something that we have set aside due to our hectic schedules.

And I think that is what it is, a reminder and just with all of the other demands in a busy day you forget about all of the great ideas and great things you could be and you could do and people should do and its just like PD for me, we need to be reminded, what we are learning as a teacher (Interview II).

It was refreshing, encouraging, and motivating to be reminded of the impact that we can have on the students and although there is a time element that can deter us from change, it becomes overshadowed by the positive effect we foresee. The participants and I have been impacted professionally because we have engaged in meaningful analysis of the experience in relation to our roles as teachers.

It is imperative that teachers take time to reflect upon their teaching experiences as stories that hold new understandings that can be brought to light through this process. Teacher stories hold knowledge and the understandings that can be gained from teaching experiences need to be validated. Teachers need to be encouraged to tell their stories and to recognize that within each story there are insights that can enable them to uncover a greater understanding of teaching. The challenge is to find a way to encourage all

teachers, not only bike trip leaders to do this, to help pre-service and beginning teachers to reflect about their teaching identity, and to empower teachers to imagine school as a space that is fluid and not the rigid structure we ascribe it to be. Without a doubt, there is a need to develop professional learning communities where the participants can encourage and, at times, challenge one another to reflect upon their practice.

Learning Communities

Cibulka and Nakayama (2000) define learning communities as “a group of educators committed to working together collaboratively as learners to improve achievement for all students in a school...one that consciously managed learning processes through an inquiry driven orientation among all its members” (p. 3). The teamwork that was alive for the participants of the trip was a powerful element because of its contrast to the isolation that is felt in the school space. In schools we live the cover stories of being self-sufficient in our own classrooms. In researching the social construction of teacher’s individualism, Diniz-Pereira (2003) states that teacher isolation is a product of the way schools are structured. The structure and culture of schools, teachers’ professional preparations, their professional career, and the relationships between teachers and others in schools all influence a teaching identity that is marked by individualism (Diniz-Pereira). By remaining isolated in our practice we prevent the emergence of a “collective intelligence” that could strengthen our schools (Sergiovanni, 2004, p. 17). Mitchell (1997) notes that a coping mechanism to the cover stories discussed earlier, curriculum mandates, and time demands is teacher separation rather than interdependence. Other contributors to professional isolation were listed as being structural school conditions, different pedagogical orientations, as well as the absences of

a shared professional identity. To overcome the social construction of teacher individualism, which puts constraints on teacher collaboration, teachers need a space that is built on mutual trust and respect, where there is a willingness to work together to achieve a shared sense of professional identity (Mitchell). One of the ways of transcending this traditional boundary to teacher identity is to provide spaces for collaborative teacher research. Diniz-Pereira argues that collaborative research benefits teachers because it encourages teachers to reflect upon their practice which could lead to opportunities to transcend or transform traditional teacher identity formation.

The bike trip experience removed the isolation, that I felt as a first year teacher, which is commonly felt as new teachers are often left on their own to navigate their way in the profession with the same duties as experienced teachers. (Richardson & Placier, 2001). The bike trips provided a shared experience from which a collaborative learning community of teachers was formed. For a group who had a shared experience there was now a story that contrasted with the social construction of a teacher's individualism. There was less isolation, a sense of camaraderie and team on the trip; but back at school and in our subject areas there was still isolation. On the trips we were placed in a situation where collaboration was essential. The opportunity to plan and facilitate a significant learning experience for the students, as a collective group of teachers, was rewarding. By working together we have learned from one another, recognizing each person's strengths, respecting each person's opinions, trusting one another's judgments, and knowing that together we could accomplish our goals of providing a memorable experience for the students. Reflection with the group on how we could improve the trips and sharing our insights with one another was a unique professional opportunity as this

did not happen often in the school environment. However the community we built had the potential of remaining a temporary community, one that existed only in the context of the bike trips unless we built it into a professional learning community, where we would continue to collectively reflect upon our practice outside of the trip experience. Learning communities discourage the “quick fix of superficial change” and “create and support sustainable improvements that last over time because they build professional skill and capacity to keep the school progressing” (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 128)

All participants in this study found it difficult to cultivate a learning community within the school due to the barriers that were listed in the previous chapter. Our classrooms become “an entity within itself” as described by Alex (Interview II) and we found ourselves professionally isolated. Brock described it as follows: “It is just you and the kids and you never see other staff, you don’t necessarily work together” (Interview II). Time, daily demands, and multiple responsibilities within the school space limited the chances teachers had to sit down with one another to discuss and reflect upon their teaching moments and experiences. For Jade, time is once again a limiting factor for implementing the type of collaboration that happened on the trip into the school space. “In a classroom...when we’re teaching we don’t have enough time to do that” (Interview I). At school Alex found that time to interact is limited to brief encounters as we rushed from one task to another, leaving insufficient time to reflect with one another.

Maybe a little bit in the morning, maybe a little bit at lunch, maybe a bit after school and that’s the limitations of our interaction, our time to reflect, to share ideas, to discuss what works, what doesn’t, to get to know each other (Int. I).

Without a community with which to reflect, we were once again left on our own to chart out a new path for ourselves. Often that task seemed daunting and we remained teaching in the ways that were known to us because we were not asking ourselves to imagine things differently.

Communities need to be created where teachers can share their stories, not simply recount them, but reflect upon them. These communities need to be developed in a way that teachers feel safe and comfortable voicing their insights and are welcome to suggestions and open to the possibility for change (Whelan et al., 2001). Contrived collegiality can be an outcome of imposed collaboration, where teachers are told what, with who, where, and when to plan or learn (Hargreaves, 2003). Therefore the fostering of professional learning communities needs to be carefully and thoughtfully implemented, and built on a foundation of trust and security among the staff at the school (Hargreaves, 2003). Through the bike trip experience a chosen community was formed. Having shared in a teaching and learning experience together, the leaders of the trips had a connection that enabled dialogue and reflection in a safe space. As Alex described,

There is no real connection [at school] for learning who that person is because you do not have that opportunity because it is a professional relationship. You have your job, I have my job, and everybody has their role in the building and you go on your merry way. It is a very corporate structure until an experience like this [the bike trip] occurs (Interview I).

Creating this community in school was an essential component to improving our teaching practices, a chance for us to imagine teaching and learning in a new way. We needed to collaborate and discover new imaginings together, opening up a space for change. Jade

found the contagious and supportive atmosphere of a chosen learning community attractive. “If you are giving these things [your reflections], other people might say, ‘Oh yeah’ and hop on the band wagon...the expectations become a little higher” (Interview II). As Whelan et al. confirm, the best learning communities are those in which teachers, collectively work together in their schools where “the story of school would be one that would foster the development and the living out of new stories of school...and these new stories offer places for interruptions and, in these interruptions, make possible new stories of who we are as teachers” (p. 155).

Time continues to be a perceived constraint for the implementation and long term success of learning communities, as the perceived lack of time stands a barrier to a school’s collaborative team initiatives (Hargreaves, 2003). Hargreaves notes that when school’s structure their philosophies to support and encourage learning communities by structuring them into their overall school vision, successful outcomes of teacher collaboration, teacher empowerment, student achievement, and caring environment are seen. However, when other demands are put on teachers (standardized testing, strict curriculum, increased teaching time), time that was once devoted to the learning communities quickly becomes reallocated and the professional learning community disintegrates. Time for learning communities to gather and reflect needs to be made a priority by teachers and built into the structure of the school with the support of school administration. Bezzina (2006) notes that in order to promote teacher learning, time needs to be allocated throughout the year for collaboration. Teachers need to take time and be provided with time to share their stories and reflect upon them together within their chosen communities be that in staff meetings, professional development days, through

mentoring initiatives, or other times when teachers can come together and reflect. The discussions and reflections should not be relegated to quick staff room chats during lunch hour or after school; discussions that are cut short because of busy schedules. Mitchell (1997) suggests that professional development activities need to change from the common short-term, individualized, passive approach to ones that are long term which encourage active on-going teacher bonding fostering mutual respect and trust which is instrumental in promoting increased collaboration and effective leadership in the schools. In order for teachers to reflect upon their practice effectively and to share with their colleagues as a way of maintaining a fluid and ever-evolving teaching identity, the process needs to be valued and providing time shows that it is a priority not another task added to an already demanding schedule.

What's Next?

What more can be done? In talking with leaders of these experiences and in my own reflection, I have found that there is a desire to have a space where teachers can freely share what they know, to uncover understandings that have yet to be recognized. Finding a way to develop those spaces more effectively in the school environment, and to offer teachers a place to reflect upon the experiences, like the bike trips, could prove to be beneficial to students, the professional community and to educational practices in general. "If schools are to become real knowledge communities for all students, then teaching must be made into a real *learning profession* for all teachers" (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 161) Finding a way to better transfer understandings into classrooms by opening up dialogue around the experiences would be an asset to the teaching profession.

There is value in representing teachers' voices, embedded in their teaching stories are their beliefs and knowledge that direct their teaching (Dyson, 1996). By representing the voices of the participants in this study, we were privy to their insights of how an adventure bike trip had impacted their teaching practice and how they envisioned taking that new knowledge and infusing it into other realms of their teaching environment. Similar to Dyson, who suggests that listening to the voices of teacher can provide information on how to implement adventure into a school wide curriculum, the voices of the adventure trip leaders in this study exemplified the power of reflection on experience and taking those meanings and challenging our beliefs about students, learning, and teaching.

There is a need to encourage pre-service and beginning teachers to reflect upon their teaching identity. Opportunities to develop clear teaching philosophies and better ways of understanding themselves need to be provided throughout their practicum experiences and in their first years of teaching. It would be beneficial to the teaching community to find spaces for new teachers to reflect and imagine new teaching possibilities. Providing them with experiences that challenge their identities and allowing them to grow early in their teaching lives would create a strengthened teaching profession.

In addition to researching those professional communities, continued research on the impact of experiential teaching spaces, like the bike trip, on teaching identity would also strengthen my recommendation that such programs continue to be supported and encouraged within school systems. The benefit of experiencing teaching in new ways undoubtedly impacts students positively and the more that can be done to better the

learning environment for students the better teachers will be at their craft. Long term studies that follow teachers after the reflection process to track changes in classroom practice would also prove to be beneficial to the teaching community. The follow up study would enable researchers and the professional community to find the best ways to help facilitate reflection and change for teachers.

CONCLUSION

The bike trip was a learning experience where learning occurs in a different way. Throughout this research the leaders of the adventure bike trips made meaning of the experience. The meanings they discovered through this reflection enabled them to see their teaching practice in a new light. Acknowledging unique connections they made with students, a new vision of how students learn, and enhanced teacher collaboration as being products of the trip experience, the participants in this research began to question their in-school identities and practice. As a collective group we began to challenge our teaching cover story, realizing that our perceptions of curriculum, time, discipline and professional image were holding us back from achieving 'trip spaces' in our classroom. Allowing ourselves to recognize these barriers enabled us to imagine new possibilities for our classrooms, students, colleagues and ourselves as teachers.

This study was initiated by my stories; as I reflected upon the impact the trip had on my teaching, I began to wonder how others had been affected. Probing and discovering the new understandings that I had taken from the experience and sharing those with others, catalyzed a dialogue around the trip that ignited a process of new reflection for the participants and renewed reflection for me. Their stories about the trip opened a door through which they could examine their teaching practice. Their pasts

emerged as analysis of the trip stories took place. They began to question their practice; they began to imagine new possibilities.

The narrative case study was represented as an realist tale that has enticed (based on my autobiographical narratives) the participants to examine themselves as teachers as they unpack a shared enriching learning experience (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Pelias, 1998; Sparkes, 2002). The power of narrative inquiry is the ability to “reconstruct a person’s experience in relationship both to the other and to a social milieu” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p.5). This study opened us up to the participants’ voices as they examined the potential impact adventure trips could have on their teaching practice. The autoethnographic component of this study initiated the research. It situated me, as a leader of the trip and as a researcher, in the midst of the research as both participant and researcher. By locating myself in the research, I was better able to initiate a conversation with my participants. Those conversations became a shared reflective experience about a shared experience. Their stories are more than just trip stories. Telling of their experiences heightened awareness within them about why the trips were powerful and challenged them to bring that power into their classroom, interactions with students, lessons, and relationships with their colleagues. We began to question the structures in our teaching to which we subscribe, that is, our cover stories.

The cultivation of an environment that values both experience and reflection is essential in schools. Teachers need to be provided with experiences that are unique, ones that challenge the cover stories that are often left unquestioned. As with any experience reflection is the critical component. Providing a space for that reflection in schools is vital. Sharing teaching stories within a receptive professional learning community can be

a powerful way of reevaluating our teaching practice and teaching identity. Those stories hold within them the possibility of change; an imagining that things can be different.

To me, my classroom today is unrecognizable from the classroom I began teaching in my first year. Although the room number is the same, the table layout has been maintained, and there still exists a lab counter at the front of the room; the atmosphere, the energy and the connections that are established have changed. Here is an example to provide a glimpse into my classroom today. At the beginning of every science class I write a science fact on the board, usually a quirky, weird piece of trivia related to the topic for the day, phrased as a question to stimulate a discussion. The purpose of this is as much about introducing the lesson for the day as it is to get us all talking. I allow the discussion to take its own course and many times the conversations end up far from the original topic and students are sharing their various stories which stem from connections they are making to the on-going dialogue. Taking those first five or ten minutes of class and using them to dialogue and get the students engaged has greatly impacted the connections that I have been able to build with my students. I am still working to provide my students with experiences, using the mandated curriculum as a tool to get there rather than viewing it as a barrier. As I facilitate lab investigations in science, group challenges in leadership or volleyball tournaments in fitness and games, I work hard to incorporate reflective practices and self evaluation tools to help students take ownership of their own learning. My classroom is now a place where we are engaged and are sharing in the learning together.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

There were three sessions set up to dialogue with the participants. The specific purpose of each session was as follows:

- Session 1: To establish a relationship with the participant and inquire about their interest in participating in a dialogue about the adventure education experiences. The interviews took place in school classrooms, the school staff room and in the living room of my home. The general themes of conversation are listed below, they were used to ensure that all participants addressed certain areas of the trips in addition to other insights they may have wanted to discuss. Various prompts were used to engage the participants in a conversation surrounding the trip experience and their thoughts of teaching and learning.
 - Prompts directed at Research Question 1: Looking at the personal interpretation of the trip's purpose
 - What are your feelings about the trip experience for the kids?
 - What do you think they were learning? Is it different from how they learn in the traditional classroom?
 - Prompts directed at Research Questions 3 and 4:
 - Focused on the topics of student journals, specific student experiences, colleague interactions and reasons for going on the trip were used to engage the participants. These topics were chosen as a result of my reflections and the meanings that I have made from the trips. My narratives in these areas initiated some of our discussion topics. Through the conversation various prompts were

also used to begin discussions around the nature of teaching and learning. Examples of such prompts were as follows:

- I am always astounded by the bravery of some of our kids. Was there anyone who stood out for you on the trips? Why do you think that is so?
- I was amazed at how much the students shared with us in their journals. How did you feel as you read and responded to the students' journals?
- Laughter seems to be a key ingredient on these trips. Do you think we, the leaders, act differently around each other and the students on these trips? Why do you think that is?
- I often find it difficult returning to the classroom after the trips. Do you find the same? If so, why do you think that is?

The conversation were recorded, transcribed, summarized and connected to my autoethnography using the paper memoing and computer assisted coding. The meanings and connections that began to emerge from these interviews were used as a source of dialogue in the second session.

- Session 2: The direction of this interview was dictated by the meanings that began to emerge from the previous session and occurred approximately two months after the initial interview. Again the interviews took place in the school; in conference rooms, classrooms and in participant offices. After coding the first conversations and looking at the connections that were forming, I talked with the participants

about their insights. In our conversations, I brought up topics that were introduced in the first session and asked for clarification, more explanation and at times asked them to challenge their insights. The specific content that was discussed surrounded the emerging themes but was not limited to that, allowing the participants to explore any other areas that had come forward for them since the previous interview. Due to the nature of the study, the direction of the interview was dependant on each individual participant but general themes were discussed with all participants. Again, the conversations were recorded and then transcribed. This session was targeted to address research question 3 and 4.

- Sessions 3 - Follow-Up E-mail: A follow up e-mail was sent to participants requesting any other insights that they may have had into the research process that they had not shared with me during our second conversation. One participant responded to my e-mail in a written form and another approached me and we discussed the research process in person. The other two participants apologized for not responding but were busy with school activities and demands and did not get a chance to respond. However, informally we did discuss the research process and in our second session had discussed the impact it was having on them.

APPENDIX B

Interview Guides*Interview Guide #1*

Confirm participation and reminder of the opportunity to withdraw at any point or stop the interview if needed.

Describe what the bike trip experience has been for you

Describe the most memorable moments of the trip

What do you think the kids are learning?

How would you compare the learning on the trip to the learning that happens in school?

Do you think we can get that type of learning in school?

How would you compare yourself, as a teacher, on the trips as compared with yourself at school?

Teach differently? Why?

Teaching Style?

How would you compare yourself, as a teacher before partaking in the trips as compared to now?

I've noticed my amazement at...

- The amount students share with me, how have you felt your connections have been with kids on the trips? How does it compare to everyday school setting?
- Student Bravery, how have you felt as you dealt with kids on the trip?
- Laughter seems to be a key ingredient on the trips, how does that atmosphere compare to the school atmosphere?

What impact, if any, have leading these trips had on your teaching philosophy?

Interview #2 with Brock – April 18, 2007

Q: To start, I would like to confirm your continued participation in the study. Are you alright with continuing?

(Reflection since last meeting)

Q: Since our last interview, has there been anything that has come forward for you that you'd like to discuss today?

Q: Since talking about teaching and learning both on the trip and in the classroom last time, is there been anything you like to expand upon?

Q: What's it been like to think about the trip in more a reflective way since talking about it last? Has it made you think about the trip in a different light?

Q: Have you seen anything in your classroom differently?

(Personally)

Q: My first question to you last time we talked was about what the trip has meant to you, we talked a lot about school and the students...what has it meant for you personally?

(Sharing our whole-self)

Q: When you mentioned that you didn't need to show your funny side on the Jasper trip as much because you didn't see the kids struggling, why do you think you use it only to help the struggling kids? Do you think the other kids would appreciate that side of you as well?

Q: In our last interview you talked about sharing yourself with the students differently on the trip as compared to in the classroom, one of the insights that you made was that you never realized that you weren't seen as funny in your classroom. Why do you think that is?

Q: You seem to have the desire to share the funny side of yourself with your classes, but mentioned that it is easier to share that side of yourself on the trip but not as easy in the classroom because they get off task, especially the regular classes and yet. Don't you think that they could use the connection though as much, if not even more than the other classes?

(Perception of student learning)

Q: In our discussion you connected experiential learning back to leadership but rarely to the classroom. Why is it connected only to leadership?

Q: Can you imagine a way of implementing the learning that happens on the trip into your own classroom?

Q: In our last interview we talked about the power of the experience and how students learn, you talked about feeling constrained in the school setting to try experiential learning. What makes that transference difficult? Why wait until the curriculum changes?

Q: I noticed in your responses that some of the reservations that you have with taking the trip type experiences into your classroom deals is connected to the comfort level you have with teaching as you do and with trying something “creative”...how do you think your comfort level impacts the transference.

(Summary of the 4 elements of what the trip means for leaders)

Q: The four major elements that have been revealed by the participants about what the trips have meant for them is: Personal challenge, A different way of viewing student learning – shared experiences and new connections, Sharing our whole selves, Sense of teamwork with colleagues

Interview #2 with Lance – April 19, 2007

Q: To start, I would like to confirm your continued participation in the study. Are you alright with continuing?

(Reflection since last meeting)

Q: Since our last interview, has there been anything that has come forward for you that you'd like to discuss today?

Q: Since talking about teaching and learning both on the trip and in the classroom last time, is there been anything you like to expand upon?

Q: What's it been like to think about the trip in more a reflective way since talking about it last? Has it made you think about the trip in a different light?

Q: Have you seen anything in your classroom/school/with students differently?

(Personally)

Q: Having participated in bike trips, what would you describe as being the trip's philosophy?

Q: What would you describe as being your role on the trip?

Q: As much as the trip is for the students, you also mentioned that the trip is an opportunity for you to physically challenge yourself. How do you balance the need to physically challenge yourself with the need to be there as a facilitator for the students?

(Sharing our whole-self)

Q: You talked about sharing your whole self with the students on the trip where as at school you have to hold back some of your self. What parts of your "whole self" do you feel that you can share on the trip that you can't at school?

Q: Can you see a space for being that self in your room?

Q: One of the reasons you mentioned in the first interview was that holds us back is that we are held to a level of professionalism that doesn't always allow us to be our whole selves. How come what is professional in one space isn't considered professional in another?

Q: Can't we be our whole selves in both and still be professional?

Q: You talked about it being easier to share yourself when you were younger because the kids expect you to be athletic whereas when you are older it is more difficult because

they don't. Do you think it is easier because you allow their assumptions to guide their beliefs about you rather than you actually sharing yourself with them?

Q: Do you think that there is a way that you could share yourself or open yourself up to the kids without needing to rely on their assumptions of you?

(Perception of student learning)

Q: What type of teacher would you describe yourself as?

Q: Do you think that the way you teach in the classroom is similar or different from the way that you teach on the trip? How so?

[Q: Can you imagine a way of implementing the learning and teaching that happens on the trip into your health classroom/counselor office?]

Q: In our last interview you talked about the power of the trips as a learning experience because they are built on an environment that fosters trust, do you see other elements of the trips that makes them a successful learning experience?

Q: Can you imagine a way of implementing those elements that into your own classroom to target the type of learning that happens on the trip?

(Teamwork/Collaboration)

Q: Everyone has touched on the idea of teamwork on the trip, how would you define the teamwork and collaboration that happens on the trip? How does that contrast to school?

(The trips as a learning experience for teachers)

Q: You've recognized the trips as being a great learning experience for the kids, would you describe it as a learning experience for you as well? How so?

Q: If we were to bring on someone new, how do you think they should be prepped for the trip? (No Prep -> Basic information -> Fully Prepped) Why?

Q: You've talked about a different way of teaching/learning that happens on the trips. Would you say that the trips enabled you to carry out a type of teaching/learning that you haven't been able to do at school or did it encourage you to see a new approach to teaching and learning?

(Summary of the 4 elements of what the trip means for leaders)

Q: The four major element that have been revealed by the participants about what the trips have meant for them is: Personal challenge, A different way of viewing student

learning – shared experiences and new connections, Sharing our whole selves, Sense of teamwork with colleagues

Interview #2 with Jade – April 19, 2007

Q: To start, I would like to confirm your continued participation in the study. Are you alright with continuing?

(Reflection since last meeting)

Q: Since our last interview, has there been anything that has come forward for you that you'd like to discuss today?

Q: Since talking about teaching and learning both on the trip and in the classroom last time, is there been anything you like to expand upon?

Q: What's it been like to think about the trip in more a reflective way since talking about it last? Has it made you think about the trip in a different light?

Q: Have you seen anything in your classroom differently?

(Personally)

Q: My first question to you last time we talked was about what the trip has meant to you, we talked a lot about school and the students, you also mentioned that you struggled with balancing your desire to push yourself with the need to hold back and be with the kids. Why do you think you were faced with that struggle?

Q: Can you describe moments from the trip that were personally gratifying?

Q: Are there things that you've taken from the trip, other than professional understanding back into your personal life? What would those be? How have they influenced you?

(Sharing our whole-self)

Q: You talked about sharing yourself with the students of the trip, that initially you were frustrated that you didn't do it right away/naturally (like the homesickness story), have you found on the trips that you more easily share yourself and your experiences now?

Q: How do you think you present yourself in your classroom as compared to on the trips? If there is a difference, why do you think that is? Can you see a space for being that self in your room?

(Perception of student learning)

Q: Last time we talked you contrasted the learning that happens on the trip with the learning that happens in your math classroom and you talked about how you viewed yourself as a teacher in each situation. In math you described yourself as the expert relaying information and on the trips you talk about sharing learning experiences, why do you think there a difference between the two spaces?

Q: How do you see yourself in PE?

Q: Can you imagine a way of implementing the learning and teaching that happens on the trip into your math classroom?

Q: In our last interview we talked about the power of the experience in making connections with students at a different level than we do at school. When we talked about bringing that back to the school you talked about getting to know the leadership students better before the trip so that you can feel more effective when we are on the trip. Why do you think you only focused on the future leadership kids? Do you think that there is a need for that in your classroom as well? Do you think that those types of connections would benefit your math kids?

Q: What do you think limits those connections in school as compared to the bike trip? What makes that transference difficult?

(Teamwork/Collaboration)

Q: Everyone has touched on the idea of teamwork on the trip, how would you define the teamwork and collaboration that happens on the trip? How does that contrast to school?

Q: Before you went on the first trip, what did you know about the purpose/philosophy of the trip?

Q: When you came on the trip the first time, how did you come to know your role?

Q: When you talked about your first trip, you mentioned some of the frustrations that you faced; often linking those frustrations with being unsure of how to handle the experience. Do you think that the lack of pre-trip preparation by myself and Kent helped you to discover things about your teaching or hindered your discovery?

Q: If we were to bring on someone new, how do you think they should be prepped for the trip? (No Prep -> Basic information -> Fully Prepped)

(The trips as a learning experience for teachers)

Q: You've recognized the trips as being a great learning experience for the kids, would you describe it as a learning experience for you as well? How so?

Q: You've talked about a different way of teaching/learning that happens on the trips. Would you say that the trips enabled you to carry out a type of teaching/learning that you haven't been able to do at school or did it encourage you to see a new approach to teaching and learning?

(Summary of the 4 elements of what the trip means for leaders)

Q: The four major element that have been revealed by the participants about what the trips have meant for them is: Personal challenge, A different way of viewing student learning – shared experiences and new connections, Sharing our whole selves, Sense of teamwork with colleagues

Interview #2 with Alex – April 24, 2007

Q: To start, I would like to confirm your continued participation in the study. Are you alright with continuing?

(Reflection since last meeting)

Q: Since our last interview, has there been anything that has come forward for you that you'd like to discuss today?

Q: Since talking about teaching and learning both on the trip and in the classroom last time, is there been anything you like to expand upon?

Q: What's it been like to think about the trip in more a reflective way since talking about it last? Has it made you think about the trip in a different light?

Q: Have you seen anything in your classroom/school/with students differently?

(Sharing our whole-self)

Q: You talked about sharing your whole self with the students on the trip where as at school you have to hold back some of your self. What parts of your "whole self" do you feel that you can share on the trip that you can't at school?

Q: Can you see a space for being that self in your room?

Q: One of the reasons you mentioned in the first interview was that holds us back is that we are held to a level of professionalism that doesn't always allow us to be our whole selves. Do you believe that there are different levels of professionalism in different spaces? Why?

Q: Do you think we can be our whole selves in both places and still be professional?

(Perception of student learning)

Q: What type of teacher would you describe yourself as?

Q: Do you think that the way you teach in the classroom is similar or different from the way that you teach on the trip? How so?

Q: Can you imagine a way of implementing those trip elements that into your own classroom to target the type of learning that happens on the trip?

Q: The last time we talked you said that you thought it would be very difficult to expect that type of learning to occur in the classroom because of the social hierarchy that exists in the classroom. Can you envision a way of creating a classroom space that foster this type of learning?

Q: In our last interview we talked about the power of the experience in making connections with students at a different level than we do at school. You had said that the trip enabled you to make those connections and I had asked that if you didn't have the trip, would you still make connections with students, outside of the scope of the trip and you weren't sure.

Do you think that the kids at school, those who do not participate in the trips would value from those connections with you as much as those on the trip do?

Do you think that those types of connections would benefit all of your students, not only the leadership kids?

Q: You talked about how much the students open up on the trip but don't want to do so at school. What elements of the trip do you think encourages them to open? Is there a way to create that same space in school so that all students can feel proud to share with us, to make those connections so that they feel connected?

Q: What do you think limits those connections (us opening up and them opening up) in school as compared to the bike trip? What makes that transference difficult?

(Teamwork/Collaboration)

Q: Everyone has touched on the idea of teamwork on the trip, how would you define the teamwork and collaboration that happens on the trip? How does that contrast to school?

(The trips as a learning experience for teachers)

Q: You've recognized the trips as being a great learning experience for the kids, would you describe it as a learning experience for you as well? How so?

Q: Before you went on the first trip, what did you know about the purpose/philosophy of the trip?

Q: When you came on the trip the first time, how did you come to know your role?

Q: If we were to bring on someone new, how do you think they should be prepped for the trip? (No Prep -> Basic information -> Fully Prepped) Why?

Q: You've talked about a different way of teaching/learning that happens on the trips. Would you say that the trips enabled you to carry out a type of teaching/learning that you haven't been able to do at school or did it encourage you to see a new approach to teaching and learning?

(Summary of the 4 elements of what the trip means for leaders)

Q: The four major element that have been revealed by the participants about what the trips have meant for them is: Personal challenge, A different way of viewing student learning – shared experiences and new connections, Sharing our whole selves, Sense of teamwork with colleagues

APPENDIX C

Bike Trip Physical Training Program

GRADE 9 LEADERSHIP**BIKE TRIP FITNESS PLAN 2007**

For this year's bike trip you will need to be physically prepared to do the following activities on back to back days:

Day 1 – Approximately 7 to 8 hours on the bike. (On trails in the Nordic Centre with some difficult hills and technically challenging routes)

Day 2 – Approximately 7 to 8 hours on the bike. (Over some large hills and gravel trails with a few stops.)

Day 3 – Approximately 8 hours of hiking. (Plan on about 5 hours up the mountain and 3 hours back down. Down is not always as easy as it sounds.)

As you can see, you will need to do some training before you go!

Training Program – Overview

Training program starts on March 23rd which is exactly 9 weeks before we depart. (we are now at week 3 since we did not get this to you before spring break) This program is designed to be a MINIMUM that you should be doing to get ready. Feel free to train harder than what the program indicates, but you should not do less than what is suggested. For the most part you will be on your own for completing the training. It is always better to hook up with one or more training partners that can help keep you motivated throughout the program. Starting on April 18th we will start doing some group rides after school twice a week, rain or shine. You will need a good bike that is in good repair for these days. These days are optional but HIGHLY recommended. If you are not joining us you will be expected to be doing the rides on your own. **YOU MUST ATTEND AT LEAST 2 OF THESE RIDES TO BE ELIGIBLE TO GO ON THE TRIP.**

There are 2 types of training you will need to do. Aerobic and strength training are going to be very important to your success on this trip.

- I) Aerobic training is generally long, slower distance type training. All aerobic sessions should be at least 30 minutes in length. You can combine 2 fifteen minute sessions. For example, if you ride to school and home again and it takes 15 minutes each way, you have done 30 min.
 - i) Cycling (you will need to do at least 2 sessions on a bike each week so that you can get used to the feel of a bike seat.) Bike sessions can be on a stationary bike or regular bike. Workouts should be a bit longer if on stationary bikes.
 - ii) Running or walking

- iii) Other sports or activities (eg. If you have a soccer practice or game that lasts an hour then this should count as aerobic training. This is assuming that you are not sitting on the bench.)
- II) Strength training will be important to your survival of the bike days. Your arms and shoulders will get tired doing the activities on day one. A lot of the soreness can be avoided by doing a small amount of weight training. Some of the recommended strength training activities are:
- Leg press or squats
 - Bench press or push-up type activities.
 - “Core” stability type exercises.
 - Circuit training.

Some key things that will make your weight training sessions better are:

- Work quickly. Don’t take long breaks between sets. This can also give you some aerobic benefit as well. You should keep your strength training sessions to about 1/2 an hour.
- Keep the number of exercises down to a minimum but do them well.
- Try to combine a bike or aerobic workout with a weight session. For example, ride to the gym, do a weight workout, then ride home.
- Work with a partner. It helps to keep you motivated and you will go even when you feel like skipping a day because your friend is counting on you.

In your program we refer to “light, medium and heavy” weights. “Sets” are one group of exercises to a target number.

- “Light” weights means that you will do a set of 15 to 20 repetitions (reps) before you fatigue.
- “Medium” means 12 to 15 reps to fatigue.
- “Heavy” would be 10 to 12 reps to fatigue.

Again, the following training program is a minimum guideline for you. If you feel like increasing quicker, or adding an extra weight or aerobic session then go ahead.

It will be important for you to complete a training log. It will give you an idea of how much work you have done and still have to do. It is also interesting to look back on in the years to come to see what you did to get ready for this trip.

Training Program

Week 1 (March 25 to 31)	2 x bike workout. Minimum of 30 minutes each. 2 x aerobic activity.
Week 2 (April 1 to 7)	1 x bike workout. Minimum of 30 minutes. 2 x aerobic activity. 1 x strength training (2 sets each. Light)
Week 3 (April 8 to 14)	2 x bike workout. (1 - 30 minutes.) (1 – 40 minutes) 2 x aerobic activity. 1 x strength training (2 sets each. Light)
Week 4 (April 15 to 21)	2 x bike workout. (40 minutes) 2 x aerobic activity. 2 x strength training (2 sets each. Light) <i>After school cycling starts this week.</i>
Week 5 (April 22 to 28)	2 x bike workout. (45 minutes) 2 x aerobic activity. 2 x strength training (2 sets each. Medium)
Week 6 (April 29 to May 5)	2 x bike workout. (50 minutes) 2 x aerobic activity. 3 x strength training (2 sets each. Medium)
Week 7 (May 6 to 12)	2 x bike workout. (1 -60 minutes) (1- 80 minutes) 2 x aerobic activity. 3 x strength training (3 sets each. Medium)
Week 8 (May 13 to 19)	2 x bike workout. (1 -60 minutes) (1- 90 minutes) 2 x aerobic activity. 3 x strength training (3 sets each. Medium to Heavy)
Week 9 (May 20 to 26)	2 x bike workout. (1 -60 minutes) (1- 30 minutes) 1 x aerobic activity. 1 x strength training (2 sets each. Light to Medium)
Friday May 25 th	Leave for trip.
Saturday May 26 th	8 hours on bike
Sunday May 27 th	8 hours on bike
Monday May 28 th	8 hours hiking.
Tuesday May 29 th	1 hour in Banff Hot Springs