

Tales of Transformation  
Through Children's Global Arts

*A Living Dissertation*

by

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B.A., University of Western Ontario, 1987  
Teacher Education, Lakehead University, 1989  
M.Ed., University of British Columbia, 1997

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

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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University of Victoria

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## Abstract

### Supervisory Committee

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Since its inception in 2003, it is becoming increasingly evident that meaningful pursuits in the field of *Children's Global Arts* can change lives. The specific intention of this research has been to document 'tales of transformation' as shared by various global arts participants to discover how individuals can alter the way they perceive the world and their role within it.

Through the power of *art*, *story*, and *relationship*, a renewed perspective of education emerges that compels us to look very differently at what it means to teach and to learn in an interdependent and fragile world. By the closing chapter, hope for humanity is restored by rethinking schools as *agents for change* where a focus on *disposition* and *inquiry* rather than *curriculum* and *methodology*, provide the value and significance for education in the 21st century.

*Chapter 1* opens up the dialogue by presenting the challenges facing many children in the world today, including those living in 'privileged' societies such as Canada. It also confronts the educational profession to assume its role and responsibility in addressing the problems and solutions that face children and the world.

*Chapter 2* provides background knowledge and theory in areas significant to this dissertation, including transformational learning, educational change, arts-based research, and child advocating philosophies.

*Chapter 3* explains my research intention and process, including a glimpse into humanistic and holistic pedagogy.

The true beginning of this dissertation unfolds in *Chapter 4* as stories begin to be told through a pivotal Children's Global Art's event - the Learning and the World We Want conference - held in Victoria in November 2003. The serendipitous nature of this initiative also unfolds through the highlighting of the Global Arts catalogue, DVD, website, Children's Global Arts Foundation, and team approach.

The classroom and community scenarios revealed in *Chapters 5-8* demonstrate ways in which the global arts project, under the mentorship of experienced educators and facilitators, have provided a safe environment for students of diverse age, background and worldview, to break through a "culture of silence" through creative and candid encounters with Self and Others.

*Chapter 9* compels us to look critically at Canada's privileged society and culture, and brings awareness to the prevailing paradox and hegemonic forces at play when considering global educational initiatives.

Weaving the global arts stories and patterns of this dissertation together, *Chapter 10* highlights unifying elements of transformation, revealing answers to original research questions, and a refreshing sense of hope for our troubled world:

- *How are experiences in Children's Global Arts shifting the ways those involved view the world and their role within it?*
- *What are the key elements that contribute to those experiences?*

*Chapter 11* outlines the implications and support for Children's Global Arts at the classroom and school level by taking a closer look at basic school structures, and identifying ways in which they can be perceived differently in order to accommodate transformational understandings as identified in the preceding chapters of this dissertation.

The concluding Chapter (*12*) provides a final reflection of this research journey.

Woven throughout the chapters of this dissertation, readers will also come across a few *interludes*, and a multiple arrangement of images and discourses, that bring greater depth and meaning to this journey, and help to convey the interconnectedness of experiences worldwide.

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I would also like to acknowledge my partner and lifelong friend *Joe Karmel*, who always believed that I could do this, and provided me with endless support along the way.

Lastly, but perhaps most significantly I would like to highlight and honour the *child artists* who conveyed their messages about our world, and to *all children* in the world whose voices are yet to be heard. You are the reason for this endeavour and the impetus to move forward with your voices, visions, and ideas. I promise to do my part in sharing your important messages worldwide.

In this transformative journey all of you have been as honeybees to flowers, providing what is necessary to pursue this vision. Through your stories, experiences, and mentorship I have been inspired to find my own **la querencia**: a beautiful place in which I know who I am... a place from which my strength of character is drawn... the place from which I speak my deepest beliefs in the accepting of this challenge to change the world - one art exchange at a time.

*To all the flowers in the field, I say thank you!*



Figure 1: Jeffrey Pitcher & Netanya Karmel, Victoria Learning Festival, 2006

**PART ONE:**  
**BACKGROUND TO STUDY**

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION: CARE AND CONNECTION IN A TROUBLED WORLD

#### *Out of Africa - A Personal Narrative:*

*Fourteen years ago I moved to a small remote village in Swaziland, Africa. I moved there without question, knowing intuitively that my decision to teach there would be the right thing to do; “right” as in a leaf falling from a tree, or the sun setting in a night sky. I left Canada with my ‘privileged’ view of the world - as a white, educated, middle-class Canadian who had little to think about or consider outside of my own immediate pleasures. I owned a modest convertible, wore expensive clothes imported from foreign places, and ate fine foods without as much as a thought to where and how they were produced. I also took for granted that how I had been taught in public schools and in my teacher training program was based on tried and true methods in education and I had emulated them well in my first years of teaching. As Kennedy (1990) might say, I was “breathing in” an ideology, or a view of the world as I lived and taught in Burlington and Milton Ontario. Through my experiences as a student, a daughter, a teacher, and a friend, I took on hegemonic and prevailing sets of assumptions about reality - a process of enculturation in which my self-identity and self-interest were formed, both of which replicated and confirmed the reality framing and value assumptions of my social group and broader community. Paulo Freire (2002) might also observe how I was becoming a mere “object” in the comforts of my home place. As I was subtly programmed to conform and not question the logic of my surroundings and the systems that prevailed, I was unconsciously submerged in a “culture of silence”. And since the filters through which I perceived my world were products of my experiences and the history of my surroundings (Kennedy, 1990), then to some degree, I was living with a fabricated perception of the world, and a misleading view of my role within it.*

There is an innate drive among all humans to understand and to make meaning of their experiences. It is through established belief systems (a frame of reference) that as people we construct meaning of what happens in our lives. As there are no fixed truths and change is continuous, we cannot always be confident of what we know or believe... Therefore it becomes imperative in adulthood that we seek ways to understand better the world around us and in doing so develop a more critical worldview. (Mezirow, cited in Taylor, 2000a, p. 4)

*At times I wonder if my journey to Africa was a blessing or a curse. Like Plato's classic "Allegory of the Cave", when chains are broken and one is led from a dark cave into the bright light, the question remains whether or not it is worth the ascent if one is inevitably led back to darkness. Return and re-immersion into a Canadian culture turned foreign has been a lonely, confusing and, at times, dark undertaking. Even twelve years after returning to Canada, I often feel like an outsider looking in, continuously disheartened and frustrated with the unilateral ideologies and the misguided actions of my own dominant<sup>1</sup> culture, and the destructive effects it has on the world at large. As Taylor (1998) suggests, this disoriented change-meaning perspective is at the heart of transformation:*

The result of a transformed meaning perspective is a disorienting dilemma due to a disparate experience in conjunction with a critical reappraisal of previous assumptions and presuppositions. (pp. 6-7)

*Little did I know that my call to Africa was the beginning of my transformative journey towards emancipation and the unleashing of many taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs. Despite the muddled confusion in trying to make sense of my present reality, I can resonate with how a butterfly must feel once it breaks free from its cocoon - liberated from its limited parameters of reality and free to discover its own meaning and truth about the world. Pierce (1986) also recognizes how disturbing events in peoples' lives create a fertile ground for perspective transformation. Ready to question the very assumptions upon which their lives are based, we find ourselves involved in an educational experience which encourages a search for meaning and exploration of oneself and fulfillment of human purpose (cited in Taylor, 2000, p. 18). Through Freire's work, I have also come to realize that the world to which I relate is "not a static and closed order, a given reality which [one] must accept and to which [one] must adjust; rather it is a problem to be worked on and solved" (2002, p. 32). Perhaps most importantly, my personal experiences with perspective transformation have led me to view the realities of "the world we live in" and to contribute to "the world we want" with a bona fide sense of passion, urgency, and action.*

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'dominant' in a dominating or controlling sense rather than to imply a superior culture.

### Purpose of Study: Care and Connection in a Troubled World

Today there is a worldwide concern with the condition of children: physical, material, spiritual, emotional. This is a new phenomenon. A generation or two ago, it was probably assumed that as children in the industrialized countries lived in earthly paradise, it was the condition of children in the majority (*third*) world which needed to be attended to. But the tendency among Afrikan elites has been to assume that the condition of children in the West sets the standards to be emulated. For many therefore, it comes as a shock that some of the indicators of a good life for children can be a danger to children's welfare; for example, mountains of food, family cars, television, games and toys, and so forth. (Wangoola, 2006, p.118)

As the third millennium opens, we are faced with a world of fear, terror, and injustice. With rapid growth in globalization and modern technology, news of starving children in India, war victims in the Middle East, AIDs victims in Africa, terrorist attacks looming across the planet, the threat of a global pandemic, and the degradation of rainforests worldwide, life on earth is becoming increasingly threatened at every level imaginable. Moreover, a materialist-consumerist and 'all about me'-centered culture is looming across the westernized world, removing and desensitizing us from the ills of society and leading us to live a life of unprecedented privilege and abundance. The irony is that this 'rich' westernized culture has created an expanding human dichotomy of 'haves' and 'have-nots' across the world; and it is the 'haves' of our western societies, who appear to have everything, that lack the awareness of a meaning worth living for. Even our young people are haunted by an inner emptiness; an 'existential void' that manifests itself primarily in a state of boredom, alienation, and feelings of depression, aggression, and addiction (Frankl, 1985, p. 129). Increasing numbers of young people are falling "into the despair of hopelessness and appear to be apathetic in their responses to the future" (Ashford, 1995, p. 76):

At the same time that we face crisis in population growth, resource depletion, environmental destruction and new civil wars of horrendous brutality, many young people express cynicism, helplessness and despair that anyone can influence the course of events even on a local scale. (Ashford, p. 75)

In December 2004, UNICEF released a document entitled *Childhood Under Threat*, which states that the survival of more than half the world's children, numbering more than a billion, is currently at risk. Twenty-nine thousand children - living primarily in *marginalized* countries - are dying every day - mostly of preventable diseases, and more than three million are ensnared in the sex trade. And children in *privileged*<sup>2</sup> nations - such as Canada - are also suffering! Record levels of mental illness, violence, and obesity provide ample testimony to our failure to meet their daily needs (Olfman, 2006a). These dysfunctional patterns are merging in the fate of our young generation worldwide, creeping into mindsets and attitudes that will shape the state of our world for years to come.

This seems to be a juncture in the history of humanity when *all* children of the world are under threat. This means *humanity* is under threat, both in the Majority (Third) World, and in the minority (industrialized) countries. In other words, the majority of peoples of the world who eke out a living on their sweat and resources of ancestral lands, and a small minority of peoples in a handful of countries who fatten themselves on the toil of others, *both* face a bleak future due to the growing threats posed to their children. (Wangoola, 2006, p. 119)

We need, urgently, the birth of a new humanity. We need, urgently, to change all this sickness and ugliness that is destroying many, many people in the world. (Osho, 2001, p. 73)

#### *Education: A Problem or a Solution*

Mills (1970) notes that “many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues - and in terms of the problems of history making” (cited in Plummer, 1983, p. 40). Our public school system - specifically its hegemonic influences and reluctance to make changes that shift the way we view and live in the world - should be held partially responsible for the devastating state of humanity that confronts us in every corner of the world. Among the greatest gifts we, as educators, can offer our children is a willingness to admit that we have made a mistake in the way we have shaped their education and then strive to make it better.

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<sup>2</sup> The terms ‘marginalized’ and ‘privileged’ are utilized to counter the commonly misused labels such as ‘underdeveloped’-‘developed’; ‘poor’-‘rich’, ‘minority’-‘majority’, ‘third world’, etc. These terms suggest that ‘marginalized’ countries (i.e. India, South Africa, etc.), are underrepresented or misunderstood, while ‘privileged’ nations (i.e. North America), are seemingly better off, but also misrepresented.

The world is in crisis, suffering from insane violence, degradation of nature, rampant greed and commercialization, and loss of meaning and community, but the consuming goal of our schools is to train young people to compete in the job market, reinforcing the domination of the global corporate economy, which fuels many of these problems. Moreover, modern schooling, like any transmission-oriented model, prevents young people from recognizing or addressing critical problems in the world around them. So long as they are made to merely memorize the so-called facts presented in authorized textbooks, students are isolated from the difficult choices they will need to make, and the complex issues they will need to understand, if they are ever to respond effectively to this suffering world. (Miller, 2006, pp. 64-65)

Our attempts at education will certainly have to be framed either to deny the terror or to deal with the incredible dangers that we are facing on this planet. (O'Sullivan, 1999, p. 17)

The great challenge that we are faced with in our threatened world is to become part of events and circumstances that disorient us to such a degree that we begin to see the world and our role within it very differently, and move us towards relentless commitment and action to care for our world at every opportunity. As today's children are the citizens of tomorrow's world, their feelings and attitudes about the world mirror their future capability and motivation to meaningfully participate in, and contribute to, society. It is crucial that efforts be made to cultivate *en-rich*-ing opportunities for young people that help them to face and deal with the ills of society by transforming attitudes of cynicism, ignorance, and despair, into actions reflected in communication, care, and interconnection.<sup>3</sup>

In a world of suffering from obscene violence and wanton desecration, it is time for us to let go of the dominator cultural programming that was inflicted upon us, long enough to give our children a glimpse and a hope of a more peaceful, joyful, and caring world. A culture of peace honors the essential needs and aspirations of all human beings and recognizes, also, that our needs must be seen in the context of a fragile and interconnected web of life. A culture of peace nurtures strivings for mutual understanding, tolerance, and cooperation, rooted in empathy and compassion. Surely this must become the primary goal of education in our time. (Miller, 2006, p. 65)

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<sup>3</sup> These opening comments build upon the researcher's earlier work: *Breaking Barriers through Children's Global Arts* (Cruickshanks, 2006)

As Miller (2006) suggests, an education that is relevant to our time cannot simply aim for *transmission*, but must support cultural *reconstruction* or *transformation*. Consequently, if we *don't* choose to involve young people in “reconstructing our societies, in building a culture of peace, justice, compassion, their future looks bleak indeed, no matter what marketable skill their school provides them” (Miller, p. 64). With this thought in mind, an important question arises that begins to unfold the nature of this present research:

If education embodies a child's  
realities and visions of the world and the future of the world,  
what does the world look like through the eyes of a child,  
and what can be learned through such perspective?

### Tales of Transformation through Children's Global Arts

#### *Background of Children's Global Arts Initiative*

The focus of this dissertation is to build on the artwork project realized through the Faculty of Education, University of Victoria and the Learning and the World We Want International Conference held in Victoria, BC in November 2003. For this conference display, a link was made through artwork with children in Canada, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Based on a simple idea of connecting children, the theme “the world we want” framed a collection of compelling artwork that offered an amazing insight into the potential of children to remind adults of what is important. The insight allowed the sincere, honest, and hopeful visions of children from Canada, Iraq, and Afghanistan to be connected and shared in one passionate plea to make a difference in the world.

Since the 2003 Victoria conference, the Children's Global Arts project has broadened and expanded and has recently been incorporated as a not-for-profit "Children's Global Arts Foundation". With increasing participation and commitment across five continents, young children from around the world are creating and exchanging cultural art forms that represent two themes “the world we live in” and “the world we want” in pursuit of a more peaceful, just, and compassionate world. At many levels, the powerful events and stories that are intertwined throughout this project are transcending

barriers of language, politics, media, and inequality, and inspiring children around the world to look differently at the way they view the world and their role within it - recognizing their important roles as artists, viewers, and active citizens, who have the capacity and the responsibility to transform their own lives and the lives of others.

As this present research will demonstrate, the ways in which we are failing to meet the needs of our children in both marginalized *and* privileged nations are coming clearer through projects and events related to the Children's Global Arts initiative. Since its inception in 2003, it is also becoming increasingly evident that meaningful pursuits in the field of *Children's Global Arts* can change lives. In classrooms, villages, beaches, and porches all across the world, painting, dancing, singing, and other kinds of creative and culture forms of artistic expression are enlivening the imaginations of young people and connecting them to realities within and outside themselves.

The specific intention of this research has been to document 'tales of transformation' as shared by various global arts participants to discover how individuals learn to "see differently, hear voices of others, connect with the lives of others with different experiences, and collaboratively shape a new vision of the world" (Sanford & Hopper, 2006, p. 3).

### *Research Questions*

1. How are experiences in Children's Global Arts shifting the ways those involved view the world and their role within it?
2. What are the key elements that contribute to those experiences?
3. What are the implications of this study for our current education system?

### *Research Methodology*

As a qualitative research study based on phenomenology, aspects of *narrative and interpretive inquiry* have been actively employed throughout this research. With the premise that stories provide the basis for knowledge construction, participants are viewed as legitimate sense-makers who are capable of deriving meaning out of their experiences related to the global arts project. Their 'insider' interpretations, perceptions, meanings and

understandings, are the primary data sources for research (Mason, 2002). Research did not rely on total immersion into the multitude of global arts settings; the aim has been to explore individual and collective understandings of the global arts project through a variety of storytelling strategies (i.e. recollective interviews; reflective documents; visual recollections; direct observations, participation, and/or field notes; and poetic representation).

As demonstrated by the following glimpse into student responses from the University of Victoria, the potential for exploring transformative learning opportunities through the Children's Global Arts initiative are of utmost value and significance for learning and education in the 21st century:

I found this entire study of the Global Arts Project to be of immense importance and value. Having the opportunity to learn about Global arts through such an amazing project such as the 'World We Want' has been an incredible learning experience. It has made me think of both art and children in a new light.

I feel that this project, in all its facets, has many messages and layers to it. The fact that children are so poignant in the work, transcends political bias and the cloud of problems that money, oil and war has created. Children's voices are so true and unbiased. They don't care about who did what, they care about their families, friends, and other people around the world.... I will think differently when an opportunity arises to help people.

## Chapter Two

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides background knowledge and theory in areas significant to this dissertation, including transformational learning, educational change, arts-based research, and child advocating philosophy.

#### Transformational Learning

##### *What is Transformation?*

To introduce the guiding premise for this research, it is important to carefully define the notion of *transformative learning* and to be explicit about the ways in which it is utilized throughout the research. As Brookfield advises, the word *transformative* - when indiscriminately attached to supported practices - loses any descriptive utility. More specifically, it falls victim to the evacuation and reification of meaning:

Evacuation describes the process whereby a term is used so often, to refer to so many different things, that it ceases to have any distinctive terms of reference.... Reification describes the elevation of a word or idea to a discourse where it appears to have an independent existence separate from the conditions under which that word is produced and used. (Brookfield, 2000, pp. 140-141)

Since its inception in the late 1970's, with Jack Mezirow's (1978) study of women returning to community college, the field of transformative learning has expanded considerably, inspiring a growing interest in scholarly research and debate. What appears to be of shared understanding is that transformative learning involves a fundamental questioning and reordering of how one thinks or acts - "a shift in the tectonic plates of one's assumptive clusters" (Brookfield, p. 139).

Transformation is defined as a fundamental change in one's personality involving conjointly the resolution of a personal dilemma and the expansion of consciousness resulting in greater personality integration. (Boyd, 1989, p. 459)

Transformative learning is aimed at helping the individual become more aware and critical of assumptions in order to actively engage in changing those that are not adaptive or are inadequate for effective problem solving. (Kitchener & King, 1990, p. 159)

Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (Mezirow, 2000, pp 7-8)

My preferred understanding of transformational learning is defined by Morrell & O’Conner (2002) as a dramatic and profound shift of consciousness - experiences that touch us deeply, permanently shifting the way we think, feel, and act in the world:

Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-location; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body-awareness; our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and joy. (p. xvii)

#### *Transformative vs Informative Learning*

Of particular interest to this research, are the transformational qualities identified within participants’ stories related to global arts that make them distinguishable from those associated with ‘informational learning’, and the effect transformational experiences might have on the way one chooses to live or act in the world. Recognizing these distinctions is a key feature of this research - having a more informed, nuanced, sophisticated, or deeper understanding of something (such as an idea, an assumption, or an educational practice) is *not* equivalent to transformative learning. Such learning is literally *in-form-ative* because it attempts to bring new contents into an existing way of knowing. Transformation takes place only when the learner comes to a new understanding of something that caused a fundamental reordering of the paradigmatic assumptions one held about the idea or action concerned (Brookfield, p. 140).

...learning aimed at changes not only in what we know but changes in how we know has an almost opposite rhythm about it and comes closer to the etymological meaning of education (‘leading out’) [*trans-form-ative*]. (Kegan, 2000, pp. 48-49)

As demonstrated in the distinguishing qualities of student responses from the University of Victoria who became involved in the global arts project, it is important to carefully differentiate between these two realms of learning experiences when conducting research in this area:

*Example of 'informative' learning potential:*

I think it is really amazing when people reach out and give voice to those that need to be heard.... We're not always aware of some of the things that are happening in the world and I think art is a great way to create awareness. (UVic student teacher)

*Example of 'transformative' learning potential:*

This presentation [Global Arts] definitely allowed me to view life and the world in a new light. So often we get caught up in our own problems and our own lives that we fail to see what is really going on in the world. (UVic student teacher)

*Hawaiian Example*

Benjamin Feinstein's study (2004) on learning and transformation in the context of a course entitled, "Hawaiian Traditional Ecological Knowledge", shares a lived example of the distinct qualities that characterize a transformational learning experience. The course was successful in enriching the knowledge base and appreciation of indigenous perspectives, however only one of the students (Jasmine) reported a paradigmatic shift in her identity, and a subsequent reordering of how she thinks. Student responses that highlight a more informed and enriched learning curve include statements such as:

I have learned a lot more than I already knew. I have never given the Hawaiians enough credit for all their achievements (Tristan); Experiences in the course have increased my awareness and appreciation for the Hawaiian culture (Jennifer); I have more respect for them and the things that they do...this class has taught me so much about Hawaiians (Sarah). (cited in Feinstein, p. 113)

Jasmine's comments however, exemplify the distinct aspects of transformative learning:

I'm still questioning the power structures that have influenced my own learning, and I'm actively learning about and challenging the system that supports the marginalization of my people. For me, the TEK course was the catalyst for altering my entire identity and how my life has changed as a result of that shift in my perspective and self-definition. (cited in Feinstein, p. 118)

### *Costa Rican Example*

Drawing on my experiences in Costa Rica as an education coordinator for “International Student Volunteers” (ISV), I observed similar transformative reactions from a variety of students. It is important to note that upon arriving in Costa Rica, these students (who came from affluent college settings in America) held strong stereotypical perspectives of the world as perceived by American culture. After living and volunteering for a time in Esparza (building houses with “Habitat for Humanity”), the following profound shifts became evident through various student conversations and field notes:

In the USA we were brought up to live a certain lifestyle. You go to school, get good grades, go to college, get more good grades, intern, get a good job, and so on.... But is that what’s really important in life? Making tons of money, living in huge houses, buying everything you want? Before today I would have said ‘YES’, but now I’m not sure. I think this is going to be a great experience for me and maybe even help me to find out what is really important in my life. (personal communication, May 15, 2004)

When I first came to Costa Rica and saw the way people live and the small houses and yards, the old cars, and the chickens and roosters, I was struck by how poor Ticos [Costa Ricans] are. But now that I have gotten to know some of the women and the men and the families that are helping us to build, I don’t think of these people as poor at all.... Being a warmhearted, friendly person provides you with a rich life.... The poor in America appear unhappy, angry, frustrated and discontent. Constantly preconceived judgments or opinions are being challenged by my experiences and interactions here... I thought that I would learn so much about the Tico culture, which I have, but I have also, more importantly, begun (sic) to question American culture. (personal communication, May 19, 2004)

### *Elements of a Transformative Experience*

The experiences of Hawaii and Costa Rica provide important insights regarding the process, purpose, and significance of transformational learning - areas that are often debated throughout the literature.

For Mezirow (1990a), the goal of transformative learning is to “help the individual become a more autonomous thinker by learning to negotiate his or her own values, meanings, and purpose rather than uncritically acting on those of others” (p. 11).

In short, Mezirow claims that the value and significance of transformative learning is in attainment of “*individuation*”:

[T]he development of the person as separate from the collective, which in turn allows for the person to join with others in a more authentic union. If people run with the herd, if they have no sense of self as separate from others, there is no hope for finding one’s voice or having free participation in discourse. (cited in Cranton, 2000, p. 189)

Mezirow (1995) also contends that three interrelated components are central to the process and the capacity for transformation and the attainment of individuation:

- 1) *Centrality of the experience* - embracing the learner’s experience as the starting point and subject matter;
- 2) *Critical reflection* - a uniquely adult characteristic that involves the questioning of assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience - often occurs in response to an awareness of a contradiction among one’s thoughts, feelings, and actions; and
- 3) *Rational discourse* - the necessary medium through which transformation is promoted and where new and revised interpretations of experience takes place.

The present research, and others, provide varying degrees of acceptance and agreement for Mezirow’s beliefs and criteria for transformative learning. Most tend to agree that critical reflection is a key element for the process of transformation. Debate arises, however, with the belief that reflection becomes critical only when it leads to transformation and social action: “Without consequent social action, critical reflection is castigated as liberal dilettantism, a self-indulgent form of speculation that makes no real difference to anything” (Brookfield, 2000, p. 14). This debate opens up many questions related to transformative learning and its relationship to social responsibility and action:

- *What constitutes ‘action’?*
- *What (if any) form of action is necessary for the process of transformation to take place? Can individual transformation take place without social transformation?*

Mezirow (1989) would argue that social action is not necessarily a direct consequence of a more inclusive discriminating worldview:

Transformative learning experiences, which result in changes that are epistemic and psychic, may not logically lead to collective action at all and may only very indirectly be a product of a specific social practice or institutional ideology. (p. 174)

In Mezirow's view, personal transformation is sufficient, and acting on the world becomes a choice (if one chooses) based on the learner's will to act on his/her own convictions. By pointing out that a changed way of understanding the world and one's place within it represents a singularly important form of *mental* action, Mezirow would also contend that "Making a decision to act or not to act is itself an action" (1990b, p. 354), and that reality is perceived and understood from the frame of reference of the individual instead of superimposed by society.

Tennant (1993) would agree that perspective transformation represents a change in perspective of the individual, not society, such that "shifts the onus for social analysis onto the learner, so that it is grounded in the learner's experience, rather than being a decontextualized theory of society generated by, and for, academe" (cited in Taylor, 1998, p. 24).

Boyd's (1989) view of transformative learning is informed by depth psychology and the exploration of the unconscious. For Boyd, the transformative journey is not viewed as a series of rational practices dependent on critical reflection or social action, but as a process of discernment – a holistic orientation leading to contemplative insight, personal understanding of seeing life in a relational wholeness. In this way, the central purpose of transformation is to "free the individual from his or her unconscious content and norms and patterns that constrain the potential for self-actualization" (p. 459).

Paulo Freire, and others who view individuals and society as inseparable, have a difficult time accepting such limiting and isolating views of transformational learning.

Conscientization [critical reflection] is not simply bringing what is hidden into consciousness... it is a breaking into consciousness of hidden dimensions of our reality through our *reflective engagement* in resisting the oppressions of day-to-day life. Both critical reflection and transformative action are essential for conscientization. (Freire, cited in Heaney & Horton, 1990, p. 85)

Although Freire would agree that critical reflection, or *conscientization* is central to transformation, he sees its purpose, [as demonstrated by Jasmine], based on rediscovery of power, where the more critically aware learners become, the more they are able to transform society and subsequently their own reality: “Conscientizacao (conscientization) refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against oppressive elements of reality” (Freire, 2002, p. 35). Freire advocates for fostering *emancipatory* transformation or *problem-solving* learning where “men and women develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality but as a reality in the process of transformation” (2002, p.12). Heaney & Horton (1990), would agree that conscientization is an important moment of social change and recognize that “new ways of thinking about the world become possible, when the promise of those “ways of thinking” can be realized in action” (p. 74). They also highlight the importance that liberating structures or “political apparatus” have in providing the capacity and support for people to think critically *and* act responsively to new ways of thinking:

It is not merely the mind, dulled into acquiescence by an atrophied imagination, that blocks liberating, transformative action. It is concrete situations, structures, and organizations that maintain oppression. Only in creating equally concrete alternatives to these does liberation occur. (p. 87)

Daniel Schugurensky (2002) also advises us to consider context as pertinent in fostering the connections between individual and social transformation:

Paradoxically, critical reflection, without an accompanying effort of a social organization and without concurrent enabling structures to channel participation in democratic institutions, can nurture the development of individuals who become more enlightened than before but who (because of their realization of the immense power of oppressive structures) may become more passive and skeptical than before. (p. 62)

There has also been considerable debate regarding the notion of *rational discourse* as a necessary component of transformative learning. Although Mezirow contends that rational discussion, reflection, and the experience of others are necessary

precursors for transformation, others feel that ‘verbal’ discourse overshadows the meaning and significance of other, ‘non-verbal’ signs of transformation:

A great challenge in transformational learning is to get beyond language and be able to spot transformation in action rather than through verbal and written responses. (Cohen & Piper, 2000, p. 225)

We do not insist on the primacy of reason or of articulation for transformative learning. We understand that crucial learning often takes place nonverbally, in the inarticulate dimensions of our bodies. We even would claim that essential transformative learning takes place unconsciously and that there is no need to attempt to bring everything into our consciousness, no need to try to pin a name on every experience. (Morrell & O’Conner, 2002, p. xviii)

Cranton (2000), brings this challenge to life as he shares his experience with a student of his, Peter, in an adult education course. During a lively discussion of how critical self-reflection leads to transformative learning, Peter, who was usually at the center of any discussion, was uncharacteristically quiet. Just as Cranton was about to nudge Peter into conversation, he burst out with obvious emotion, “I don’t do this! I don’t reflect! But I for sure have transformed perspectives” (p. 181). Though Peter was unable to articulate exactly what his process for transformation was, he was certain it was neither logical or analytical, and that his change in frame of reference “came to him” as a direct result of the experience.

A personal critique of transformational learning theory relates to the common assumption that transformational learning and the skills and abilities required to experience such learning, are restricted to *adult learners*. This research challenges why critical reflection - bringing awareness and meaning to our thoughts, roles, and relationships - is considered “the most significant distinguishing characteristic of adult learning” (Mezirow, 1981, cited in Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 260), with little to no mention of younger learners in this discussion. Although it has been indirectly suggested that the reason why younger learners do not engage with reflective judgment or abstract thinking may be due to a lack of education rather than inherent incapacities, there appear to be few insights offered regarding the potential and the need for educating children and youth in these areas.

It is not that some adults [and youth and children] are inherently incapable of thinking abstractly, becoming critically reflective, or making reflective judgments. It is only that they have not learned how to think in these ways. Many are socialized in subcultures - including those of schools - that place little or no value on such ways of knowing.... Reclaiming this stunted function of critical reflection for transformative learning is what emancipatory adult education is all about (Mezirow, 1990b, pp. 358-359)

A significant outcome of this present research challenges these assumptions that suggest experiences with transformational learning are restricted to adults. As this research suggests, an equally important strategy to reclaiming stunted capabilities in adulthood is to prevent the problem in the first place by recognizing *young people* as valuable thinkers and active members in society.

Paulo Freire (2002) advocates that *every human being*, no matter how submerged in the “culture of silence” he or she may be, is capable of looking critically at the world in a diagnostic encounter with others. Provided with the proper tools and environment, the individual can become conscious and aware of personal and social realities as well as the contradictions within it, and ultimately play a part in the radical reconstruction of oppressive structures and situations. And although Freire speaks in response to the learning capabilities of illiterate peasants in Latin America, the potential for transformational learning that he alludes to, can be applied to any learner or setting:

When an illiterate peasant participates in this sort of educational experience, he or she comes to a new awareness of self, has a new sense of dignity, and is stirred by a new hope - “I now realize I am a person, an educated person”; “We were blind, now our eyes have been opened”. (2002, p. 33)

Daloz (2000) recognizes that although the capacity (or capabilities) to develop more adequate meaning-making frameworks is always there, transformative learning is by no means inevitable, and depends strongly on the particular environment and cultural forces at work in the individual’s life. “In effect, people have the potential to make the kinds of deep shift described here, but whether they will or not depends on the particular conditions of their lives” (p. 104).

### *A Field in the Making*

Transformational learning is currently recognized as ‘a field in the making’ (Morrell, O’Conner, & O’Sullivan, 2002). Although a variety of research endeavours have been developed in this field, the majority of initiatives that focus on transformational learning take place outside of formal systems of public education, share limited practical applications, lack a relationship to social and environmental action, and focus primarily on adults with little consideration of our younger members of society.

Although the theory is much discussed, the practice of transformative learning has been minimally investigated and is inadequately defined and poorly understood. There needs to be continued exploration into the practice of fostering transformative learning recognizing the limits of promoting an ideal practice, particularly looking at the practicality...for learning in a typical classroom setting...there is still much to be learned about the complex nature of transformative learning. (Taylor, 1998, pp.vii & 62)

This present research endeavour builds upon present understandings of transformational learning - challenging some aspects and adding to others. Most significantly, the stories and events that are intertwined throughout this dissertation reveal the importance of *connection* - connection with *Self* in relation to *Others* as a critical element for transformation.

### Social and Educational Change

For Freire (2002), there is no such thing as a neutral education:

Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring conformity to it... or (liberates) and becomes ‘the practice of freedom’, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 34)

Freire uses the metaphor of *banking* to describe our present state of education wherein teachers make *deposits* of information into student accounts, and students, as empty objects, are required to receive, memorize, and recount this information. Banking education does not engage students in critical thinking or questioning. Nor does it

encourage students to become active members within their communities. Instead, the banking approach requires that students be passive and conform, thereby serving the purpose of subtle *oppression*. Furthermore, “the more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world” (Freire, 2002, p. 73). Implicit in Freire’s banking concept is a dichotomy between students and their world: students are merely *in* the world, not *with* the world or with others; they are spectators, not re-creators. In this view students are not conscious beings, but rather possessors of a consciousness: an empty “mind” passively open to the reception of reality from the world outside.

Edmund O’Sullivan (2002) shares a similar view of the conforming nature of education. According to O’Sullivan, “When any cultural manifestation is in its florescence, the education and learning tasks are uncontested and the culture is of one mind about what is ultimately important” (p. 2). During these times there is a trustworthy feeling of optimism that education and learning practices are working well, are “formatively appropriate” and therefore warrant continuity and replication.

Even when a culture is formatively appropriate however, there are times when a loss of purpose or meaning leads the broader public to engage in a “reform criticism” known in the field of education as “educational reform” (O’Sullivan, p. 3). Traditional school reform leaves the basic educational system intact while attempting to repair existing practices, or discretely add on parts. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) are strong advocates of educational reform arguing that the way forward is through melding individual and institutional renewal and informed action:

The solution lies in critical masses of highly engaged individuals working on the creation of conditions for continuous renewal.... Once some momentum has been established, new organizations will have some generative capacity to select and help renew future members... (p. 354)

Often times *reform* efforts, although well intentioned, lead to superficial and short-lived change because the add-ons or the renewed conditions do not adequately reflect or relate to the entire system in which they are intended to serve. As Michael Apple (2003) suggests, “Reforms that are instituted with good intentions may have hidden effects that

are more than a little problematic” (p. 4). Through his examples of voucher plans and state-wide curricula and testing, that worsen class, gender, and race inequalities, Apple advises that we “be very cautious about accepting what may seem to be meritorious intentions at face value” (p. 4).

### *From Conformity to Freedom*

While sitting on a bench in a narrow cell in Birmingham jail (in 1963), Martin Luther King Jr. composed a letter that began with the following words: “We know from painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed” (cited in Johnson, 2005, p. 44). When considering dramatic social and educational change, individuals must not be deterred by the political reality that those who control the existing system have a personal stake in the status quo. With Apple’s (2003) work in mind, every institution, policy, and practice - especially those that currently dominate education and the larger society - establish relations of power in which some voices are heard and some are not. And recognizing how “Many economic, social, and educational policies when actually put in place tend to benefit those who already have advantages” (Apple, p. 4), reconfirms the need to challenge the status quo and those dominating forces that maintain it:

As a result of the internalization of negative images of themselves, whole classes of people may become silenced and/or confused about the nature of social reality and their place in it. Often used unwittingly by members of the dominant class, this insidious form of oppression helps the powerful maintain control with minimum of external force – particularly through the use of education. (Auretto, 2001, p. 47)

Freire (2002) advocates for an education that liberates, enhances, and expands every human being’s ability to examine these hidden and oppressive messages and reconstruct this reality by redefining our place and purpose within it. In order for education to become a liberating practice of freedom, students must be encouraged to reach a state of critical consciousness, or *conscientizacao* (conscientization). Freire defines conscientization as a means for breaking through prevailing mythologies to reach new levels of awareness - in particular, awareness of oppression, of being an *object* in a world where only *Subjects* have the power to participate in meaningful decision-making.

“Conscientization” involves becoming part of the process of changing the world as liberated members of an equal society:

Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of women and men as conscious beings, intent upon the world. They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in relation with the world. (Freire, 2002, p. 79)

Through Freire’s influences, Apple (2003) employs a framework called *repositioning* that suggests that the best way to understand what any set of institutions, policies, and practices does [i.e. the banking system of education] is to view them from the standpoint of those who have the least power, questioning deeply those who benefit least from the ways these institutions function.

As many events and narratives of this research suggest, the most subtle and often unforeseen circumstances of conformity and oppression may be found in the midst of public education systems found within our dominating culture. The signs are hidden amidst the guise of democracy and opportunity, and in the hegemonic beliefs that the values and principles of the dominating and “privileged” society are “formatively appropriate” and worthy of assimilation in every remote corner of the world. Hegemony, as Greene (1988) points out, is a form of persuasion that “is often so quiet, so seductive, so disguised that it renders young people acquiescent to power without their realizing it” (cited in Reed & Johnson, 2000, p. 139). Paul (1998) poses a similar message to keep in mind throughout the following research:

Internalized oppression is so pervasive that it is often invisible and, thus, goes completely unnoticed, much as air pollution is unnoticed when it is a constant and inescapable fact of life. Education, exhortation, and political protest hammer away at conscious beliefs while leaving the unconscious bedrock below untouched (cited in Aurette, 2001, p. 48)

### Arts - Based Research

The transformative value and significance of the Arts are substantial. Scholars and philosophers worldwide have argued that art is normal, necessary, and also essential to human survival. Recognizing how this present research sits outside the traditional

meanings of “art-based research”, the following section provides useful art related theories and practical examples that support initiatives such as those discussed throughout this research.

Greene (1998) suggests that anyone who is authentically concerned about the “birth of meaning”, about breaking through prevailing surfaces, about teaching others to “read” their own worlds (and the world of others), art forms must be conceived of as ever-present possibility, and a central part of curriculum, wherever it is devised (cited in Reed & Johnson, 2000, p. 137). In support of idealistic and aesthetic visions, Greene (1991) states that, “To perceive, to imagine new possibilities of being and action is to enlarge the scope of freedom for the individual; and, when people work to open new perspectives together, they may even discover ways of transforming their lived worlds” (p. 158).

Darlene Clover’s (2000) work with “Community Arts” informs us of the universal nature of creativity and brings to life immense possibilities for transformative and collaborative learning. Community Art activities as described by Clover, “provide a creative but often challenging process that taps into people’s cultural, cognitive and spiritual centers” (p. 20). Through various creative and cultural mediums such as dance, theatre, music, poetry, story-telling, sculpting, weaving and drawing it can be discovered that the potential and capability for creativity lives within all of us:

To create means to relate. The root meaning of the word art is to fit together and we all do this every day. Not all of us are painters but we are artists. Each time we fit things together we are creating. (Corita, cited in Clover, 2000, p. 20)

Through many diverse examples, Clover also highlights the power of community arts in breaking down oppressive boundaries and making the invisible, visible in society (p. 21). Feminist adult educators in the Dominican Republic, for example used drawing as an effective medium to encourage women to communicate ideas that many were too fearful to openly name or discuss. Drama has also been utilized across Africa to convey social and political objectives to rural and urban people, and to open up deeper levels of reality that have remained unnoticed or hidden. In Canada’s arctic, popular theatre has been utilized as an educational tool for dealing with people’s feelings of oppression and powerlessness. Theatre became a medium to help the Inuit express their feelings about life,

to improve their written and communication skills, to encourage assertiveness and self-appreciation, and to provide a forum to address the ways in which their cultures and traditions have been undermined and undervalued. *I recall a similar situation in Swaziland where the women in rural villages, who would otherwise be severely punished for “speaking out” against King Mswati and his naïve political decision-making, found refuge in their ability and solidarity to “sing out” their frustrations.*

Clover (2000) continues to provide examples of the value of community arts in helping to deal with environmental issues that are often linked with complex and confusing scientific concepts. Engagement with creative and cultural processes “draws out people’s own, often extensive, local ‘ecological’ knowledge before moving onto outside facts and information which may be necessary to learning and future action strategies” (p. 22). Guevara (2001) also argues that “breaking-out into an action-song about the adverse impacts of logging may help keep the energy high and add variety to what might be a very technical discussion” (cited in Clover, p. 22). Singer-song writer Raffi, has demonstrated these effects through his numerous albums such as “Evergreen, Everblue” and his child-favorite songs such as “Baby Beluga” and “Down By the Bay”.

In Toronto, a labour and environment project used community arts as a tool to build a sense of community and work towards socio-environmental transformation and sustainability. One of the models it was built around is referred to as the “Transformation Model”, where art was used to foster the transformation of communities by providing “people with a sense of identity, civic pride, and a means by which to view themselves as creators of culture and active agents of change through a participatory, creative process” (Clover, 2000, p. 25). In addition, an unexpected outcome of this collective arts project, “transformed the stereotypical lens through which the individuals and groups involved had viewed each other and how they viewed and worked with the issue of waste in terms of invisibility, moving from the ‘individual’ to the political” (p. 29).

In his article *Aesthetic Education as Reconstructionist Education*, David Conrad (1994) explains how “aesthetic education can help give voice to those who feel disempowered and that it can provide fresh insights into social, cultural, historical, political, and educational issues confronting us” (pp. 47-48). Conrad views aesthetic education as a broad, interdisciplinary field of study relating the arts and aesthetic issues to

human lives, social problems, and environmental concerns. From his perspective, the aesthetic dimension is a “fundamental part of every person’s life and can be developed further through enhanced experience, awareness, and understanding” (p. 49). Through the lens of a reconstructionist educator, Conrad is drawn to the works of Brameld and his views of art (poetry, painting, music, sculpture, dance, architecture, craftsmanship) as the key to achieving “social-self-realization” – the inclusive, all embracing value in education that recognizes both the possibility of individual transformation and social/cultural transformation toward a world of greater beauty and justice (cited in Conrad, 1994, p. 48).

During his graduate education course, “Seminar in Aesthetic Education”, Conrad investigated with his student teachers the nature of aesthetic experience and its relationship to personal integration and growth, and also introduced a wide range of artistic creativity in the social, cultural, historical, and political context from which it emerged. Through an array of diverse examples, Conrad was able to show how artistic images and expressions have the power for personal development and social justice. Viewing sculptures of grieving parents crying out against war, patchwork arpilleras expressing anguish of the cruel Pinochet dictatorship in Chile, and artwork created by survivors of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, students learned how “the arts remain one of the powerful, if not the most powerful, realms of cultural resistance, a space for awakening folks to critical consciousness and new vision” (hooks, 1990, p. 39).

Conrad also explores the relationship between artistic expression and the understanding and appreciation of culture. Conrad introduced his students to bell hooks, an African American feminist cultural critic, who clearly acknowledges her support of radical social change and liberation struggles: “It’s exciting to think, write, talk about, and create art that reflects passionate engagement with popular culture, because this may very well be ‘the’ central future location of resistance struggle, a meeting place where new and radical happenings can occur” (cited in Conrad, p. 54). It was through a poor and illiterate quilt maker (Baba) that bell hooks began to really “see” how, in the daily lives of traditional southern black communities, consumer capitalism ravaged the black poor, and reinforced a longing for things that often subsumed an ability to recognize artistic worth or value (hooks, 1990). Despite the oppressive nature of consumerism, hooks discovers how music, dance, painting, and poetry created by the African

Americans serve a dual purpose: as a political function in the struggle against racist thinking, and as a medium to bring beauty and joy into the lives of people who had few material possessions. Towards the end of the course, a student shared her growing understanding of the power of art and aesthetics in the transformation of oppressive lives and circumstances:

Aesthetics can play a powerful role in unearthing an untapped power in all of us, especially those operating under some form of repression or loss. It is a powerful concept that cuts across class, race, and cultures. (cited in Conrad, p. 56)

Deryk Houston, an artist residing in Victoria, British Columbia, demonstrates a further example of how art provides a powerful “tuning fork” for better understanding the role that personal and social transformation have in responding to an unjust world. Determined to give voice to the innocent victims of war, Houston ventured to war-torn Iraq to better understand the realities of war and the effects of war on the people of Iraq. As expressed in his documentary film, “From Baghdad to Peace Country”, this venture turned out to be life-altering journey that transformed his life and his art. Using the Earth to convey images of a mother and child, Houston shifted his artistic voice from one that conveys political and finger-pointing outrage, to an emotional invitation to stand up for children’s rights and peaceful resolution to conflict. Through his disorienting experiences and his transformational work, Houston confirms that “Art is a record of our times, and for people to understand these times in future – art has this very important role” (cited in Friesen & Lepage, 2003).

Similar to the goals of the Children’s Global Arts initiative, UNESCO has a long, established tradition for utilizing children’s Art as a medium for uniting children around the world. Through their association entitled “Art Child” UNESCO organizes contests and collaborative events related to children’s Art and Culture (“Unesco”, n.d.).

The B.C. Ministry of Education also supports Fine Arts as an essential element for social responsibility and democracy. As indicated by the rationale outlined in the Fine Arts curriculum:

The fine arts are important to our understanding of society, culture, and history, and are essential to the development of individual potential, social responsibility, and cultural awareness.... An understanding of the fine arts fosters respect for and appreciation of the diverse cultural heritages and values found within Canada and around the world. (cited in Sanford & Hopper, 2006, p. 9)

### Honouring the Voices of Children

Maxine Greene (1993) believes that in order to create democratic and free classrooms, teachers must learn to listen to student voices to discover what they are thinking, what concerns them, and what has meaning to them. Through this listening, a collective search for historical, literacy, and artistic metaphors provide us with knowledge of the world. In addition, Greene recognizes how listening creates possibilities for human empowerment and counters the marginalization experienced by students in school and in their lives. A theme permeating much of Greene's work is her "unyielding faith in humankind's willingness and ability to build on and transcend their lived worlds" (cited in Reed & Johnson, 2000, p. 124). Greene also recognizes that although freedom, like virtue or justice, cannot be taught, "an atmosphere can be created where students are free to pose critical questions about the world they inhabit, engage with others about their shared worlds and how to improve them, and awaken to the belief that things do not have to remain as they are" (cited in Reed & Johnson, p. 126).

Driskell (2002) recognizes how the fifty-four Articles of the Convention of the Rights of the Child serve as a 'Bill of Rights' for young people, calling on all the countries that ratify it to create the conditions in which children can take an active and creative part in the social and political life of their countries.

It [Convention of the Rights of the Child] establishes children's basic right to a healthy and safe environment, as well as their right to be actors in their own development: to express their views on all matters affecting their lives; to seek, receive and impart information and ideas; and to peacefully assemble. (p. 36)

Driskell also recognizes how young people are generally ignored or not included in meaningful decision-making, and how this short-sighted view contravenes Article 12 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child [the child's right to express an opinion] (p. 13). I

would also suggest that Articles 13, 14, and 29, which include a child's right to obtain information and express his or her own views, the right to freedom of thought, and the right to an education that prepares the child for active life as an adult (Unicef, pp. 1-2), are also being denied when children are not recognized as valuable contributors in society.

Since the adoption of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, a number of similar initiatives have been launched that further the legitimization of children as active agents in our world. The World leaders who gathered at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 emphasized (through Agenda 21 Programme of Action) the importance of young people's participation (Section 25). An international initiative entitled *Mayors, Defenders of Children* was launched by UNICEF in 1992 to encourage mayors and municipal leaders to "make children's basic needs a priority and increase the participation of children in community development and decision making" (cited in Driskell, p. 36). Singer-songwriter Raffi, recently proposed *A Covenant for Honouring Children* which states (in part) that "all children are created whole, endowed with innate intelligence, with dignity and wonder, worthy of respect", and that there is a need to "recognize the early years as the foundations of life, and to cherish the contribution of young children to human evolution" (Raffi, 1999, p. 1). Principles 12c and 14a found within *The Earth Charter* also support the need to provide children and youth with educational opportunities that empower them to fulfill their essential role in creating sustainable societies and contributing actively to sustainable development (Vorratnchaiphau, 2000, pp. 45-46).

In an action research project, Penny Silvers and a teacher researcher used literature discussion as a vehicle for encouraging fourth-grade students to reflect critically on injustice in their own lives. Through this study, the researchers came to see that "the changes in student behaviour represented their expanding self-awareness and recognition of some of their tacit biases in light of their new understandings about themselves in a gendered society" (Silvers, 2001, p. 560). Overall the students learned to be more conscious of social issues, and were encouraged to become more socially active and proactive when they felt there was a need to change existing inequities (p. 561)

Critical reflection provides an even more powerful dimension of thinking and learning with the potential for examining deeply held but limiting beliefs, while reconstructing a more enlightened awareness of oneself that can lead to expanded thinking and knowing. (Silvers, pp. 561-562)

This finding helped researchers to recognize that “even young students can relate to those social inequities that connect with issues in their own lives” (p. 562), and that once their consciousness was raised, students became more aware of their own biases and began to address ways to deal with them as they occur. They also came to realize the transformational potential in children and how deeper understandings about tacit assumptions created the opportunity for children to make conscious and informed choices regarding whether or not to change their own deeply held beliefs:

By raising awareness of social issues through critical reflection during literature discussions, we became better teachers and all of us, teachers and students alike, even at this fourth-grade level, gained deeper insights into learning and the potential for greater self-knowledge and social change. (Silvers, p. 562)

Apple (2003) also shares a couple of noteworthy examples of child honouring practices. In Belem, Brazil, a “Youth Participatory Budget” process was instituted. It provided resources and space for the participation of thousands of youth in the deliberations and decision-making over what programs for youth needed to be developed, how money should be spent, and over creating a series of political forums that could be used by youth to make public their needs and aspirations. A similar instance is found in New Zealand, where multi-racial groups of youth are formed in communities to publicly discuss the ways in which youth see their realities and advance proposals for addressing these realities (p. 10).

[These initiatives] are very different than most if the ways youth are dealt with in all too many countries, where youth are seen as a “problem” [or an object] not as a resource [or a Subject].... In this way, alliances that begin to cut across race, class, and age are being built. There are models then, of real participation that we can learn from and that challenge the eviscerated vision of democracy advanced by neo-liberals by putting in place more substantive and active models of actually “living our freedoms”. (Apple, p. 10)

If the need and the evidence to legitimize young children as competent and capable members of a democratic society is so vastly widespread, this research challenges why, when interviewing young people we often get the response: “No one listens to me. The politicians don’t care. Nobody cares” (Driskell, p. 13)? And why do we come upon the common themes that “youth frequently do not believe that they are taken seriously by adults” (Ekman, et al., cited in Limber & Kaufman, 2002, p. 8)? Perhaps part of the answer lies among those adults who still believe, despite all the evidence to suggest differently, that young people are unable to participate in experiences dealing with critical reflection and transformational learning because they lack the necessary knowledge, skills, and experiences. As Driskell has found, even the many adults who include themselves as advocates for young people, have attitudes towards young people that undermine their support for child and youth participation in community development (p. 37). And as long as research and educational change efforts continue to ignore or marginalize student perspectives and remain focused on issues outside classroom walls and beyond the control of schools and teachers, “the prospects for developing truly effective learning interventions and reforms may remain dim indeed” (Gentilucci, 2004, p. 143).

The *Children’s Global Arts* initiative, as the cornerstone of this present research endeavour, has provided opportunities for young people around the world to connect meaningfully with one another through exchanges of creative and cultural forms of expression and communication; and in so doing have assumed their rightful role as thinkers and citizens of society.

The following chapter will explain my research intention and process, including a glimpse into humanistic and poetic representation pedagogy.

*We are perhaps entering to a truly fantastic period  
when all we know about knowledge will be changed*  
(Hall, 2001, p. 178)

### Chapter 3

#### RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

##### Research Intent

Weaving understandings of qualitative research methodologies such as *narrative and interpretive inquiry*, this dissertation compiles an anthology of interconnected and cross-cultural stories that depict personalized life experiences, events, and circumstances that have emerged through the Children's Global Arts initiative, and identifies in these stories, areas of transformation at an individual, institutional, and/or community level. From a *phenomenological perspective*, my motives are derived out of the concerns for humanity, the benefit of a shared society, and through the recognition that "living a life consistent with sustaining the planet requires a new ethic which builds upon the assumption that each person is of value and that each person does make a difference" (Ashford, 1997, p. 6).

Phenomenological research is a being-given-over to some quest, a true task, a deep questioning of something that restores an original sense of what it means to be a thinker, a researcher, a theorist. (van Manen, 2001, p. 31)

...genuine theory always has a geography, that is, that it always arises out of specific concrete situations formulated by living persons who are attempting to answer or clarify real problems at the heart of their living. (Smith, 1997, p. 2)

From a research standpoint, my ontological perspective concurs with Palmer (1987) that it is not only how we view the world that shapes who we are, but also *the way we view or know the world has powerful implications for the way we live*:

Every epistemology tends to become an ethic, and that every way of knowing tends to become a way of living...the relation established between the knower and the known, between the student and the subject, [between the researcher and participant], tends to become the relation of the living person to the world itself... every mode of knowing contains its own moral trajectory, its own ethical direction and outcomes. (p.22)

I have attempted to modify Plummer's (1983) humanistic approach to my research; becoming intimately familiar with participants' experiences and understandings, and accurately interpreting them through a collaborative process of review and analysis. My epistemological belief is that in order to adequately learn about *the world we live in* and *the world we want*<sup>4</sup>, my role as a researcher needed to give voice to participants through the generation, representation, and interpretation of *stories*. For if it is true that "the truth about stories is that that's all we are" (King, 2003, p. 2), then I could not avoid seeking "tales of transformation" as a key component of my research. Not stories for stories sake alone, but for the power of stories to give voice – particularly those voices that go unheard<sup>5</sup> – and to advocate for social and environmental justice on a worldwide scale.

...there is nothing sacred or sacrosanct about people's voices. They are data that is material for interpretation...we need...to bring our interpretive energies and creativity and insight to bear on this thing called data. (Darbyshire, cited in Horsburgh, 2003, p. 310)

### *Stories as Knowledge Construction*

There is a story I know. It's about the earth and how it floats in space on the back of a turtle. I've heard this story many times, and each time someone tells the story, it changes. Sometimes the change is simply the voice of the storyteller. Sometimes the change is in the details. Sometimes in the order of events. Other times it's the dialogue or the response of the audience. But in all the tellings of the tellers, the world never leaves the turtle's back. And the turtle never swims away. (King, 2003, p.1)

Through his weaving of history, literature, culture, and oppression, King (2003) asserts how the power of stories inform us of who we are and how we perceive the world. He compels us to listen closely to stories and to act upon their urgent messages. Most persuasively, he evokes in us a subtle sense of urgency and responsibility to act upon what we know and learn through stories, and to refrain from saying in the years to come that we would have lived our lives differently if only we had heard these stories. In my mind,

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<sup>4</sup> Children's Global Arts themes

<sup>5</sup> LeCompte (1993) argues that it is the responsibility of qualitative research to seek out the silenced because their views are often counter-hegemonic. Lincoln (1995) also recognizes how this view of voice - voice as a resistance against silence and marginalization - is becoming a hallmark of quality in interpretive research.

King is talking about the powerful influence stories have in provoking personal and social transformation, and the necessity for us to become moved and significantly changed by them.

*A Consideration...*

With the understanding that all cultural groups do not share the white, middle-class, western, view of *research* or *researcher*, there are some special considerations that I needed to keep in mind throughout my research. As indicated by Bogdan & Biklen (2003), “While research may be a nebulous term for most, for some it may conjure up images of what is done in a laboratory, or as an instrument of government [or colonial] repression” (p. 85). With this in mind, it was important to consider how participants residing in remote villages in Zanzibar or Afghanistan, or parents, children, or teachers, for example, viewed me, and try to curtail any problems or misunderstandings that may arise. Referring to Bogdan & Biklen (2003), who I am to the various participants and what this research means to them was important to consider when negotiating fieldwork relations as well as for interpreting data.

In relation to the project at hand, various global arts participants knew me as the *coordinator* for this project; this is the role in which I initiated contact with people both locally and globally, and invited their participation in this project. A growing sense of trust was established, and through this trust, I became privy to informative and insightful stories both locally and globally. With the above concerns in mind, I was somewhat bothered by the implications of switching roles from a *coordinator* to a *researcher*; *was it in the best interests of the project, the participants, or my research, to inform all participants that I was conducting ‘research’?* I felt that exposing my role as a ‘researcher’ might jeopardize the natural flow of this project, and may begin to raise some doubt and mistrust in the minds of many participants - particularly those living outside of Canada. I considered also, how it might alter the perceived nature of this international arts-based project from one that flows naturally from culturally diverse creativity, to one that is ruled by systematic and academic research. In keeping with the values of honest and participatory research, however, I considered a compromise.

As the notion of “story-telling” holds universal meanings, and the collection of participant ‘stories’ is a recognized aspect of my role as a global arts coordinator, then the interpretation of these stories also became part of this role. In this way, I did not need to “switch” roles per say, but rather expand my role as coordinator to include such things as story analysis and interpretation - *in partnership with* related members of the global arts initiative. I sought permission for the formal representation of the stories utilized in this research, and also invited collaboration in the authentic understanding of them.

### Research Questions

1. How are experiences in Children’s Global Arts shifting the ways those involved view the world and their role within it?
2. What are the key elements that contribute to those experiences?
3. What are the implications of this study for our current education system?

### Research Setting

My research setting and participant sample reflects the nature of the Children’s Global Arts initiative. Like a compelling novel series, this project has grown and expanded, incorporating characters worldwide in a seemingly endless array of interconnecting events and stories. At present we have a diverse assortment of characters interwoven in a project that stretches across many borders and boundaries including: Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Abu Dhabi, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria, Chile, India, Belize, Vietnam, and Canada. This exciting international representation has offered inspiring as well as limiting opportunities for this research.

Although the multiple events and art exchanges that have emerged from remote corners of the world have provided a wealth of transformational stories, the collection, analysis, and interpretation of these stories has proven somewhat difficult for qualitative research. In an ideal world, all participants - particularly those involved in this research - would be involved fully and collaboratively throughout the entire research. In the process they would be ultimately empowered to take effective action toward improving conditions (particularly those of an oppressive nature) in their lives.

Reconciling with the reality that full participation and collaboration was not attainable on a worldwide scale, I have pursued my research with honesty and integrity, using various models of qualitative research that best apply to my research context and intentions. Research did not rely on total immersion into the multitude of global arts settings; rather the aim was to explore individual and collective understandings of the global arts project through a variety of storytelling strategies.

I am fortunate that members of neighbouring schools and organizations (i.e. Gordon Head & Braefoot Elementary; Langford Fire Dept.; VIDEA; UVic) have been involved in the Global Arts initiative, and have offered extensive support for this research. I am also grateful for the opportunity to have coordinated this project at the time of research. Through this role I was able to establish first-hand connections with various global participants through a form of “virtual reality”<sup>6</sup> (i.e. Hands Across Borders); connections that I hope will continue to create a strong sense of collaboration, openness, and reciprocity.

#### Research Participants (as Story-Tellers)

Drawing from Mason’s (2002) work, all participants in this dissertation are viewed as legitimate sense-makers who are capable of deriving meaning out of their experiences related to a global arts initiative, and their ‘insider’ interpretations, perceptions, meanings and understandings, are the primary data sources for this research. With an understanding that ‘We can be known only in the unfolding of our unique stories within the contexts of everyday events’ (Paley, cited in Reddy, et al, 1998, p. xi), research participants have been helpful in providing firsthand and recollective, memory-based stories, beneficial in providing cause-and-effect relationships in relation to this research inquiry.

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<sup>6</sup> A significant change in the field of qualitative research involves the shift from spatial to virtual and discourse communities in fieldwork practice. The researcher is known to never meet a living person, but only interview people online or follow their talk in a virtual room. (cited in Bogden & Biklen, 2003)

A diverse range of participants were selected in order to offer a vast and informative account of global arts experiences and to help us better understand the effects of these experiences across many levels and interests. The following tables include research participants who are represented *formally*, *informally* and *anonymously* throughout this Children's Global Arts research - bringing merit to important messages and meanings without always making particular reference to participant names or identifying features. In my attempt to acknowledge the far-reaching effects of the Global Arts initiative, I have also attempted to represent marginalized or oppressed "outgroups" in this dissertation who are instinctively compelled to tell "counter stories". As Delgado (1989) states:

Oppressed groups have known instinctively that stories are an essential tool of their own survival and liberation.... Listening to the stories of outgroups can avoid intellectual apartheid. Shared words can banish sameness, stiffness, and monochromaticity and reduce the felt terror of otherness when hearing new voices for the first time. (cited in Pignatelli, 1998, p. 404)

Table 1: Global Arts Research Participants (Formal)

<u>Story-Teller (Interviewee)</u>	<u>Story-Telling Date (Interview)</u>
<b>Children</b> Logan Chester: Gordon Head grade 1 student Mairi Chester: Gordon Head student	March 15, 2006 March 15, 2006
<b>Parent</b> Karen Chester: Gordon Head parent	March 15, 2006
<b>Teachers</b> Debbie Linnell: Braefoot Elementary, Victoria Lynn Heslup: Braefoot Elementary, Victoria Nancy Steeves: Erin Woods Elementary, Calgary Cheryl Zelmer: Erin Woods Elementary, Calgary Joe Karmel: West-Mont School, Metchosin; King David School, Vancouver	March 7, 2006 March 7, 2006 April 8, 2006 April 8, 2006 October 2004 November 18, 2006
<b>Vice-Principal/Principal</b> Elaine McVie: Braefoot Elementary, Victoria Theresa Lewis: Erin Woods Elementary, Calgary	March 21, 2006 April 9, 2006
<b>University of Victoria, Teacher Education</b> <i>Faculty</i> Dr. Kathy Sanford Dr. Tim Hopper <i>Student Teacher</i> Roselynn Verwoord	November 8, 2005 December 19, 2006  September 14, 2006
<b>Community Members - Local and Global</b> Geoff Spriggs: Langford firefighter/Kabul link Atiqullah Mohammedullah: Kabul fire chief Pat Elias: Hands Across Borders, Zanzibar	March 14, 2006 April 11, 2006 September 7, 2006
<b>International Development</b> Kieth Orchiston: VIDEA/Kelowna-Zambia link Lynn Thornton: VIDEA/Victoria-Zambia link	February 6, 2005 February 21, 2006

Table 2: Global Arts Research Participants (Informal and/or Anonymous)

<u>Story - Teller</u>	<u>Story Construction</u>
<p><b>University of Victoria, Teacher Education</b></p> <p><i>Faculty</i>            Dr. Budd Hall            Dr. Bob Dalton            Students in Teacher Education Program:            Carrie Rowlandson            Courses: Community, Culture, and Environment;            Health &amp; Wellness; Social Studies Methods</p> <p><i>Sessional Instructor</i>            Laura Nimmon: ESL course</p>	<p>Global Arts DVD footage            DVD Project Guide</p> <p>Written Reflection Paper            Response Papers</p> <p>Written Reflection</p>
<p><b>Teachers</b></p> <p>Charlotte Holtan: Gordon Head Elementary, Victoria            Verna Collett: Gordon Head Elementary, Victoria            Deirdre Vincent: Gordon Head Elementary, Victoria</p>	<p>Global Arts DVD footage            Global Arts DVD footage            Global Arts DVD footage</p>
<p><b>Community Members - Local and Global</b></p> <p>Gita John: India-Canada link            Connie Nimmon: Hands Across Borders volunteer            Lisa Suhay: Mouse &amp; the Light author            Global Arts Summer Institute Participants</p>	<p>Personal Communication            Written Reflection            Email Communication            Written Reflections</p>
<p><b>Child Artists - Local and Global</b></p>	<p>Voices reflected in various forms of artwork (i.e. drawings, documentary film, quilt-making, etc.)</p>

## Research Strategies

Multiple means of story inquiry have been pursued to capture the complexity of my research endeavour. Based on the work of Pignatelli (1998), one way to open up spaces for matters of fairness and respect for the “other” is to allow the play of *memory* to flourish throughout the story-telling process:

Memories, as the repositories of what used to be, play an important role in what [participants] consider, or do not consider, acceptable, appropriate, or right...memories are strong indicators of what people are willing to struggle and work toward achieving. (p. 406)

What is significant about memories, as suggested by Scharatz & Walker (1995), is not their surface validity as true records, but their active role in the construction of participant identity [and circumstance] (cited in Pignatelli, p. 407). For some, these emotionally compelling recollections offer a sense of narrative urgency about “the world we live in”, and a means of opening up fixed and closed readings of past and present conditions of oppression and discontent. At the same time, memory nourishes hope for a better future and “the world we want”, and draws our attention “to the deep kinship which exists between memory, personal and social transformation, and the ethnographic text” (Pignatelli, p. 406). In my quest to understand the nature of this kinship, the following creative and collaborative strategies were employed:

- 1) Recollective interviews and conversations
- 2) Reflective documents (i.e. journals, email communication, and/or response papers)
- 3) Visual recollections (i.e. children’s artwork, documentary film, DVD footage, etc.)
- 4) Direct observations, participation, and/or field notes

### *Rationale for Research Strategies*

#### *Recollective Interviews and Conversations*

There are many ways of getting at the phenomenology of experience, but in the end there is probably no substitute for spending many hours talking with the subject, gathering up his or her perceptions of the world, encouraging these to be written down, reading through letters and diaries, and developing an intensive intimate familiarity with one concrete life. (Plummer, 1983, p. 67)

My ontological perspective suggests that a person's perceptions, views, understandings, interpretations, and interactions are meaningful elements of a transformational experience that my research questions have been designed to explore. My epistemological belief is that in order to generate legitimate and meaningful data on these ontological elements I needed to talk interactively with participants. I needed to ask them questions about their experiences, to listen to and hear what they had to say, to gain trust and access to their narratives and articulations, and to co-interpret and analyze their choices and use of language involved in the verbal descriptions of their experiences.

Collaborative and trustworthy relationships had been gained between members of the global arts community. With this trust, informal one-on-one interview settings were established where questions related to global arts experiences were asked openly and interactively with participants in order to gain access to personal and relational narratives. Using guiding questions that were unique and appropriate for diverse backgrounds and circumstance, particular reference was made to transformational situations and encounters observed or experienced throughout global arts experiences.

*Reflective Documents (i.e. journals, email responses, and/or response papers)*

'Life documents attempt to enter the subjective world of informants, taking them seriously on their own terms and thereby providing first hand, intimately involved accounts of life' (Plummer, 1983, p. 14). Although personal conversations and interviews proved to be a highly effective method for gathering data, I was also aware how inappropriate they were for certain circumstances, and also how heavily dependent they were upon a participant's ability to verbalize, conceptualize, and recollect a specific experience, even when a conversation or dialogue took place within a familiar moment of that experience. For these reasons, an openness to incorporate participants' stories in the form of journal writing, email communication, and/or reflective response papers were also pursued - writing that represented direct descriptions of a participant's experiences from the 'inside', including feelings, emotions, moods, sensations, and thoughts that are associated with any given experience as they have lived it. As Plummer (1983) suggests,

It is probably at this moment [writing of life documents] that people start to develop fully a sense of themselves as objects of introspection, of interest, of value; when the individual begins to brood and reflect over his or her inner nature; a time when the individual begins to retreat from public life into the realms of privacy - the inner thought, the private home, the real self. (p. 8)

The incorporation of written responses was also an attempt to enter the subjective world of participants, allowing the continuous and uninterrupted narrative of a global arts experience to take place on a participant's own terms and language - complete with all the ambiguity, permeability, trials, and tribulations that make each experience unique.

Although there are some who believe that human documents are too subjective, too descriptive, or too arbitrary to help in scientific advance, I feel as Plummer (1983) does; that if this is so, then 'scientific advance' isn't the only goal of human endeavour. Reflective documents, with their commitment to humanistic sensitivity, still have a vital role to play in human progress. And if this is true, then scientific advance in the social world may actually be dependent upon research methodology that includes subjectivity and first-hand lived experiences as cornerstone. In which case, written documents of life must have a central role to play (p. 11). My intention was to keep myself continuously informed throughout a participant's experience with global arts, and to make relevant connections between an individual's written and lived experience.

*Visual Recollections (children's artwork, documentary film, DVD footage, etc.)*

Sometimes words, either spoken or written, can fall short of meaning. As pictures can be 'worth a thousand words' and transcend cultural borders and boundaries, I have also incorporated various global-arts inspired images as viable documentation. My research demonstrates for example, that the children's artwork that has been sent to Canada from Afghanistan in 2003 and 2005, shows powerful changes in the political and the social structures of Afghanistan, and demonstrates how the image of Canada as a peacekeeping influence is growing remarkably in the minds of Afghanistan children.

Multiple uses of technology have also been utilized in various global arts and settings. These creative forms of knowledge construction have also provided valuable forms of expression and representation. A documentary film entitled "Education Without

Borders”, for example, was created in a rural township in South Africa. This film not only highlights the fearful challenges children face on a daily basis; it also shares a spirit of hope that children’s lives can be transformed through the efforts of the school community and the arts-based outlets that honour children’s voices and concerns.

A Global Arts DVD video has also been produced locally in Victoria, British Columbia as a global arts resource tool. Participating teachers, students, and others involved in this project were interviewed for this video; interviews which reveal many stories about the global arts initiative, and uncover a tale or two related to transformational learning. Digital photographs have also been sent from various communities worldwide. These have also been utilized as an essentially descriptive task designed to illustrate text; and also for ‘photo elicitation’, where photographs are used as a medium to provoke a response (Collier, 1979), or as a resource to extract further explanations (Plummer, 1983, p. 64). Digital photographs sent from Guguletu, Cape Town and Jambiani School in Zanzibar, for example, help to illuminate the context in which the documentary and artwork were created, and provide a setting for the reading, viewing, and interpretation of ‘stories’.

As Ball & Smith (2001) suggest, the benefits of visual data such as those described above, are that they permit close analysis of the intelligibility of participants in an environment in which the visual intertwines with the spoken (cited in Mason, 2002). Visual data can also provide meaningful additions to stories that are unfolding in diverse cultures and contexts. A banner created by children in Zanzibar, Africa that weaves colourful images with Swahili phrases, or a local “story” generated through a combination of visual observations and DVD interviews, for examples, demonstrate the value of visual and diverse modes of representation.

Mason (2002) also recognizes the increasing benefits for utilizing visual data in qualitative research. She argues that the belief that everything we need to know exists in language or text is “a rather limited and uncreative one” (p. 104). Mason advises researchers who employ visual data to see beyond the use of technology (i.e. what the camera can record), and be more focused on what the visual allows us to see and learn about in relation to our research.

Keeping these benefits for incorporating visual data in mind, each figure (i.e. artwork image or contextual photograph) represented throughout this dissertation includes a succinct caption that either explains each image, or acknowledges a direct quotation shared by a child artist and/or participant (represented in “quotation marks”). Further quotes or comments that relate directly to images are represented through the use of a subtle **gray shaded text**. Integrating images and text in this way, allows for a differentiated reading of this dissertation. In particular, it invites young readers and participants to view this research, acknowledge the significance of their contributions, and continue to play an important role in future discussion.

#### *Direct Observations, Participation, and/or Field Notes*

With epistemological beliefs that meaningful knowledge cannot be generated without some form of observation, because not all knowledge is articulable, recountable or constructable through personal and intimate dialogue (Mason, 2002), and that the social researcher is not a mere medium through which knowledge is discovered, but can also be seen as a [‘co-constructor’] of ‘knowledge’ (Plummer, 1983), I have chosen to include close and direct observations (in the form of field notes), as part of my data collection.

I believe that through my shared participation in various global arts-related experiences, I have come to know what social and cultural settings feel and look like, placing myself in an informative position to relate to, and interpret that which is revealed in a given global arts or transformational experience. At the same time, however, I have not over-estimated my ability to truly ‘know’ another’s experience simply because I have participated in a shared experience as part of my research practice. As stated by Znaniecki (1934),

When I wish to ascertain at first hand what a certain activity is...I try to experience it. There is only one way of experiencing an object; it is to observe it personally. There is only one of experiencing an activity; it is to perform it personally. Practical [researchers] insist on this: they will tell you that you cannot fully realise what they are doing till you do it yourself (cited in Plummer, 1983, p. 34)

In a sense I have moved within a ‘hermeneutic circle’ throughout my research in which I begin to comprehend each story by understanding that frame of reference from

which it was produced, and appreciate that frame of reference by understanding each story. Various forms of data have been viewed constructively, with a quest to identify any ‘tales of transformation’ that might support my research intentions. Wherever possible, these stories were viewed with knowledgeable informants who have direct knowledge of the context and the makings of these diverse forms of data.

### Analysis Plan: Creative and Collaborative Interpretation

Once the anthology of stories was compiled, the challenge was to make sense of the mass recollection of words, feelings, descriptions, pictures, and images, in order to adequately and ethically address the initial research questions related to the nature of transformation and the global arts initiative. Although this was a gruelling and time-consuming task, there was also an intriguing sense of anticipation and excitement for ‘getting inside’ the stories and discovering significant meanings.

I was prepared to be “up to my ears in historical, political, social, religious, sexual, and who knows what other sorts of structures and networks, saturated by them, radically saturated” (Caputo, 2000, p. 12), and to be comfortable with my reality of feeling “all wet and not too sure that I know what is what” (p. 12).

#### *Story Transcription (Step 1)*

A file was prepared for each of the global arts projects, settings, and storytelling participants. As data came in through various oral, visual, and written forms, the information was transcribed into appropriate files and sections, leaving space beside the transcriptions for responsive note-taking and thematic coding (see step 2).

#### *Story Coding and Analysis (Step 2)*

##### *Responsive Note-taking:*

After the transcribed stories had been read through for the first time, they were read through a second time highlighting areas that stood out as significant. Using the allotted space directly beside the transcribed stories, initial thoughts, discoveries, hunches, memories, or interpretations were noted that emerged in response to these first two readings. Notes included such things as: ideas or impressions about segments of

conversation, interviews, email or journal entries; linkages with literature or other stories; reference to particular words or phrases; emergent ideas, themes, or categories for future coding; and/or reflexive thoughts regarding my relationship and involvement with a particular segment of the research process.

A similar process took place when viewing various visual forms of representation. For example, the global arts DVD (and preceding video footage) were first viewed without response. During a second viewing, responsive notes were taken similar to those above.

Although the visual process and interpretive dialogue tends to occur between the viewer(s), artwork, artist, and the setting, I feel as Durate does that it should also privilege the subject (cited in Sullivan, 1996). In this sense, the subjects that are shown in the children's artwork from Iraq or Afghanistan (women, children, etc), or the documentary film from South Africa (high school students, teachers, etc.), for examples, were also viewed as informants of this project and study; inviting us in and confronting us, by staring back and asking forthright questions of their own:

There is almost a challenge thrown to the viewer whereby anything less than acceptance is abruptly sent back, and the deficiency is with the viewer, not the subject. (Sullivan, p. 221)

The power in the interpretation of stories (oral, written, and/or visual) was to create a dialectic that gave voice to social, cultural, and/or environmental concerns that are real and predicated on the need to view and see things from the "insider's" point of view. Through Durate's work (cited in Sullivan, 1996) I feel that this initiative and this research belongs to the people and the communities in which the stories were created. As a researcher involved in the processes of story interpretation, I had an ethical responsibility to those from whom/for whom knowledge was created. The stories are not mine, as a researcher. They belong to the children in Iraq who lost their limbs to war; to the women in Afghanistan who feel caged and powerless; to the teenagers in Guguletu who live in daily fear of gangsters; and to the children in Canada who live in fear or isolation. Their stories document their struggles and they invited me to view, listen, and interpret carefully, with the best interests of those concerned utmost in my heart and mind.

*Thematic Coding:*

The space allocated beside the responsive notes represented the common ideas or themes that were found interwoven throughout the data (i.e. interviews, conversations, life documents, photographs, documentary films, DVD videos, artwork, and observations), and ones that emerged through a more thorough and interpretive reading of data. These themes attempted to identify and illuminate the underlying characteristics that made a participant's experience transformational.

The newly gained data are read with an eye to particular theoretical themes and concepts that have evolved in the research thus far or are found pristine and new in the transcript. (Plummer, 1983, p. 151)

The identification of themes depended on my familiarity with the data and also familiarity with my initial research inquiry (including theories related to transformational learning). I needed to move back and forth between the research questions and the data, so that any indexing themes were formed accurately through this process of interaction (Mason, 2002).

As this research unfolded and the stories flowed in, I became aware of the need to 'bracket out' *predetermined* themes and theories of transformational learning, in order to seek a new set of themes based on a thorough reading and familiarity with the data. Working in the context of the hermeneutical circle, I then revisited my original list (prior knowledge), and identified any linkages and connections - with an awareness that what emerged looked somewhat different than was originally intended. As highlighted by Keller (1983), the research trap of imposing an answer to research questions by failing to see what is hidden beyond prior assumptions and intentions was avoided:

I feel that much of the work is done because one wants to impose an answer on it. They have the answer ready and they know (what they want) the material to tell them. Anything else it tells them they don't really recognize as there, or they think it's a mistake and throw it out. (cited in Doucet & Mauthner, 2002, p. 128)

As Husserl (1931) alludes, if we can free ourselves from predetermined assumptions and beliefs, then we can become closer to the thing itself, which is a philosophical approach to the truth (cited in LeVasseur, 2003). The challenge was in suspending briefly,

predetermined notions about global arts and transformational learning, while maintaining a connection between the research inquiry and the data collected through participants' life experiences, and ultimately understanding this data as a response to the inquiry (Gadamer, 1987, p. 332).

### *Writing Up The Research (Step 3)*

An aim of phenomenology is to “transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence - in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful” (van Manen, 2001, p. 36). The challenge was in collecting and ‘getting inside’ the authentic voices of participants and then turning them into structured and coherent statements that embodied the voice of participants in some places and the voice of the researcher in others, without losing authentic meaning. The act of writing constituted practical action, and the inscribing, the writing, and the rewriting of the text, became my research. Through my writing I attempted to capture participants' lived experiences of global arts and transformational learning in such a way that readers or listeners would nod in agreement, recognizing it as an experience that they have had, could have had, or would like to have. In order to do so, I wrote a phenomenological description that is “collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience - is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience” (van Manen, p. 27).

### *Poetic and Visual Representation*

There is no single way - much less the “right” way - of staging a text. Like wet clay, the material can be shaped. Learning alternative ways of writing increases our repertoires, increases the numbers and kinds of audiences we might reach. (Richardson, 2000, p. 936)

With increasing awareness that the more traditional, textual descriptions of qualitative findings do not adequately reflect the complexity of life experiences (Butler-Kisber, 2002), I have attempted to stretch the boundaries of narrative reporting to include other literary genres, including visual and poetic representation of participant stories and findings. The rationale for including these creative representations as part of my research analysis is threefold: i) to evoke emotional responses that bring the reader/viewer closer to

the work; ii) to open up new and multiple possibilities for constructing meaning; and iii) to engage with multiple audiences, particularly those who are more attune with creative language constructions (Butler-Kisber, 2002; Madill & Hopper, 2007; MacNeil, 2000). Like Butler-Kisber's (2002) experience when attempting to compile her work linearly in traditional text-form, the result when I attempted to do so seemed very flat, unable to capture the essence or poignancy of meaning, nor the provocative understandings that were revealed through participant narratives and experiences.

Poetic representation is utilized most extensively in chapter 10 where insights into the "elements and signs of transformation" are compiled using personal, pedagogical, perceptual, societal, and international understandings. Building on Richardson's (1994) work representing "found poetry", and Mishler's (1992) "chained narrative" approach (cited in Butler-Kisber, 2002), I distilled direct words and phrases from various participants' stories scattered throughout this dissertation, and transformed them thematically into poetic form. I selected particular words and phrases using thematic coding strategies, and then I experimented with the words to create rhythms, emphasis, flow, and syntax. In doing so, the organization of words were compiled through my design, while the words embedded within each poem remained the participants'. Uniting words in this creative configuration allows the reader to see, hear, and *imagine* the signs of transformation in new dimensions, while maintaining the integrity of the findings. "Poetry is thus a *practical* and *powerful* method for analyzing social worlds" (Richardson, 2000, p. 933).

### *Participant Involvement*

With the multidimensional array of data that my research setting, circumstances, and interactions presented, my role as a project coordinator, a participant, and an interpreter, allowed me to become 'epistemologically privileged'. With this privilege came an ethical responsibility to include those who were involved in the analysis and interpretation of what I have observed and experienced (to the best of my ability). To validate what I had written, I included global arts participants (particularly those interviewed in a formalized setting) in the process of understanding, by inviting them to add, delete, or alter words, statements, and/or interpretations.

Like poetry, I hope I have validated meaning partially through written words and images, and partially in silence, where words left space for awareness and an unquestionable familiarity resonates through the text.

Speech points beyond itself to silence, to the word within the word, the language buried in language, the primordial language, from before the Flood or the Tower of Babel; lost yet ready at hand, perfect for all time, present in all our words, unspoken. To hear again the primordial language is to restore to words their full significance. (Brown, 1966, cited in Van Manen, 2001, p. 131)

The following participant responses to their co-interpreted stories and insights highlight the value of memory in restoring and reviving actual lived experiences:

*Thanks for sending me this excerpt. Reading it over brought back the depth of that experience and the sense of satisfaction in participating and completing it. As I reread my comments, I can specifically recall the preliminary discussion with the students and also my amazement at the quality of work they completed. It was a wonderful experience in my career as an educator to participate in this project.*

*I have just read through your work and...it brought back many wonderful memories of the students as I actually felt as if the conversation was just happening.*

*I read over the text and it seems to be a very accurate transcription of our conversation. Names, places, and other important information all seem to be accurate also. Thank you very much for the opportunity to contribute the Global Arts initiative.*

### Humanistic Pedagogy

A distinguishing feature of a humanistic approach to pedagogy is how the notions of theory and research are to be related to lived experiences. In contrast to the more positivistic and empirical sciences, human science does not view theory as something that comes *before* practice in order to ‘inform’ it; rather theory comes later - to enlighten lived experiences. Life experiences come first and theory comes later as a result of analysis and reflection. An experience of transformational learning for example, gathered meaning as participants gave memory to it and reflected upon it. Although the pursuit of this research could not be conducted “without the conscious or unconscious use of underlying theoretical perspectives” (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 434) that helped to guide it

initially, my inquiry became better understood through a series of theories and understandings generated once experiences had transpired, were shared and described.

As discussed earlier, efforts were made to bracket out predetermined notions regarding what a ‘transformative experience’ might look or feel like in an attempt to “ward off any tendency toward constructing a predetermined set of fixed procedures, techniques and concepts that would rule-govern [this] research project” (van Manen, 1990, p. 29). In relation to the role of theory, I was not interested in ‘grand theory’ for its own sake; I was more interested in revealing “Ah ha” effects where evocative expression through story hits the experience, body, and emotions of the reader: “Ah ha effects fuse old experiences with new ones, thus opening up readers’ minds towards new horizons” (Willis & Trondman, 2000, p. 12).

To validate this humanistic research and move it beyond a study of wishy-washy, airy-fairy speculations, it was important for me to remain mindful of my original research questions and inquiry, to consistently orient myself to participants’ experiences that made my inquiry possible, and to co-construct evocative descriptions of participants’ actions, behaviours, feelings, beliefs, and intentions, as they unfolded. The challenge was in moving participant stories from authentic lived experiences to the construction of rigorous and interpretive data. ‘Rigor’ established by remaining ‘strong’ and ‘hard’ in humanistic principles and the focus of my research inquiry, and also ‘soft’, ‘intuitive’, ‘subtle’, and ‘sensitive’ in my efforts to bring the range of meanings of participants’ experiences to reflective and creative awareness.

The following chapter launches the true beginning of this dissertation as the stories begin to unfold through The Learning and the World We Want conference - a pivotal event for the Children’s Global Arts initiative.

## Dedication

In Honour of a Barbeque to Save the World...

A barbeque that has inspired an infectious essence of  
care, communication, and connection,  
among children worldwide  
to make a difference in our world through artwork.

*How are the people in Afghanistan?*  
one young boy from Victoria asks Kabul firefighter  
Atiqullah Mohammadullah  
just before he hands over his artwork....  
*How many children are there in Afghanistan?*  
*Are there trees in Afghanistan?*  
*How long was the war?*  
*Do mothers and fathers go to war?*  
*Where do the children go when the war is on?*

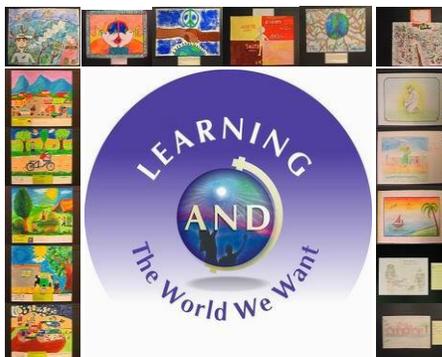
It's a complicated world *Budd relays to the children* -  
it's got a lot of exciting stories, it's got a lot of sad stories,  
and one of the things that we believe,  
we believe it as university people,  
we believe it as school teachers and school principals,  
and we believe it as firefighters,  
is that if *your voices*, and *your dreams*, were heard more,  
then it would make a difference to the life in this world we live in....

Thank you Budd Hall,  
for rousing the *passion, the urgency, and the action*  
to make a difference  
in the world we live in  
and for inspiring the dream to build  
the world we want.

May this [dissertation] -  
with an abundance of transformational stories  
and a wealth of friendships -  
become yet another legacy to *save the world*.

## Chapter 4

### LEARNING AND THE WORLD WE WANT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



**Figure 2: Children’s artwork from Victoria (Canada), Kabul (Afghanistan), and Kurdistan (Iraq), on display at World We Want conference; Victoria, November, 2003**

#### The Beginnings: A Barbeque to Save the World

In February 2003, Dean Budd Hall (Faculty of Education, University of Victoria) invited colleagues to his home for a barbecue and discussion “to save the world”. In the wake of the US “War on terrorism,” the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, Dr. Budd Hall wanted to brainstorm ideas for promoting peace and education in the world through the Learning and the World We Want international conference.

The Learning and the World We Want Conference was born from a concern that many of us here at the University of Victoria and others around the world were feeling after the aftermath of 9/11. In the build up towards the invasion of Iraq there was a feeling of helplessness that the fate of the world was being determined by politicians or generals... So, the impetus was to think about...*what do we do as educators?* (Global Arts DVD log, tape 6<sup>7</sup>)

With a plan to build alternative visions of society, Budd Hall decided to bring educators together at his home for two reasons: One was to say that we have a stake in the world that we want, and second, to construct ideas in the imagination of a better world:

<sup>7</sup> All further references to “DVD log” will refer to the Global Arts DVD log, tape 6. If a reference to “DVD” appears, this will relate to the actual DVD itself.

We know the world that we don't want because we live with it everyday. But often we don't give ourselves permission to imagine alternatives to the world that we have. So, "learning and the world that we want" seemed like a theme to bring us together for these purposes. (DVD log)

At the barbecue colleagues, Tim Hopper and Kathy Sanford contributed to Budd's idea by suggesting that the best way to promote peace and education at the conference might be through the voices of *children*, revealed through an Artwork exhibition:

Kathy Sanford and myself work closely in schools so we came up with the idea of artwork. Art is a universal communicator. So, if we can get artwork from children here in Victoria and somehow exchange artwork with children in Iraq and Afghanistan wouldn't that be an amazing way to capture the idea of the world that we want? (Tim Hopper, DVD log)

In Kathy Sanford's view, the global arts initiative came to them rather by accident, through a deliberation of the essential question at hand: *How do you communicate with children of another language and culture without writing letters and speaking to them?* The answer for her was simple: *You do it through arts!* Kathy feels that the power of the art itself shows children different ways of living and of experiencing the world. As a Director of the Teacher Education program at the University of Victoria (UVic), Kathy recognizes how art has been increasingly overlooked in our curriculum, turning towards a more focussed approach on print text and literacy, reading, writing, and numeracy. "We have forgotten the importance of these other subject areas that are actually the things that bring joy into the lives of kids in school". For Kathy, initiating artwork from children in Victoria, Iraq, and Afghanistan reminds us of the value of art for communicating ideas about our world to a real audience, and for finding meaning and purpose in education:

Initially I became involved in this project to infuse the voices of children into a pretty academic - adult kind of - conference, and recognizing that kids have things to say about the world as well... and so it just *arose* that we wanted to give kids an opportunity to talk about the world as *they see it*, through artwork, because it's an easier mechanism to share, than written language, because of the language barrier. (DVD log)

During an interview Kathy also noted how the Global Arts idea has originated and evolved through a collaborative and joint effort, and how important this *team approach* has been to its overall success and sustainability:

It was because we had connections through *Budd* that we actually even thought about it... it was a combined group effort coming up with the idea... we [Kathy and Tim] brought the interest in kids - as teachers... Budd brought the interest in connecting with other parts of the world, especially Iraq and Afghanistan at that time... then Bob [Dalton] in valuing the artwork has been a really significant piece as well.

Through Budd Hall's extensive connections in international education, he was able to follow up with his colleagues' suggestions and provide contacts in Kabul, Afghanistan, and Suleimaniyah Province of Kurdistan, Iraq, who were able to generate artwork from children in these areas based on the world they would like to see - "the world we want". Moving with this momentous idea of involving and connecting children, this theme framed a collection of compelling artwork from children in Canada, Iraq, and Afghanistan, that offered an amazing insight into the potential of children to remind adults of what is important in our world.

As indicated by a volunteer coordinator in Kabul, the struggles and commitment of many people who worked around roadblocks and barriers to send the artwork to the World We Want conference is a true testimony of the value of children's artwork for healing shattered spirits and for overcoming the immensity of daily struggles inflicted by war-torn realities and circumstances:

There are so many dire needs, such as no roof over the classroom, children coming to school hungry and leaving hungry. Parents, mostly mothers, begging in the streets. So, all these things are distractions from art. Of course, once we find our way into art, then the energy and strength that come from that experience are immense and help us overcome so many dire things. The challenge of this project [Global Arts] might be just that: lifting teachers and pupils into art to uplift their hearts. (cited in Sanford & Hopper, 2006, p. 6)

As the local schools in war-torn Kabul in 2003 had scarce supplies or support for pursuing art projects, a commander of Camp Julien, the Canadian Armed Forces post in Kabul, scoured the base for pads of paper, pencils, and pens and delivered these to the children so that they could create the artwork for children living in Canada. A volunteer

Afghanistan teacher who had relocated to North America as a refugee in 1980 and since returned, became the local and ongoing liaison for the artwork project in Kabul. With the assistance of the Canadian Armed Forces, 40 pieces of children's art were flown to their Trenton base in Ontario and then transported to Victoria.

The artwork that was generated from Kurdistan, Iraq in 2003 met with different yet related difficulties. During this time of Saddam Hussein's regime, martial rule, and the US invasion of Iraq, postal service to the outside world had been denied (since 1991). Without the assistance of the Kurdistan Save The Children Fund situated in Suleimaniyah - who managed to collect 40 drawings from children in Kurdistan, and also form networks to smuggle the drawings across the Iranian border into the hands of a professor at the University of Tehran (who then flew to London to a conference and couriered it to UVic from London) - the receiving of artistic messages in Canada from Iraqi children would have been a mere vision rather than reality.

It was just amazing because I was thinking...these are not times when you are going to be smuggling anything across the border in Iraq, but people made a priority of this and it came. (Tim Hopper, DVD)

In local Canadian schools, the struggles for this artwork idea were not as apparent as in Iraq or Afghanistan. As noted by Sanford & Hopper (2006), many teachers in the Victoria School District (#61) who were approached to participate in this collaborative artwork exhibit, enthusiastically embraced the idea of using children's artwork to communicate with international delegates. When Budd Hall was approached with the question of why teachers would be interested in taking up this particular learning approach, he responded by suggesting that it creates an engaging opportunity for *all* students to become meaningfully involved:

We have shown that you can engage students in what seems to be abstract complicated ideas about the world which works and it engages *all* students. It isn't an activity where some do well and some don't do well...this is an activity where everybody gets involved. This is a very concrete, practical way for... kids to actually understand that there are children like themselves living in other parts of the world, but experiencing life in very different ways... understanding that no matter how young we are or what position we are in our school or community, what we choose to do can really make a difference. (DVD log)

Enthusiasm for this Global Arts opportunity is clearly reflected through the following insights shared by research participant, Elaine McVie - grade 7 teacher and administrator at Braefoot Elementary School, Victoria, British Columbia.

#### Elaine McVie's Story

Elaine explains how her motive for participating in this unique educational opportunity stemmed from her extensive involvement in fine arts. She has taught music, drama, and other art programs for about 10 years in the school system, and she has been a long-term advocate for fine arts in schools. As involvement in the project was initiated fairly early in the 2003/2004 school year, Elaine recalls how it became “one of these melding things that brings a class together”. For this project, Elaine coordinated with another grade 7 teacher at Braefoot, and collectively they decided that they would allocate a *whole day* (rather than a couple of shortened days), to allow the kids to “just simply immerse themselves into this project”. To explore the theme initially, Elaine also embraced a child honouring perspective by allowing her students the uninhibited freedom to engage in deep conversations where, “everything could be on the table as far as what they thought would be appropriate”:

I can recall that when my grade 7 class talked about it they were very - it was very *engaging* for them to discuss what that meant - “*what would your world be like if you could define It?*” - it was one of those memorable days where children were very involved and self-directed and very satisfied at the end because they had *time without any pressure* to really plan and complete their project. (Elaine)

#### *Time is the Essence*

Expanding on the need to allow quality, uninterrupted time to engage in such a project, Elaine feels that sometimes we piecemeal projects too much for children and that children should be allotted longer periods of time to focus on activities. “We often try and cram one more thing into the day, and I really like to do big art projects - to really have time to just immerse yourself in it and let your mind really think about it”. Elaine felt that because the project had a focused theme, and the discussion they had prior to drawing opened up ideas outside of “right and wrong”, it became very *individual* - “so it was *OK*

for them to express individually what they felt and believed would make a difference or what they saw as an objective”.

Elaine recalls that by setting up this space for children - having everything prepared so that they could spend their time *doing* rather than *waiting* - it became a very creative time for her students. “There sort of becomes a *hum* of engagement shall we say - you know when kids are engaged even though there is a level of noise but it’s a really positive kind of thing - so that was really good - it was really worthwhile!” Elaine confirms that giving time was a big factor in the success of this project. By altering the structure of time from a piecemeal 40 min. block of time to a full day of creativity, it allowed for the flow of creativity to emerge for children:

We are always doing it piecemeal and I didn’t want to approach it that way - I wanted everybody to end up at the end of the day with a finished piece...whatever it was that they wanted to say... when you are in to something your mind is into it and that creative piece is open - I think when you chop it off and say “ok put your stuff away, the bell is going to go...” it is really hard to pick that up again... so maybe that was a component piece... it worked for us. (Elaine)

#### *Art Literacy: Art For Communication and Purpose*

Elaine continued to explain how the success of the art project was recognized through her students’ realization that *art has a message* over and above a Friday afternoon craft. “For a lot of kids it was an awareness or an opening to the idea that *art is a medium to convey a message*”. Elaine recalls talking about this with her students as they began to conceive of expressing their ideas of their world through art: “*How would you draw or colour or outline?*”, or “*What wording would you use to really make an impact?*” ... “*In a sense you are doing a little advertising - you are making a statement*”. For her grade 7’s to grasp that - “that art in practice is more than just a coloured paper and something we do on Friday afternoon because ‘we do art on Friday afternoon’” - was a transformative, “aha” moment for Elaine:

It was like “*I have something to say and I’ve thought about this, this is how I would like to convey it*” so it was a voice for them... yeah, and I hadn’t thought about that before but that might have been why it became a really cohesive thing.

For Elaine and her students, participation in the World We Want art project was about *theme, time, creativity & flow*, and it was also about knowing that the project was going on to another piece - “it was more than was just sort of hung up on the classroom wall - there was greater *purpose* to it”.

All 60 (roughly) pieces of children’s artwork were *properly displayed* in the library or some capacity or other, and 10 were chosen for exhibit at the World We Want conference, alongside those from Iraq, Afghanistan, and other schools in Victoria.



**Figure 3: Elaine McVie’s student represented at The World We Want conference - Grade 7, Braefoot Elementary School, Victoria.**

Elaine feels that this component of the project was very honouring and it also demonstrated value. Furthermore, because there were so many students in the school taking part and working on the same theme, when their art was displayed it came alive and generated the space for meaningful dialogue and discussion:

So when they looked at each other’s artwork they went, “*Oh, that’s what you think*”, and “*Oh, that’s what you’re talking about*” - they all understood that each of them was trying to say something - rather than just a visual decoration shall we say. So it was very good - it was a really interesting thing to work on.

Proceeding the conference, the exhibit featuring artwork from children in Kabul, Kurdistan, and Victoria, traveled to various schools through the Victoria School District. As indicated by Elaine McVie, when this display reached Braefoot Elementary, it added yet another enriching and unearthing dimension for learning and education at this school:



Figure 4: The World We Want art tour

When all of the art came back to the school and was displayed, that was another time that was very rich because they got to go and look at all of that and talk about it. They were astonished at the fact that [art] came over from Afghanistan and Iraq - they began to look at the themes and that created really good discussion about how different their lives were and what they saw.

### *Uninhibited Responses to an Unearthing of Other*

Elaine agrees that this project very much creates a “sense of other” for students. She remembers when the pictures were displayed from Iraq and Afghanistan - children’s experiences with violence so vividly portrayed - really struck home with the kids... “The girls particularly - there were some pictures around girls inability to access educational opportunities and that was really powerful. I remember one of my girls coming back quite angry - that someone would say ‘*just because you are a girl you can’t do this and can’t do that*’”. Elaine also recalls how her grade 7 girls were willing to talk about some of those issues and discuss how certain realities close doors, limit people’s choices, and take them into different directions:

Things like availability of education, availability of birth control, the effect and influence of drugs, access to fresh water - they were very aware - there were things that came up that indicated to me that once we got talking about it they could really think this through - and that came through in the display. (Elaine McVie)

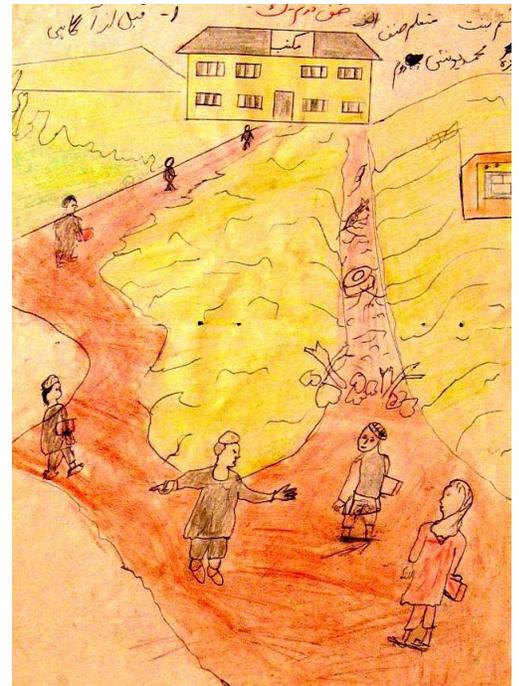
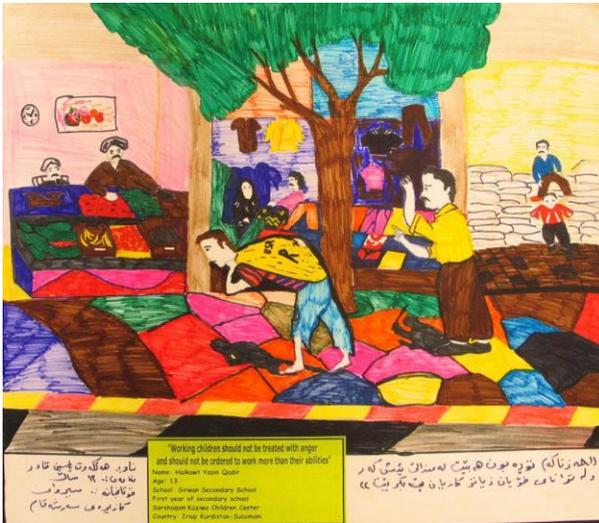


Figure 5: “Before Awareness”  
Afghanistan child artist, 2003



**Figure 6: “Working children should not be treated with anger and should not be ordered to work more than their abilities” - Iraq child artist, age 13, 2003**

They looked at it and they were quiet - and the fact that they had to sit and write a debrief was really good because they didn't just talk about it they had to think about “*Why does this bother me - what have I seen - what have I noticed?*” (Elaine McVie)

Having worked with this age group for many years (11-12 year olds), Elaine recognizes it as a transition time from “me absorption” that is partly about learning to survive, and also a time to disengage and be more independent. Without suggesting students of this age are focused only on themselves without awareness of larger issues, she acknowledges how the drawings returned for the school exhibit had a profound impact on them:

I just remember it being a very powerful and engaging discussion - but not limited at all; if anything I tried to broaden it. (Elaine McVie)

### *School-Home Links*

Elaine received very positive comments from visitors and parents of Braefoot school community. Elaine knows of parents who visited the art display and how pleased and impressed they were with the meaningfulness of the project. She noted how kids would go home and talk about it at the dinner table - particularly the older kids, and how those discussions and ideas would come back to the classroom. The project also became something that her class and school was able to refer to throughout the year, as a reference point to other areas of study.

### *Voluntary Experience*

In the midst of her support and enthusiasm for the Global Arts project, Elaine also recognizes the heavy load that teachers have on their plates, and the increasingly busy life children have outside of school: “particularly in a city like Victoria... a modern child goes from morning right through to often quite late in the evening, with a variety of scheduled activities”. With this and added teacher pressures in mind, Elaine contributes part of the success of the Global Arts experience to the fact that it was *optional*. She would hesitate putting more on people’s plates, but feels that if it continued to be incorporated in art, social studies, or social responsibility type programs - as optional activities, then “people could choose to be part of it, and therefore when they made that choice they knew that they were committing some time and energy to it”.

### *Making a Difference*

As a closing comment to this World We Want experience, Elaine recalls how the *exchange of the actual* artwork was really intriguing to kids. “It wasn’t a photocopy or a fax, but that paper that was hanging there was actually something that some child [in Iraq or Afghanistan] had worked on in the same way that they had worked on their piece”. Through this child-to-child connection, everybody understood that there was a possibility of some communication that might make a *little tiny bit of difference* - “that is part of the power in art - that you *look at something and it speaks to you* - and that was probably part of what intrigued kids”.

### Responses to International Artwork Exhibit

This is what makes the global arts project such a valuable and meaningful tool. We can learn so much from these artistic voices, and by making people think, the art is making a difference. In a way, these children have succeeded in bringing about change, and in so doing have achieved a small triumph over the problems and chaos plaguing our beautiful planet. In a wonderful way, this exhibition is helping move toward the dreams of “The World We Want.” (UVic student teacher)

As demonstrated by the following comments, overwhelming interest, thought, and emotion was generated from the collection of children's artwork (from Victoria, Kabul, and Kurdistan), that was on exhibit at the World We Want International Conference in November 2003:

The conference was filled with passion and urgency.... I think what struck me was seeing these young people from Victoria standing beside their pieces of art and explaining to all the adults and conference participants, and then in groups of 2s or 3s they were going around reading what children their age in Afghanistan and [Iraq] were saying...the care and the interest, and the ability of young people in Victoria to connect to these heartfelt pleas and expressions of hope was very moving. (Budd Hall, DVD log)



Figure 7: The World We Want conference  
Child artist from Victoria, B.C.

**Artist comments:**

*I love the art here. My painting is here too.*



*Thank you for putting my artwork here. I loved spending time here and the pictures from Iraq and Afghanistan really spoke to me.*

*I really love the international art. I also think it is cool that we get to see children's art when the kids who drew it are just like us. I hope everyone who drew the art gets to see our comments.*

*I think that the picture of the boy hanging by the balloon is powerful because it gives the message to me that everyone can have a dream.*

*"This painting expresses my dream in which I am hanging myself by a balloon. I felt like I was flying to the sky. It was really a nice dream. I've always liked balloons because it gives me the hope that one day I will be able to fly"*  
Akum Kamal Abdullah

Figure 8: Akam Kamal Abdullah  
Age 10, Grade 6, Kurdistan, Iraq

***Delegate comments:***

*Dear Children of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Canada. Your artwork is so beautiful. It made my heart beat stronger. We adults will do our best to teach peaceful, respectful ways of solving disagreements. Thank you.*

*These images are poignant and powerful - you touch our hearts across cultural boundaries!*

*It's a true inspiration to see the natural heart for peace so alive in our young people and their teachers who are seeking a world that works for all.*

*I am a visitor from a country in Latin America. I saw the art from the students displayed today and it touched me so deeply. This art exhibit anchors me a lot!*

*A picture is so worth a thousand words!*

*We will not forget you and your beautiful pictures.*

*We promise to work harder to get education right for students.*

*Your eyes, Your hearts, Our eyes, Our hearts, One World!*

***Teacher Comments:***

*This has been a very powerful experience. Being here with my students has encouraged us to continue to imagine and work towards a positive future.*

*Take heart. Have hope. Your pictures tell a true story - as children see it. We learned from you. Thank you!*

*From one child to another. From one mother to another.*

*This was a wonderful project! Children of different ages and from different countries came together in a meaningful way. Bravo!*

*Working with the students, the university-faculty and my colleagues on this project has been one of the most exciting units of work I have been involved with in my teaching career. (Elaine McVie)*

(Comments cited in Hopper, et al, 2004)

## Global Arts Spreads Like a Rhizome

The Learning and the World We Want initiative started as a good idea and then, as people around the world connected with this idea, an amazing insight in the potential of children to remind adults of what is important was created:

*“What kind of a world do you want?”; “Draw us a picture of the world that you want and give a title to the picture”.* The power of that simple idea had a communicative power that just took off. (Budd Hall, DVD)

... suddenly the implied stories in every piece of artwork that comes, other people want to contribute to that story, so metaphorically it's like a *fire* where the wood is being fed to keep it warm, nourished and light, and it keeps being fed by people contributing. (Tim Hopper, DVD)

The process of creating children's artwork has proved to be more than just sending out a message or the propagation of children's visions and ideas. Through a diverse exchange of creative and cultural art forms that reveal *the world we live in* and visions for *the world we want*, children from communities around the world (Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Canada, South Africa, Tanzania, Nigeria, India, Chile, Belize, Vietnam, Abu Dhabi, and Uganda, thus far), are communicating and interacting with one another through visual realities that inspire us all to make a difference:

Through this art form of communication, we have the opportunity to see a reflection of our own lives through the illuminated lives of others, liberating us from a fixed sense of “I”, to an undivided connection and consideration of “We” or “Other”. This significant transformation shifts habits of mind, and sets the stage for meaningful recognition of identity, connection, citizenship, and social and environmental responsibility. (Cruickshanks, 2006, p. 42)

### *An Artwork Catalogue*

As outlined by Sanford and Hopper (2006), one immediate sequel to the World We Want conference was the creation of an artwork catalogue. Through funding provided by the Troubadour Foundation, all the artwork that was created by the children in Victoria, Kabul, and Kurdistan, was highlighted in this catalogue, with text translation in three different languages. Each child artist and school community received a catalogue as a

token of appreciation and as an indication of how their stories, dreams, and realities, would continue to be told.

### *A Global Arts Workshop*

As part of this outreach and recruitment process, a *Global Arts Workshop* was held on *April 1, 2005, at the University of Victoria*. This workshop, attended by 12 participants including teachers, parents, and administrators from 4 local schools, generated future artwork relations between children in Canada and children in Zanzibar, India, Belize, and Afghanistan - many of which are highlighted throughout this dissertation. The workshop also solidified the people and the projects that would be represented in a Global Arts DVD.

### *Global Arts DVD and Website*

Through CIDA funding, in Spring 2005 a Global Arts DVD was produced and the Global Arts website ([www.childrensglobalarts.ca](http://www.childrensglobalarts.ca)) maintained. These resources have become instrumental in helping to: capture the stories of children's lives through their artwork; disseminate this knowledge and perceptions of our world to a global audience, and to expand global arts initiatives, both locally and globally. The intent of these plans and resources was to play a part in "letting everyone know what is going on" in our world from a child's artistic point of view, and to also provide inspiration for educators and community leaders to consider alternative ways for putting energy and ideas into practice.



**Figure 9: Cover of Global Arts DVD**

The voices of the DVD are very powerful and will carry on another 10 years... the voices of the teachers and kids, the nature and the story of the project are all very powerful - you can't say 'this isn't possible', and you can't say 'we shouldn't do it'... you watch it and you say, 'well, we should do this and it is possible'. (Tim Hopper)

### *Global Arts Summer Institute*

Expanding on the themes and prospects for the “World We Live In” and the “World We Want”, a Global Arts Summer Institute was held at the University of Victoria, from July 4-8, 2005. The Institute (partially funded by CIDA), invited Canadian educators to learn more about the Global Arts initiative, and generate ideas for their own artwork exchanges in partnership with communities around the world.



**Figure 10: Children from Victoria, Canada send banner to Tsunami victims in India (2005)**

*Care,  
Communication  
& Connection:*



**Figure 11: Children in India receive banner (2006)**

### *The Children’s Global Arts Foundation*

The *Children’s Global Arts* initiative has gained increasing momentum since its inception in 2003. In June 2006 it evolved into a Children’s Global Arts Foundation (CGAF) presently consisting of 17 board members, 170 Friends, and a wide array of art exchange activities permeating vast corners of the world<sup>8</sup>. The CGAF is situated within the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria, transforming the hearts and minds of faculty and new teachers, and altering perceptions of what learning can mean in an interconnected world. It is also reaching areas that are profoundly linked to education, such as health & wellness, social justice, and environmental sustainability; collectively providing a holistic view of learning and education, and a greater force and power to address the present needs in our world.

<sup>8</sup> Refer to Appendices 1, 2, 3, & 4 respectively, to view the constitution, Friends, events, & initiatives of this organization (as updated July, 2007).

*Team Approach*

Kathy Sanford reminds us of the significance of the “team approach” in the expanding Global Arts initiative:

... it’s not one person’s project, and we’ve not tried to own it; *whoever wants to take it up, we’re there to support schools all over the place*, but not say, “You know you’re doing it the wrong way”, or “No, no we didn’t mean that”, but say, “Ah, you know, that’s great, and that will connect with this.... (Kathy Sanford, interview)

The expansive and far-reaching relationships, and transformational programs and activities that have germinated from Budd Hall’s momentous “barbeque to save the world”, can best be summed up by Tim Hopper’s metaphoric meaning of a “rhizomatic strawberry”

*Global Arts like a Rhizomatic Strawberry*

...when you put the efforts in  
and make the connections,  
suddenly it bears fruit and people really appreciate it -  
it’s sweet,  
the texture is great,  
it goes well with other things,  
and suddenly you just did this and this happened,  
and you wouldn’t even imagine you would get this fantastic strawberry out of that...

and that came after the blossom...  
so you had the blossom and that was fantastic  
so now you have this strawberry afterwards....  
and that went on for a long time,  
the taste and the ideas...  
well beyond the beauty of the blossom...  
and so you have this ongoing-ness to this experience...

and when you play that out,  
a strawberry plant does die but it never *really* dies -  
it leaves an element of itself behind as a seed,  
and then that comes back again...  
so you have this cycle that will never disappear,  
because no one who has tasted a strawberry can forget it.  
(Tim Hopper)

As the Global Arts initiative expands across countries and continents, we begin to sense how multiple readings of a shared story are taking place throughout the world, and how characters of seemingly diverse backgrounds and interests, weave in and out of events, adding layers of depth and complexity to this anthology. Although there are a myriad of stories and contexts of which to draw and construct knowledge for this dissertation, the following section (chapters 5-8) unfolds an anthology of “tales of transformation” as explored through the support and facilitation of global art exchanges between children in Canada (primarily Victoria & Kelowna British Columbia, and Calgary, Alberta), and children living in communities throughout Afghanistan, Tanzania, India, South Africa, and Zambia.

**PART II:**

**TALES OF TRANSFORMATION THROUGH  
CHILDREN'S GLOBAL ARTS:  
WEAVING CHARACTERS AND EVENTS**

## Chapter 5

### CANADA MEETS AFGHANISTAN: FIREFIGHTER-TO-FIREFIGHTER CHILD-TO-CHILD

#### From Fire Hoses to Paint Brushes

Before the production of the Global Arts DVD, the artwork catalogues, along with art supplies, were sent to Afghanistan in 2004 through the Langford Firefighters (situated in Langford, British Columbia, Canada), who were traveling to Kabul to donate firefighting equipment.

As firefighter and research participant Geoff Spriggs explains, they became involved with Kabul initially through their mentor and fire chief Bob Beckett, who while serving as president of Colwood Rotary club, learned of the situation of the fire department in Kabul. From this seed, their involvement with Kabul started to grow, branching out from fire hoses to paint brushes, eager to spread goodwill in whatever direction seemed to come their way:



**Figure 12: Langford Firefighters delivering fire-fighting supplies and children's artwork to Kabul, Afghanistan**

Catherine McLeod from UVic (Community & Relations) heard about our project and knew that our intention was to travel to Kabul to deliver the equipment, and we got the phone call saying, "We've got a Children's Art project and if it's possible, can you send with you [to Kabul], boxes of art supplies?".... Our initial response before we even knew what the Children's Art project was about was, "Well, this is too easy. We can just add this into our trip". (Geoff Spriggs)

Little did Geoff or others know at the time, just how pivotal the roles of Langford and Kabul Fire Departments would become in the Children's Global Arts initiative.

### *Art as Relationship*

The significance of the Langford Fire Department's support in the Children's Global Arts initiative is reflected in Geoff's initial quest to bring artwork to Kabul to accompany the catalogues and art supplies. Before he left for Afghanistan, he had some personal friends of his draw some artwork for the Kabul firefighter's children. As Geoff recalls, this in itself formed an interesting part of an afternoon with the Kabul firefighters. A quite telling point was spending the first half of the first day in Kabul, not doing anything related to firefighting whatsoever, just sharing stories and sharing art. He recalls how all the formal pretenses were dropped when the firefighter's held up artwork drawn by children in Canada, and through the invitation to reciprocate ideas through artwork. Geoff recounts the interest and dialogue that took place among firefighters: "*Oh, can I get my*

*children to draw as well?*", and "*What do you want them to draw?*" In response, "*Well, they can draw whatever they want... take art supplies home to your kids and get them to draw so we can bring it back [to Canada]*". Geoff also recalls how Rob Kettner, a videographer supported by Rotary International, initiated artwork from school children, and how significant it was to share this project in both capacities - in schools and in direct relation with families they had formed connections with through firefighting. Linking the art project back to service in Afghanistan, Geoff explains, "When these connections form, and all the formal barriers drop, you are then able to do some really functional work based on the relationship that you built, and that's a really important part".

Upon Geoff's return to Canada he was also able to observe his friends' children (4 & 6 years old) looking at the artwork from Kabul and having their parents explain, "*the pictures that you drew, do you remember a couple of weeks ago?... this is what the children over there have drawn in response... or wanted to share with you...*". Geoff recalls the level of curiosity and interest, and how fascinated these young kids were by having a dialogue and connection with children in another part of the world.



**Figure 13: Children's artwork from Victoria (Sundance Elementary School) on route to Kabul, Afghanistan**

*Art as Care, Communication, and Connection*

Through the support, commitment, and generosity of our local and international firefighters, a growing number of children from Canada and Afghanistan are forming friendships and understandings with one another through the creation and exchange of artwork. As Geoff learned and experienced more about the children's art project, he also came to realize that although the focus of their trip to Afghanistan was initially firefighting, what has grown out of the project, is *a small community involved with another small community - "fire-fighter to fire-fighter"; "child-to-child"*. "We are reaching out and making a connection to another part of the world and in this instance it is Kabul, Afghanistan - and that has a far more powerful effect than firefighting breathing apparatus":

In relation to children's artwork - even though the premise is, "Yes, exchange artwork back and forth", it's about a heck of a lot more than the quality of the way they drew the 'duck' that really matters - it is much deeper than that - and the same thing with the firefighters...

It is the connections that we made that *they know that we are listening to them, and to each other...* that the connection is actually meaningful.

The Chief of the Langford Firefighter Department, Bob Beckett, would concur with Geoff's sentiments, as he too discovered how his purpose in Afghanistan runs deeper and beyond firefighting equipment:

While my initial goal may have been providing fire-fighting equipment for my colleagues, the real focus of the project is the children of Afghanistan. By helping my colleagues in the only way I know how or can, we end up demonstrating to their community, family and children that we do care about them and their future. (Beckett, 2006, cited in Project Unity Committee)



**Figure 14: Chief Bob Beckett and Team from Langford Fire Department**

Through Geoff's firsthand experiences in Afghanistan he has noticed how "unbelievably proud" Afghanistan people are, but how they are handcuffed in their abilities because they don't have the means to actually deliver their service. A constant message that keeps coming again and again is their desire for change and their need for understanding and support: "I think that is extremely frustrating for them and so that is why they are pushing, "make sure you share this with everyone you can when you get back and tell our story... let people see because people will want to help and we want them to help us". And probably more than that, Geoff adds from everything he can understand, "is they want to show us how far they have come and what they have done".

#### How A Window into Children's Artwork Reflects Broader Society

Artwork is one of humanity's most powerful communication tools. Through art, people are able to express themselves; to record the reactions of their personalities to the world they live in. This idea is particularly interesting in relation to children's art. Children's art can both challenge and confirm the ways of our world. (UVic student teacher)

In the DVD *Project Guide* produced in 2005, UVic art educator, Bob Dalton demonstrates how "children's artwork provides us with a window into a child's world, and can also be described as a 'bellwether' - a standard or marker of how a society is doing" (cited in Hopper, et al, 2005, p.5). To tell their story of how far the children and people of Afghanistan society have come, in 2005, a second set of artwork was created by children in Kabul, Afghanistan, and sent to Canada, again through the Langford Firefighters. These images - alongside those displayed at the World We Want conference in 2003 - share a telling sequel of Afghani children's lives from years 2003 to 2005, and mirror the social and political changes that have transpired in Kabul Afghanistan over this two-year period.

*Kabul, Afghanistan, 2003:*

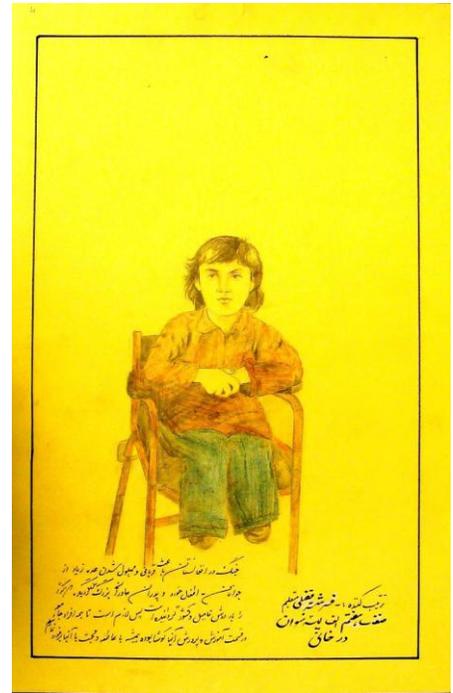
*Devastation Period and Appeal for Peace & Democracy*

*Realities of War*

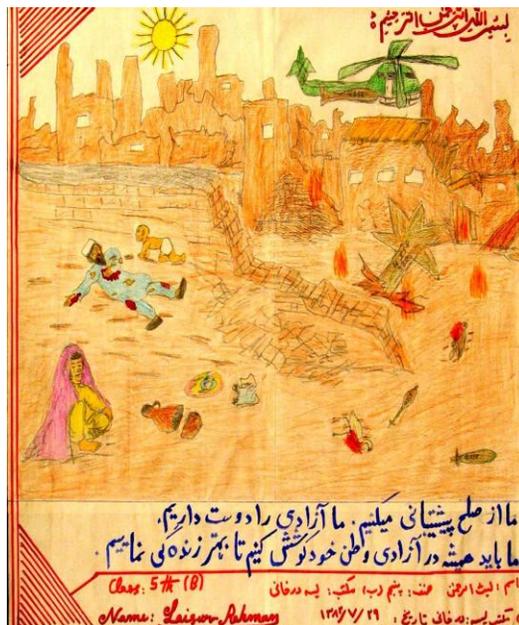
As vividly illustrated by the 2003 artworks from children in Kabul Afghanistan, the emotions and lived experiences are ones of uncertainty, fear and personal suffering; and scenes of devastation and war.



**Figure 15: Child artist from Kabul, Afghanistan 2003**



**Figure 16: “War Messed Up Parts of My Body”**



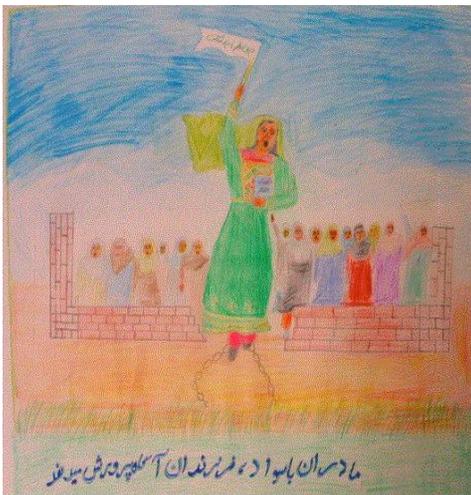
**Figure 17: Child artist from Kabul, Afghanistan, 2003**

As explained by Bob Dalton (2005), these lived experiences of war are not just drawn by children as cool and objective observations – “there is often a powerful affective character domain where their own feelings of fear or anger are projected onto people and also their natural surroundings with a crying sun, for example, or dark clouds” (cited in Hopper et al, 2005, p. 5).

### *Messages of Appeal*

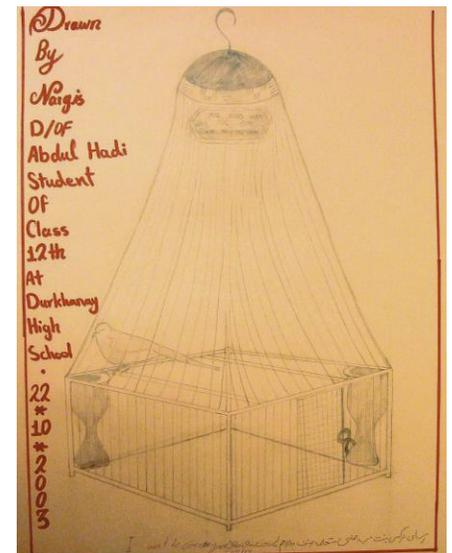
This first set of artworks drawn soon after the fall of the Taliban, also appear to viewers as an appeal or campaign for democracy, reconstruction, and access to education for girls and young women; they have become part of Afghani children’s passionate quest for change and international support and understanding.

One drawing shows a young woman holding a book, floating just above the ground but tethered by a chain – a fitting metaphor for the restraining policies of the previous regime.



**Figure 18:** “Mothers that are educated can teach their children well”

Another visual metaphor features a bird in a partially draped cage (shape of a burqa), signifying the confinement of a noble spirit.



**Figure 19:** “A woman in a burqa is caged like a bird”

*...that birdcage  
one will resonate with me for the rest of my life –  
I will never forget that piece –  
It was the most powerful strong piece I have ever seen -  
It was so simple and so honest and so straightforward.  
(Cheryl Zelmer)*

### *Commitment to Afghanistan*

Another apparent theme or message in the work is a strong sense of citizenship and a moral commitment to the rebuilding of Afghanistan. A number of drawings show destroyed buildings and homes, and bear the inscription: “I want to rebuild my beautiful country.” Such representations provide evidence that the youth of Afghanistan are not ground into submission, but rather optimistic and hopeful that their voices will be heard and will make a difference. (Dalton, cited in Hopper, et al, (2005), pp. 5-6)



Figure 20: “We are tired of war... Afghanistan is our home... Many of our people are dead... we must rebuild our dear nation”  
- Mohammad, grade 6, 2003

### *Kabul, Afghanistan, 2005:*

#### *A Recovery Period - Signs of Democracy, Freedom, and Reform*



Figure 21: Educated Women

Comparing the artwork from 2003 and 2005, one can see how life is changing, seeming to highlight recent developments in Afghanistan. Boys *and* girls are shown attending school and holding books, and women are represented as voters in a national election – events that would not have been possible in the former state ruled by the Taliban.

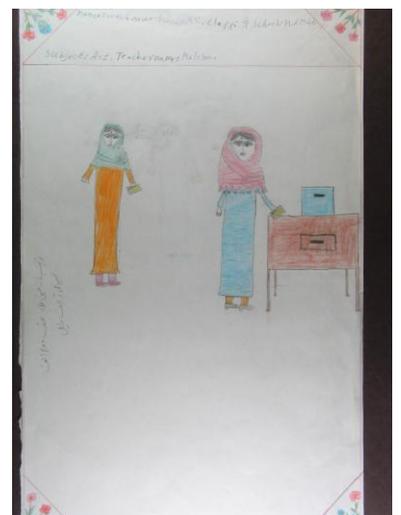


Figure 22: Women Voting

Only a few images out of approximately 150, show signs of despair. All others from this more recent time period seem to indicate that a recovery is taking place in Afghanistan. Beauty abounds in the drawings. Exquisite flower designs, colourful birds,



Figure 23: Unity

landscaped homes, and scenes of daily living, reveal an evident desire to celebrate life and to enjoy the ordinary affairs of the home amidst a peaceful and untroubled society.



Figure 24: Safe Homes



Figure 25: Daily Life



Figure 26: Freedom & Liberation

Note: Although the 2005 drawings from Kabul show how democracy, freedom, and reform are returning to their country, it should also be realized that large areas of the country are still ruled by warlords, and that war is presently continuing at devastating levels of loss and injustice. Peace and freedom is still a long way away for many people of Afghanistan.

### Canadian Children Respond to Afghanistan through Artwork

I can think of no better way to make a logical connection with another region of the world than through the artwork from Afghanistan and Iraq. As far as respecting human equality and cultural diversity goes, the students will get a much better perspective on the Muslim world through the medium of this art than they will get in an evening watching CNN. The unmistakable humanity that these pictures provide is invaluable in tearing down stereotypes that may creep into society from mainstream American television. (UVic student teacher)

The 2003 and 2005 artwork from children in Kabul, Afghanistan continue to be displayed throughout schools in Canada, connecting students to the perspectives of children living in war-torn countries. The following three classroom scenarios exemplify the growing cultural maturity of Canadian students as they engage with others through art. At the heart of these visually creative and intercultural experiences is a dialogue between children from Kabul and Victoria - a powerful form of communication that is enabling children to identify with life's most basic and universal needs, rights, and responsibilities, in relation to Self and Others.

#### *Clothesline Art (2005)*

*From:* Grade 1 Student Artists, Gordon Head Elementary, Victoria, B.C., Canada

*To:* Children in Kabul, Afghanistan

*Teacher Facilitator:* Verna Collett

*Source of Information:* Global Arts DVD & Project Guide

As demonstrated in the Global Arts DVD, Verna Collett - a teacher for over 30 years - began a clothesline artwork project by brainstorming and discussing with her grade 1 class the things that we are lucky to have here in Canada and in our homes (i.e. plenty of food, toys, games, clean water, medicine, clothes, families, hospitals, safe roads, etc.) The class also talked about areas of the world where people don't have these things, and possible reasons why.

Verna then showed her students the pictures that were sent from Afghanistan (from 2003 and 2005), and asked them to identify any differences between the images (i.e. 2005 depicts a more peaceful life, etc.). Through this dialogue, Verna explained how we can understand pictures and art without even knowing the language of the country - *that art has its own universal language.*

*A Teacher's Perspective (2005)*

*Discovering a Sense of Other through Curiosity, Discussion, & Empathy*

As noted by Verna Collett, the students were *overwhelmed* by the colour and by the expression of guns and war drawn by children in Afghanistan. They *began to question* what they saw, and they asked to revisit the art several times. She describes how they went from just looking at it (a visual thing) to *going into it as a story* and thinking about what it would be like to be in that place. During a subsequent viewing of artwork, her students were paired with older children who talked with them more about the art. A lot more questions were raised by the children, increasing their empathy for these children in another country. They kept returning to these conversations about what it would be like to live there.

The children were then invited to think about how art can make someone feel better, and how artwork that they send to children in Afghanistan would be an expression of their caring. Together, the class then developed a plan for their artwork project. They decided to draw pictures of the things “we wish others could have; the most important items on our list”. Children utilized rectangle and triangle shapes to draw self-portraits and their wishes for the children in Afghanistan and for the world. Children also wrote about themselves and about their wish for the world on the back of these shapes. As an added component they also decided to display the drawings by creating long paper bead “necklaces” where children rolled a wish, a happy thought, or a dream of a better world inside each bead.



**Figure 27: Grade one children from Gordon Head Elementary School, Victoria, send clothesline art to children in Kabul, Afghanistan**

### *Beyond Fundraising*

Verna recalls how initially her students wanted to send money to help the children in Afghanistan - a typical “social responsibility” response in schools. When she expressed to the children that their message or gift needed to be *deeper - that they needed to send a part of themselves to make a difference* - a boy became emotional, and it became clear that it was a breakthrough moment. The following quote from a young boy in her class, demonstrates this deeper connection:

*“We made these pictures for Afghanistan to make them feel better and to make them feel that they are all part of this world and to also make sure we are sending them our dreams and our love and all of the things we want them to have nicely... and this one is mine and it reminds them to have safe hospitals”* (Grade one student artist, Global Arts DVD)



**Figure 28:** “I want everyone to have safe hospitals”

The prominent themes that came up as wishes for children in Afghanistan were centered around life’s most *basic needs*. Through their wish beads and their artwork, the grade 1 students of Verna Collett’s class expressed their desire for “everyone” to have:



**Figure 29:** “I wish all children had books”

- clean air, fresh water, and good food
- safe homes, roads, & families; good cars
- a safe school; books
- flowers
- peace & safety

### *Critical Reflection*

Upon completion of the clothesline artwork project, Verna's students assessed what they had learned: "Doing the project helped us feel better because we like letting others know we care for them. Art is a way of communicating with children who speak a different language and sharing our thoughts and feelings with others" (cited in Hopper et al, 2005, p. 15). The project also proved to be a good reminder for everyone to focus on what is really important, and "to be thankful for our many blessings and to consider which things we really need, and how many luxuries we have" (p. 15).

Students of this grade 1 class were proud of their project and their work, and recorded it in photos and by writing about it. As a review of the project each child made a short strand of beads and wrote his or her wish for the world on an index card with the beads fastened onto one corner to take home and tell their parents about the projects. This gesture evoked many positive comments from parents and other classes.

To conclude her sentiments of this inter-cultural art experience, Verna highlights reasons why she found this project to be a success:

It increased their empathy for other ways of life that are not as safe as ours. I think the power of exchanging children's art between cultures becomes a conversation through pictures and provides a really direct and powerful link that is on a deeply emotional level. It addresses many of the truly sensitive and important issues that we strive to include in our curriculum. I don't think it can be done in an any more powerful or meaningful way than through art exchanges between children.



**Figure 30: Verna Collett and her grade one students discuss basic needs all children in the world need to feel safe and healthy. Ideas used for Clothesline Art.**

To further understand the effects of this experience, I decided to arrange an interview (story-telling dialogue) with one of Verna Collett's students who took part in it. The following summarizes the dialogue that I had between 8-year *Logan Chester* (along with his mother, Karen Chester).

*A Student's Perspective (2006)*

(One year after the Clothesline Art experience)

I went to 8-year-old Logan Chester's home to interview him in his own comfortable and familiar grounds. We began our discussion through a partial viewing of the Global Arts DVD - the section that highlighted his class taking part in the Clothesline Art project. This generated a great deal of interest and excitement as Logan was reminded of this memorable grade 1 experience. Logan then ran to get his wish bead that he made in his class one year ago. As he shared its meaning with such vivid memory and enthusiasm it was clear that the clothesline art project was one he would continue to remember for a long time to come. Logan read aloud what he had written on the back of his wish bead:

*"The world we want...*

*My wish for the world is for everyone to have a safe house...*

*I care for you".*

When I asked Logan how his message and the clothesline art experience made him feel, he responded by saying that he felt kind of weird, sad, and happy. Logan felt sad that a lot of people have been killed by war and bombs, yet happy that he was going to make someone else in the world happy through the sharing of his artwork:

*Well, someone in another country, in a house that is half way around the world, has exactly the same picture as me, and I drew it... This is a good thing cause then they know that, well, that I care for them.*

It was clear to Logan that sending his picture to children in Afghanistan would make a difference because "*they know that somewhere, someone half way around the world knows about what's happening there and they care for them*". When asked if he (or others in his class) would rather not hear about wars going on in the world, Logan was clear about wanting - and needing - to know about what was going on so that he could try and help and make a difference. When asked how he thinks children his age could make the greatest difference in the world, he responded assuredly by suggesting that sending pictures (like they have done) is important because "*they can tell a story in just one picture*" - pictures were a way for Logan and his classmates to communicate and show care for children in Afghanistan.

At this time Logan held up and shared his picture of his house that was on his wish bead - a smaller version of the artwork that was to be sent to the children in Afghanistan. When asked what story his picture was wishing to convey to children in Afghanistan, Logan said that he wanted to tell them his wish for a “*safe house and a nice yard*”. Logan included a tree in his picture because it provides children in Afghanistan with shade on warm days and something fun to play on. Logan felt that about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of children in Afghanistan would be living in homes with shattered windows, or broken doors, and that only a few would have nice homes like the one he drew for them.

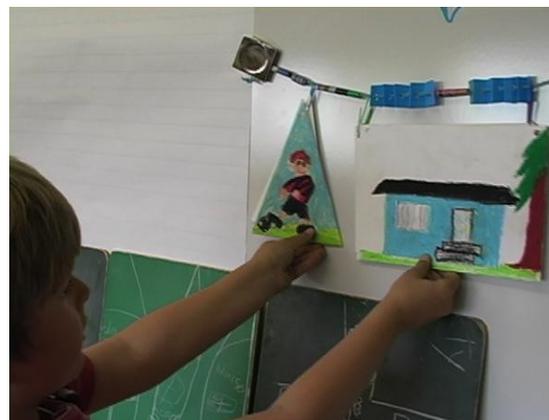


Figure 31: “I want everyone to have a safe house”

Logan continued to share how children in Afghanistan needed the same things as children in Canada because - except for the difference in language - they *are* the same!

After the interview Logan seemed very interested in hanging around his sister’s interview and before he left for a swimming outing, he came up to me to say good-bye. I got the feeling that he wanted to give me a hug but I wasn’t sure. I talked to his mom Karen about this later, and she noticed the same thing. She also noted how this gesture was very unlike Logan, as he is not a huggy type except with his mom and others really close to him. This observation seemed to affirm the transformative impact that Tim Hopper speaks about in relation to Logan’s experience:

The impact here is the ability for a kid - a boy in a class - to say “we are sending our love”. Before masculinity had taken over his capacity to express that emotion he has got a reference point that I think he will have the rest of his life... it is that ability to get out of the social structures that often inhibit us - you can’t teach that....

“*We send them our love*” - you can’t put a price on that! (Tim Hopper)

*Dream Catcher Art: “The Way I Want the World to Be” (2005)*

*From:* Grade 3 Student Artists, Gordon Head Elementary, Victoria, B.C., Canada

*To:* Children in Kabul, Afghanistan

*Teacher Facilitator:* Charlotte Holtan (Teacher/ESL for 32 years)

*Source of Information:* Global Arts DVD & Project Guide

Charlotte Holtan believes children have an affinity for the natural world and she wanted to bring this aspect to a global arts project, as well as a focus on a country different from Canada... like Afghanistan. The dream catcher exchange idea was inspired by the art and stories from the children from Afghanistan and by the following quote:



**Figure 32:** Charlotte Holtan and her grade 3 students discuss how “all things are connected”. Ideas used for Dreamcatcher Art.

*All things are connected.  
 What befalls the earth  
 befalls all the sons of the earth.  
 This we know: the earth does not belong to  
 man, man belongs to the earth.  
 All things are connected  
 like the blood that unites us all.  
 Man did not weave the web of life,  
 he is merely a strand in it.  
 Whatever he does to the web, he does to  
 himself.*  
 (Ted Perry, 1972; attributed to Chief Seattle,  
 1800s)

*A Teacher’s Perspective (2005)*

*Emergent State of Consciousness*

Before Charlotte Holtan’s grade 3 class got involved in the art project she didn’t think that her students’ understanding of a war-torn country were very broad. When the artwork came from Iraq and Afghanistan she let the students interact with the art in their own way at first, observing them feeling very *outraged* at what they were looking at.

They knew there were struggles going on the world, but when they saw children depicting this they were amazed and angry. When they saw guns and people in pain and injury and children without schools and family they were shocked about this.

Similar to her colleague Verna Collett’s approach, Charlotte started in a simplistic way by preparing a chart and drawing a happy face on one side and a sad face on the other. She then invited her students to list the things that made their world easy (or good) to live in (happy face side), and then other things that might make a world not so easy to live in (sad face side).

To initiate ideas for the dream catchers, Charlotte prepared a drawing of a “universal child” and brainstormed words with her students that represented everything a child *anywhere in the world* would need to feel happy, healthy, safe, loved, and nurtured. Students then traced out a web onto white paper, and stamped the outer part of their circle with painted twigs to create the border. On the inside of the web children drew a picture of themselves, and surrounding their self-portraits they wrote five personal and powerful words from the “Universal Child” poster. Students proceeded to pencil-sketch and illustrate each word they chose, demonstrating how this reflects the Afghanistan artwork and their theme “The Way I Want the World to Be” for all children in the world. Charlotte’s messages to her students at this time were: “*Pictures are worth a thousand words*”, and “*If it comes from your heart then it is good for making the dream catchers*”.



**Figure 33: Dream Catcher Art Exchange – Grade 3 students, Gordon Head Elementary School, Victoria, send art to children in Kabul, Afghanistan.**

As indicated in the DVD footage, student responses while choosing words and pictures for their dream-catchers were thoughtful, including such things as: “I chose colour for happiness because I thought their art [from Afghanistan] was grey”; “Hope is important because if you hope it can come true”.

The hopes and dreams expressed by Charlotte’s grade 3 class (DVD log) were similar to Verna’s grade 1 class wishes for basic needs, with an added sense of maturity and sophistication about the nature of our world, and an emotional desire for peace:

### *Peace and Freedom*

- I hope that war stops in Afghanistan and Iraq - it really upsets me and I want them to have a life like we do here with none of that happening - I want war to stop
- No wars or fighting - people shouldn’t be mean
- Everybody needs food and freedom - dream for everybody to have fun and nobody hate each other
- Way down deep inside my heart... I feel sort of sad for the people in Iraq and Afghanistan for being in a war... I feel sad for those countries...



**Figure 34: Grade 3 student expressing her wishes for children living in Kabul, Afghanistan.**

### *Equality & Connectedness*

- The world needs equality
- Children have a lot of differences, but one that is the same is feelings - children should share feelings of happiness and sadness and surprise
- We are all connected and we should value culture
- Dream catchers are good because everyone has a dream - they show that everyone is the same

### *Communication*

- I want people there to see my artwork
- I hope the children will see my art and see my message

*Education*

- Knowledge is important
- A teacher is important to know how not to get hurt and to protect you

*Love, Health, & Safety*

- Family, laughter, shelter
- Importance of love; friendship, peace
- Fresh air, fun, food, love
- I dream that everyone is safe and has a home and is cared for
- Importance of clean water

*Social Responsibility: Global Arts as a Link to Inclusion*

On the Global Arts DVD, Charlotte mentions how she has seen “huge benefits for kids come out of this project”, particularly those related to social responsibility:

In their own world I see it spilling over from their relations with each other in the classroom to the playground. I have seen children become more inclusive with one another and more compassionate. All the social responsibility things we are trying to create through school are enhanced in this project.

Charlotte continues to inform us how the artwork from Afghanistan and Iraq *triggered something for the kids* - “It triggered ways to act on the deep feelings that they were getting from what they were seeing from the pictures”. On the playground Charlotte noticed how the kids were more aware and inclusive and how “it all came out of the artwork.” Charlotte also felt that her students’ assumptions about what happens to kids in other countries were different after their engagement with the art exchange project. She demonstrates this shift through a story:

A Chinese kid came and felt a bit self-conscious about being different and after the global arts project they really embraced him. I think that the kid’s assumptions changed because their world is closed and it’s familiar.

*Art as Communication and Connection*

In retrospection, Charlotte felt that the most powerful aspect of this project for her students was that it was *child-to-child expression* and *child-to-child information*. It became a very simple and effective way for children to communicate ideas - a project where children grew a great deal at many levels:

The project *opened the kids' hearts on an emotional level* in a way I hadn't been able to all year.... When they drew they could relate to what the world should be and what kids universally need to be healthy.... Children have learned a great deal from the project - a project where children weren't asking for the art back, but were excited to be able to communicate with another child.

Tim Hopper also noticed how these young children (5 - 7 year olds) - through their visual and communicative articulation of thoughts and feelings - were able to return to an understanding of what it means to be "alive", to be "happy"...

and just learning to express that reminds us as adults what it is to be happy and engaged in the world, and to not feel that [we] are superior but [we] need to connect in order to show interest, to show care, to show a desire to collectively improve the situation that we each live in... that retrospective understanding is hard to teach. (Tim Hopper)

This important point about *relationship* is exemplified in the following interview with *Mairi Chester*, a 10-year-old girl who took part in Charlotte Holtan's dream-catcher art project. Like her brother Logan, her story began through a partial viewing of the Global Arts DVD - the section that highlights Mairi's class taking part in the Dream Catcher Art project.

*A Student's Perspective (2006)*  
*(One year after the Dream Catcher Art experience)*

*Art as Care and Connection*

After viewing her class project on the DVD, Mairi shared her series of pictures that she drew on the day of her interview. The drawings illustrated Mairi's perception of her artwork being sent on a plane to children in Afghanistan. The captions that accompanied her drawings indicated a strong sense that the artwork would serve a dual purpose: *to bring happiness to Mairi* for sending the artwork, and *to bring happiness to the children in Afghanistan* who would receive her artwork.

Throughout the hour long interview these themes of happiness reoccurred, revealing insights into Mairi's perceptions of the value of the dreamcatcher art project for bringing joy to children Afghanistan, *and* to Mairi's personal life closer to home.

Through the viewing of children's artwork from Afghanistan, Mairi understood that life in Afghanistan for many children was very sad and violent, and that it wasn't fair for them to have a life like that. She also felt that because they lived with such violence, it was quite possible that their hearts would also be violent, and they would feel like being violent in return. In Mairi's eyes, it was important to send children in Afghanistan artwork because "*it is teaching us how to be nice to others instead of just caring about ourselves*". In Mairi's honest view of the world, the best way to make a difference in the world is by making somebody other than ourselves happy - "*making other people happy, makes us happy*"! By making and sending pictures to children in Afghanistan it would make a difference because "*we are doing a nice thing for them*" and it might change the way they feel - instead of feeling mean (because their world was sad and violent), when they get their dreamcatcher art, "*they will probably feel like being kind again*".

Mairi also concurs with her teacher's Mrs. Holtan (Charlotte) observations, that after participation in the artwork project, "*it changed the way people act*". Mairi recalls kids in her class being nicer to other children, "*like the kindergarten kids*". When asked if she thought these same kids would have showed this kindness before the art project Mairi responded by saying, "*Probably not because they wouldn't have known to be nice*".

*From Global to Personal: Solving the Bullying and War Problem through Kindness*

The conversation with Mairi became increasingly interesting when we dialogued further about the notion of “war”, and the value of learning about war. Although Mairi admitted that she didn’t like hearing the word war, and that she “*wished that war was not a real thing*”, she felt that it was important to learn about it because we would know what to do if it happened to us some day. The next poignant comment from Mairi came rather unexpected at first:

“I have a bully!”

After inquiring what she meant about “having a bully”, Mairi went to great length explaining the bullies that have chased, teased, and tormented her each year at school. I began to see the profound correlation Mairi was making with her own experiences at school, and the artwork project with children living in war-torn Afghanistan. In Mairi’s view, bullies are those children who have been taught to be mean - those who live in a world of unkindness. Bullies are those people who don’t want to help other people, and just care about themselves, not others. The solution to bullying was simple to Mairi and reflective of her views for making a difference to the children in Afghanistan: *“I would give*

*[children] nice projects to do for other people - teach them to be nice - teach them about other places in the world”*. When Mairi was

asked if she thought participating in an artwork project like the “dreamcatcher art” would change the way bullies react to other children, she immediately responded with “*Yea!*” Reflecting further, Mairi felt that because they were changing somebody else’s world, it changes their whole world... *“If they help more than one person they’ll get used to being nice to people and then they will turn nice”*.



**Figure 35: Mairi Chester’s grade 3 wish for kindness in Afghanistan and Canada.**

*Identifying the Special in “Special Needs”*

Towards the end of our conversation, I discovered that the children’s artwork project helped Mairi overcome other obstacles (other than bullying) that she faced at her school. As Mairi explained, she required tutoring “*in boring stuff*” because of her diagnosed “special needs”, and “*the kids didn’t really like [her] in Mrs. Holtan’s class*”. Mairi explained how the Afghanistan art project was exciting (not boring) because they got to do something for others, and they would receive something in return. On the social side of things, Mairi felt good because she now had friends. It didn’t appear to matter to Mairi that these newfound friends were living far away in Afghanistan; for her it made all the difference because she no longer felt isolated, alienated, or alone - she had found a friend(s). It is also interesting to note how Mairi’s diagnosed “anxiety disorder” was not triggered by the artwork exchange with war-torn Afghanistan. Although she admits that she was concerned for the children in Afghanistan since her artwork was sent (and she had not heard back), the project had made her more happy, than anxious or worried because “*she was doing something nice*” for the children in Afghanistan.

Mairi closes her story with wishes for all the children in Kabul, Afghanistan, and Victoria, Canada:

For children in Kabul, Afghanistan, “*I wish for them to have no war in their country, to have a safe place to live in, and to have clean water*”.

For children in Victoria, “*I wish for them to be kind to others instead of just caring about themselves*”.

With Karen Chester actively listening to her children’s stories and relationships with the Global Arts project, I embraced the opportunity to inquire into her stories and understanding, from *a parent’s perspective*:

*A Parent's Perspective: Learning From and About our Children*

Once friends and grandparents had picked up Logan and Mairi, I began our dialogue by asking Karen if she had learned anything new about her children through hearing them speak about their experiences. Without hesitation, Karen replied affirmatively:

*Yeah!!! I think their reflections were quite articulate and it really is amazing the recall that they possess - you know to go back a year - like I said to Logan "that is an eighth of your lifetime ago"! Wow! So there was some impression made on him - he distinctly remembers what he created and the feelings they had around that....*

*And Mairi too - the kinds of links that she was making between her experiences with bullying for instance, and how this project can change people far away but also her peers of this project - can change her peers - Wow! Those are pretty profound links and I wasn't aware of that link in her mind - between this project and her experiences with bullying...*

*Yeah.. New information!*

*Humanizing Curriculum*

The greatest value that Karen sees in the Children's Global Arts project is in its ability to give her children "a direct link to something bigger than themselves - a being outside themselves...in another country where life is very different". In Karen's mind, this opportunity "to relate to other human beings is perhaps the most important skill we could offer our children". Karen indicated how they have maps up on their walls and how it may have been around the same time when each of her kids started expressing an interest in, "Well, where is this country?" and "Where is Afghanistan, and in relation to what?", because they didn't really have a sense of that part of the world before the artwork project.

In regards to her daughter's concept of 'friend', Karen also confirmed how in the company of a psychiatrist, Mairi had told him that her best friend was someone in a faraway country. Although she admits it is a little frightening to hear her daughter describe her best friend as someone she has never met, she realizes that for Mairi this excites her. In Karen's eyes, "if she struggles in making social connections here, then

*wherever she can find them is where we want to provide them...if it's through a pen pal or pictorial communication then so be it".*

Referring back to Logan and Mairi's experience, she wonders if they felt "*somewhat empowered that even as children*" they could make, send, and receive something that could make a difference. With reference to Mairi's "special needs", she values how experiences such as the art project enable her to find her place in an academically focussed curriculum, and allow other students in her class to view what she does as unique and valuable. In this way, the project has "*empowered Mairi*" and others who struggle in areas where the academics are emphasized. Karen also feels that arts-based projects benefit children who are more focused on academics, in that it gives them the opportunity to "*stretch and grow in areas they might not have explored before*".

It was interesting for Karen to hear Mairi talk about her learning disabilities and her anxiety disorder, particularly her response to feeling no worry about the art project. Karen confirmed that she did not see any signs of anxiety, and believes these feelings were averted because it "*wasn't a project that disabled her in any way*", and because "*there was an action*" that provided a solution. Karen sensed that for Mairi there was a reality that, "*Yes, war is happening, but this is what I can do about it...*".

Karen also commented on her own sense of concern and worry that her young children would be exposed to concepts such as war and violence, notions that she had tried to protect her children from. She was concerned about how war would be discussed, and how her children would respond to the devastation of war. Karen was grateful that both teachers had sent home a form for parents to sign. Through this home-school connection she became aware of what was going and could offer a follow-up at home. She was also fortunate that both Mairi and Logan had excellent teachers - ones she felt comfortable placing her trust in. Karen knew the level of preparation Verna Collett had done for this art project because Logan and his classmates "*all knew something - and you could see it in their little faces that they were really feeling as they spoke - and feeling what they were doing was important*". In particular, Karen recalls Logan's previous conversation: "*I love the phrase on Logan's little card - the last sentence 'I care for you' - and you know when he read that this morning he felt it - he meant it - there is something profound in that for him*".

Karen also recalled how for so many children in Logan's class, they wished for safe houses, and she valued the opportunity for them to acknowledge basic needs (such as safe homes) that can easily be taken for granted living in Canada. The fact that Logan had gained a sense of what it might be like to live without a safe home or other basic needs had become a very worthwhile and significant learning opportunity.

### *Lifelong Learning*

The projects and experiences related to global arts became an unexpected gift for Karen as a parent and it triggered in her a re-awakening for the power of art to question, challenge, and transform behaviours related to war and violence. These realizations conjured up a related memory when her children were younger, and also inspired Karen to create a poem to honour the power of art for lifelong healing and transformation.....

*There was a day when Logan was really angry with Mairi - he was about 3 years old and he told her that he was going to shoot her - and as a parent that really disturbed me..... And so I sat him down in the rocking chair and held him for awhile and told him a story of when I was about 8 or 10 years old and I was exposed to a drawing. A series of drawings actually from children in some war-torn parts of South America, and this one little girl's drawing - as I described in this poem - where she was watching her family being shot one by one by these soldiers. And I told Logan about this picture that I had seen and that it had been drawn by a young child, and what it made me wonder afterwards; there were questions like "Well, who made her breakfast in the morning?.. who tucked her in at night?... who did her homework with her... who played with her?"; and Logan started to cry, and it wasn't necessarily my goal to cause him to cry, but that is what happened for him.... And you know I never heard that statement again - I never heard - "I am going to shoot you" - ever - so it was pivotal for us - for the family.*

*So those pictures can be powerful... they were powerful for me. I never forgot that image and it became powerful for my own children - you know 20 years later! And even now guns and tanks and such things are not his toys of choice.*

Belly-full

**I.**

*Crayon.  
Maybe boy, maybe girl  
reaching for a string.  
Joy, this moment  
this reaching to the sky  
belly full of kite.*

*I remember  
the same wax colours, twenty-four-packs,  
the smell they scratched on my paper.*

**II.**

*That other girl  
she was eight or maybe ten, about my age.  
She used crayons too  
the same hues; wonder if they were Crayola?*

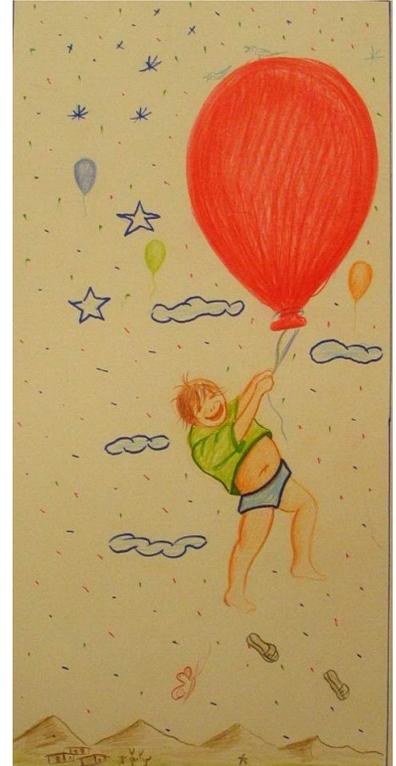
*Her picture was red.  
Red.  
Red leaking out of her family  
soldiers with guns rat-a-tat-tatting  
the guns even said that: "rat-a-tat-tat"  
you know, those bubble thoughts  
like in the comics.*

*Cherry red,  
says so right on the side  
of the Crayola.*

*After  
who tucked her in?  
who made her breakfast? helped her with homework?  
and why the baby?  
belly full of blood*

*There were other colours, other colours  
in her picture.  
I don't remember any of them.*

by Karen Chester



**Figure 36: Child artist from Iraq  
(see page 62)**

*Art and Novel Study (2005)*

*From:* Grade 6 Student Artists, Gordon Head Elementary, Victoria, B.C., Canada  
*To:* Children in Kabul, Afghanistan  
*Teacher Facilitator:* Deirdre Vincent  
*Source of Information:* Global Arts DVD

The third art exchange project continues to inform us about the power of art and story in the changing of perspective or worldview. For a Social Studies unit on Afghanistan, teacher *Deirdre Vincent* utilized the children's art exhibit from Afghanistan, as well as the novel "The Breadwinner" by Deborah Ellis - written under the rule of the Taliban - to inspire her grade 6 students to think critically about our world and to connect with children in Kabul, Afghanistan through an exchange of artwork and poetry.

Deirdre explains on the Global Arts DVD that art and music are the best ways to communicate with one another when you don't speak a language. For her students, viewing the artwork from children in Afghanistan was powerful in itself, but studying the book "The Breadwinner" within the personal and relational parameters of a "book club" added a deeper meaning about the situation of Afghanistan. Deirdre mentions how excited her students were about sharing artwork with other children in Kabul and how it challenged them to think outside Victoria:

The kids came up with ideas of the world they want and they drew them. They want happiness and joy and they want children in the world to have the joy that they have here... They appreciate things and think beyond their own lives.

*I drew this picture signifying the world we want - it's got a little world with a bunch of hearts around it and peace signs and happy smiling people and smiley faces, and a bunch of people from different origins joining hands - a Swedish girl, a Chinese boy, an Afghan girl, a German boy, a Canadian girl, a French boy, a Jamaican girl, and an African boy.*



**Figure 37: Grade 6 artist from Gordon Head Elementary School, Victoria**

Deirdre commented on how one boy came up and thanked her, and expressed how the book had “changed his life”, and how the art and poetry was a way for them to “change the way they feel about the world”. These sentiments are also shared in the DVD:

*I knew a bit about worldly matters, like famine and drought and things like that...., but I never knew this was going on in Afghanistan - and it truly has changed my perspective in the world we live in, and it has definitely made a big impression on me - I drew a picture of a girl beside the Afghanistan flag because she is not wearing a burqa and she is free, so I wanted to try and depict that.*<sup>9</sup>



**Figure 38: Grade 6 artist from Gordon Head, Victoria**

### Art Literacy: Fulfilling Our Need for Communication, Care, and Connection

Tim Hopper reflects on the learning that has taken place through the above three classroom experiences. From his firsthand observations, he is really amazed at how the students here in Victoria are making connections with children in Afghanistan by asking themselves poignant questions such as, “*What would those kids not know about me?*”; “*How could I share that with them?*”; and, “*What do I need to tell them so they feel me as a friend and as a part of their future, in the sense that I care?*” Tim saw how this process

<sup>9</sup> Refer to “Collaborative Reciprocity” to be aware of generalizations and stereotypes (chapter 11, p. 266)

“was happening seamlessly...with teachers who are very good at connecting with kids and getting kids to think in ways that make them feel proud of what they are doing”:

*This notion of connection is so important.... it goes back to Raffi’s child honouring... in that there is a child in every one of us...*

... when we come into the world we are passionate about everything we learn and then we sort of learn not to be passionate from experiences, and I think this rekindles that desire to learn because it enriches our understanding of the world and our existence in it. (Tim Hopper, DVD log)

Geoff Spriggs also observed the sincerity of children’s messages from Victoria and Kabul, as expressed through their artwork to one another: “In almost all of the art that I have seen in both directions, there is emotion attached to it”. Geoff senses the true goodwill wished from the Canadian children as demonstrated in their symbolic images of peace signs, doves and colours; and also by listening to what they are saying while creating the art. “It is quite powerful. It says ‘*We are taking this seriously as little kids. We are taking this seriously to express what we would really like - the world that we want*’ - they are trying to express that”.

Geoff observes the same form of expressions coming from children in Afghanistan. “In the artwork you see the emotions of, ‘*Well, this is what our life is like*’ ... I just think that they take it extremely seriously and it is very personal and it is expressing that emotion and getting it out”. Through his observations in Victoria *and* Kabul, Geoff has come to realize how this art exchange project is “assisting in a really big way in letting them know that someone is *hearing it* - or someone is *seeing it* - and there is that connection being made, and I think that has a very lasting effect throughout the whole project”.

## Strengthening Relationships through Art Exchange: A Visit from Afghanistan



**Figure 39: Kabul firefighter Atiqullah Mohammadullah visits Gordon Head Elementary School to pick up artwork for children living in Afghanistan.**

As part of Geoff's quest to bring understanding and connection between communities of Kabul and Victoria, in Spring 2006 he arranged to have Kabul firefighter, Atiqullah Mohammadullah (Atiq) visit and speak with members of the Greater Victoria region, including students from Victoria schools - Gordon Head, St. Joseph's The Worker, and Sundance Elementary - who had created artwork for the children of his country, Afghanistan. Atiq began each talk by expressing his apology for speaking in his muffled manner - how he had recent dental work done on his mouth. (I found out later that his teeth, cheek, and mouth were in need of serious repair because of previous combat with the Taliban - attacks that killed Atiq's close family and relatives).

During one of his humble visits to a Victoria school (choosing to sit with students on the floor at Gordon Head), Atiq shared the following words with students that accentuate - even in the dire midst of war and chaos - the need for building relationships among children through artwork:

The most important things between this exchange of the art between our kids [in Afghanistan] and the kids in Canada is it makes our relations stronger and we express our ideas through art to each other and know more of each other through the exchanging of art - and our relations will be stronger, stronger, stronger.... And finally the result is that they will know each other slowly by the art. (Atiq, through translator)

Atiq also relayed how most kids in Afghanistan are showing their ability through their art that is being sent to Canada - how *in their art especially*, their ability is very good. With this in mind he explains to the children of Victoria how Afghani children need this encouragement so that they will carry this ability over during times when it is not coming through help of their friends from other countries. Atiq's fundamental request from children and people of Canada is, "Don't forget our kids - think that they are your own kids and help them in any way that you can do it". Through his passionate expression of gratitude, Atiq shares the secret of success for Afghanistan - *through encouragement and the building of relationships with one another, strong education and a promising future will prevail.*

Through a translator, Atiq expressed at great length how the children in Victoria are "very kind young people", how he "loves your pictures", "really appreciates what you have done for children in Afghanistan", and is confident that the children in Afghanistan "are doing the same for you". Atiq was grateful for Victoria children's understanding of basic needs, and their awareness of how very little paper and pens Afghan children have to work with in their struggle for basic needs. The message that the children in Victoria heard loud and clear was that Atiq was confident and grateful that, through their help and love, the children in Afghanistan would grow up to be good people, *just like them:*

He is 100% sure that with your help and your love, that Afghan children will grow up to be just like you guys and they will be good people.... When he goes back he is going to tell Afghan children that you guys are nice people - he is just saying "thank you", he really appreciates what you guys are doing - especially Victoria, especially Canada - he knows that Afghanistan will forever be in debt to you.

Through a question and answer period, the children of Victoria also came to realize the similarities between themselves and children of their same age living in war-torn Afghanistan:

*Are there many children in Afghanistan?*, one young boy asked Atiq.

Atiq listened and responded intently to this question and many others:

There is 2 million children just like you guys living in Afghanistan and you guys are very much the same...if you were living in Afghanistan you would have maybe 6 more brothers or sisters.

*What games do they play?*

Volleyball, soccer, cricket, baseball, swimming - there are not much balls and toys or facilities like swimming pools now so they don't play that much.

*Are there trees in Afghanistan?*

There were lots of fruit trees, lots of grapes, lots of trees in Afghanistan but the war and the bombs killed and destroyed all of the nature that Afghanistan had, but it is slowly growing but it will take time.

*Do children in Afghanistan learn the same things as children here?*

Afghan children learn just the same things as you do here - they learn math, writing, and reading, but they are more eager to go to school than you guys - they don't say, "Oh I am sick mommy"; they don't do that because they haven't been able to go to school for a *long* time so they are missing school.

Atiq would continue to explain how about 2 million children will return to school, and how schools which are getting rebuilt, have no supplies, desks, or chairs. He shares the value of their artwork in this regard by suggesting how much they will appreciate such gifts in the rebuilding of their schools and education.



**Figure 40: Grade 1 students from Gordon Head Elementary School, passing their clothesline art to Atiq - art on route to Kabul**

Continued dialogue between Atiq and students in Victoria open a door for understanding the relationship between child-to-child connections and broader notions of *social change*:

*How are the people in Afghanistan?*

Afghan people are very kind people, they are very brave and generous people and they will be influenced greatly and easily by your love - so if you give them love they will change - they are very open to you guys.

*Is Afghanistan getting back to how it was before?*

Yes, please be patient... Afghans are open to this and they are good people - the Taliban have changed them, they brought bad influences... the Taliban is not from Afghanistan, they are from different parts. It is getting better slowly, and it will get better.

After he told Victoria students that he would take their pictures to the children in Afghanistan, he conveyed to them the following heartfelt message: "I love you guys - Thank you for your love - thank you for everything and I hope you continue to do this for us... you are very peaceful, kind people in Canada". Atiq's message was simple yet profound: *The love and friendship given to the children in Afghanistan, by the children in Victoria - as communicated in their artwork - will provide hope for a newborn country:*

Those are the future of Afghanistan and those are the leaders of the people in Afghanistan, and those people are the best hope for our country for the future... Have a good life forever... thank you.

The principal of Gordon Head Elementary school Brent Kelly, closed Atiq's visit with a message to students to continue this partnership with children in Afghanistan *for a long time*. Brent finished his address with the following message:

I hope this is something you remember for a long time and you continue to be a part of - the world we want - and this global arts project... Thank you to everybody who helped facilitate this - we really appreciate it - it is a wonderful thing for children... so thank you!

The Big Picture: From Personal to Social Change

*An Afghanistan Perspective*

In a subsequent interview with Atiq I inquired further about the notion of change by asking him how he felt the art exchange between children in Victoria and children in Kabul could make a difference in Afghanistan. Without hesitation Atiq reiterated his message that the most significant part of the artwork exchange was that it would enable the children to *get to know one another, and ultimately make relations between these two countries stronger*. Atiq went on to explain the broader ramifications this will have on the future of Afghanistan and ultimately, the world:

And the result will be for you guys that if *our* kids have a good education, if *our* kids have good ability to learn something...and they have good relations, we can give that back to the world.

*A Canadian Perspective*

At a separate time and place, Geoff Spriggs furthered this discussion when he mentioned how the Children's Global Arts project has the potential to continue to grow naturally, moving from *individual* to *social change*:

It has an organic quality where one child shares to another child shares to another child and it creates a social change in either attitude or how they want to relate back in their own community.

I inquired further by asking Geoff *what social change would look like?* Geoff suggested that in Canadian schools, instead of a knee-jerk reaction to an event - an international event - and just tarring everybody with the same brush (i.e. all Afghans are terrorists) - students who have experienced international friendships and notions of reciprocity, would have a moment of pause where they would say:

“Oh no, there are actually people behind this - there are actually communities involved in this - and there are actually kids over there that are not much different from *me* - but they are also suffering - because a kid is a kid is a kid”.

Geoff continues to point out that if students look for, or are offered opportunities to view the world in that way, then when they have the opportunity to help, to assist, to make a decision, or have that kind of influence, they could perhaps make an informed decision instead of a knee-jerk reaction. In an ideal world of going about things and making changes, Geoff anticipates how students would make decisions based on, “Well, what would be *good* for the person in that community or the child in that community?”.

Geoff reinforces the theories that consider societal and individual change concurrently within the realm of “integrative transformative learning” (Miles, 2002), with the understanding that they are both intricately and purposefully connected to one another:

Integrative transformative learning...incorporates progressive personal change and progressive social change as mutually constitutive of each other and focuses integrally on both. (Miles, 2002, p. 24)

An education that reveals and enhances our radical interdependence with all creation frees us from a 'false consciousness' of our separateness into a richer understanding of our underlying relatedness. I believe that as we deepen our apprehension of this truth we will grow ever less vulnerable to the either-or thinking of "self versus other" and more able to reorganize that we are always beings-in-relation. (Buber, 1958, cited in Dolaz, p. 120)

Tim Hopper (DVD log), builds on Geoff's process of social change by suggesting that when students develop international connections through artwork, they begin to see the world as their neighbour, and they "really live" the interconnections. Through Tim's observations students are able to *imagine*, and start to embrace the idea of what it is like to live in another country such as Afghanistan, and how this awareness not only affects their way of thinking about that part of the world, but also how it affects the decisions that they make, and the decisions their parents make, because they start bringing that to the dining room table for discussion around these projects:

...they bring this sort of naïve sincerity and as a parent you start to realize that they are right, they are asking the right questions, and these are the things that we need to focus our lives on.... Without being so busy, ask ourselves, "*Why am I doing this and what is important*"?

Tim Hopper feels that this process is where it starts to resonate in Victoria schools, homes, and communities, and he hopes that the same things are happening in the partnering Global Art's communities in other parts of the world. In this way, education can share a common vision for society that keeps us deliberating between what is right and wrong, moral and immoral, just and unjust.

Geoff Spriggs also notices how the art exchange project keeps expanding his role as a firefighter - "It is the bigger picture approach and it doesn't get much bigger than a global approach to something". Geoff notes with interest how projects such as these create emotional connections that open your eyes to, "This actually does have bigger ramifications and bigger influences and bigger connections than what you thought your project was about initially":

You know, one piece of artwork to a firefighter's child, that knocks another brick out of the wall type of thing, and it progresses that way. It is all of the little things that tend to actually make the difference - and those are the things that end up building - The BIG grand gesture.

*Fulfilling a Need by Making a Difference*

Geoff has witnessed the larger ramifications of these community building projects through the support extended within local communities, including the “no questions asked support” from Langford mayor and councillors. Geoff has noticed how even brief involvement from community - helping to pack a box or load a truck, for examples - fulfill a sense of purpose for people.... “They feel like they have contributed a great deal to people half way around the world (in Afghanistan) and they can see the impact that they have had through our stories and media images”. Geoff continues to be amazed at how fast the “helping neighbours kind of feel” has extended even beyond Langford and well beyond his fire department walls, and how inspiring it is to be part of that process. Through projects he has become involved in Geoff sees the benefits of neighbouring communities getting more involved in humanitarian and community-to-community efforts, and also an international connection to Afghanistan.

On a personal level, projects such as these make *him* feel valued - “It makes me feel like I am doing something worthwhile and that has a personal meaning to people”. Geoff feels this sense of value and purpose is shared universally - “It is just somebody saying, ‘thank you for your efforts and don't forget about us; we do exist over here and we are people too’”.

Geoff acknowledges how he ends up appealing to seemingly opposite ends of the spectrum to make service projects happen. He appeals to media attention to get the word out, to a business sense to ensure a “good sell”; but at the end of the day, when all of the stories come back, Geoff finds that the value really had nothing to do with any of those whatsoever. Rather, “It is that I have made - *I have actually made a difference!*”

Sometimes I feel helpless when I reflect on the overwhelming devastation that some innocent children face. By creating outlets to share honest and hopeful visions we are creating public awareness to promote change. Equally as importantly as identifying problems, [The World We Want art project] allows us to pool ideas to create a better world. (UVic student teacher)

## Chapter 6

### CANADA MEETS ZANZIBAR ISLAND, TANZANIA CHILD-TO-CHILD



**Figure 41: “Zanzibar Island is the same size and shape as Vancouver Island”**

Entering into the art exchanges between children in Victoria, Canada, and those residing in Jambiani, Zanzibar, we begin to realize the expansive possibilities for collaboration and transformation, as well as the cultural sensitivities thereof.

#### A Link to Zanzibar: Hands Across Borders

The connection with Jambiani began through a “Grassroots Healing” organization in Victoria that works with students studying Chinese medicine, “acupuncture”. Some students of this program further their practice of acupuncture by volunteering at a “Hands Across Borders” health facility, located in Jambiani community on Zanzibar Island, Tanzania. This clinic is operated by Canadian chiropractor doctor, Alastair Pirie, and Canadian teacher, *Pat Elias* (research participant), and it is the first and only holistic medical facility to be found on the east coast of Africa.

Grassroots Healing heard about the Global Arts initiative and felt that they could contribute to this project by having Hands Across Borders’ volunteers bring artwork to Victoria from children attending Jambiani School. One such volunteer, *Connie Nimmon*, embraced this idea wholeheartedly as she had seen the artwork from children in Iraq and Afghanistan and was eager to become part of these visions through her volunteer work with Hands Across Borders. When Connie arrived in Jambiani with the World We Want

artwork idea, Pat Elias embraced and supported this project even though the process, as anticipated within Jambiani school community, would be challenging and difficult.

Over the years Pat has realized the need to pick and choose carefully when asking for assistance and cooperation from Jambiani School; but despite challenges, she has found helpful and dedicated staff to work with when needed, including the assistant head teacher, Abdallah Mussa.

Pat has lived and worked within the Jambiani community for many years. She is a recognized teacher - the most highly regarded profession among Tanzanians - but does not teach at the school. Pat knows most of the school children, as she speaks fluent Swahili, does personal tutoring, holds classes for the deaf and hard of hearing children at the clinic two days a week, and is highly involved in the Jambiani community.

### *Shifting Rules and Learning Approaches through the Artwork Process*

Connie arrived in Jambiani at the beginning of December 2004 during the children's school holiday. Classes were to resume in January 2005, a time when Connie and Pat had arranged to begin the World We Want art project. As no exchange school had been identified at the time, it was arranged for Connie to bring the children's artwork to the Faculty of Education at UVic for use within various Global Arts initiatives (i.e. courses, workshops, conferences). Pat met with Abdallah to consider the best way to approach this project with the students and how much direction they should receive. Pat expressed strongly the need for students to approach this from a different mode of learning - moving away from always being told what to do, how to think, and what the "right" answer should be. They agreed that students should enjoy the creativity that comes with artistic expression, and not be limited by imposed rules or standards. Students would be invited - perhaps for the first time - to engage in a learning activity with as much freedom as possible.

At the appropriate date and time Pat and a Zanzibar student carried the box of art supplies (from Monk's office supplies, Victoria) down to Jambiani School. There were 28



**Figure 42: Pat Elias and student bringing art supplies to Jambiani School, Zanzibar Island**

children in all - ranging from ages 13 to 19 - eager to get started on their first global arts' project. Pat, Connie, and Abdallah, waited with excited anticipation to see what the outcome would be.

They began the process by explaining the meaning of the project and inviting students to draw *the world they live in* and *the world they want*. They introduced the different art mediums they could choose from, including pencils, pastels, coloured pencils, and water colour paint. Connie assisted wherever possible but without speaking fluent Swahili, her verbal interaction was limited. She was initially surprised to see that “the children who chose to use the water colours did not know that they needed to mix water with the dry paint”. It was an eye-opener to recognize how children from Jambiani had no exposure to painting in either their school or their homes.

During the *several hours* that the children were drawing, Pat spoke with them and asked them their thoughts on the *world they live in* and *the world they want*. The following represents a glimpse into the children's artwork and comments, as categorized in six primary themes. As Pat indicates, these represent a “broad spectrum of interesting ideas from children/young adults who for the most part have not left their village environment”.

### *The World We Live In & The World We Want*

#### *Crime*

Robberies: improve the police force  
Road accidents: drivers should avoid speeding  
Stop stealing things  
Stop reckless driving



**Figure 43: Child artist from Jambiani School, Zanzibar**

#### *Peace & Justice*

No wars but peace  
Stop the wars  
Human beings should be kind to each other  
Human rights instead of inhuman behaviours  
Peace and harmony in the world  
Reduce poverty



**Figure 44: Child artist from Jambiani School, Zanzibar**

*Unemployment*

A hope for jobs when we graduate  
 The future: plenty of jobs, increase science and technology, be able to choose jobs

*Environment*

Illegal fishing: must be conservation of the environment  
 Stop pollution and keep the environment clean  
 Stop soil erosion



Figure 45: Jambiani child artist



Figure 46: Jambiani child artist

*Disease*

There are many diseases: there must be a good cure  
 Stop the spread of AIDS

*Education*

The right to a good education  
 Children should be in school instead of working

*Cultural Sensitivities*

In February 2005, we received a note from Connie relaying her reaction to the Jambiani children's artwork as one of *disappointment*: "The pictures are very nice but not anything too incredible. We gave them a lot of time but not much came out that made me think 'wow, this is amazing'". Having seen the art from children in Canada, Iraq, and Afghanistan, she felt in comparison, they were far more impressive than those generated by children in Zanzibar. I had sensed Connie's disappointment and decided to follow up through a three-way dialogue between Connie, Pat, and myself. Pat shed light on the artwork process by first sharing the context of the school situation.

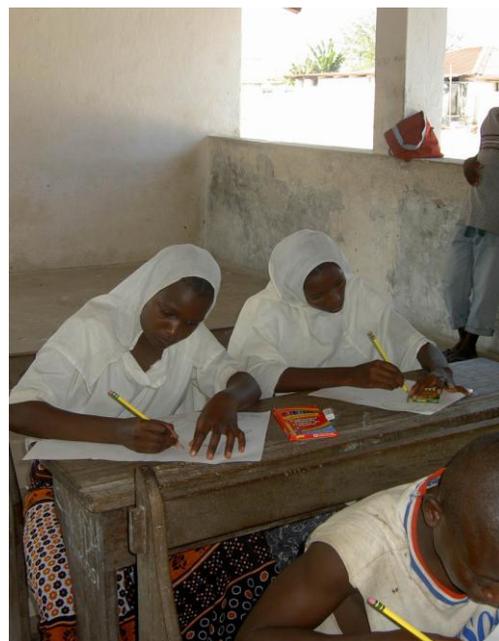
As Pat explained, the system of education in Jambiani School can be compared to the education system in the UK circa 1950's. Class sizes range from 45-65 students. Most students share pencils and the primary mode of learning is taking notes from the

blackboard, as there are no textbooks other than limited class sets that Pat had photocopied and bound. Learning by memory rote is the ‘modus operandi’, and caning is common for such infractions as being late for school, speaking too much, or asking too many questions. There is very little room for initiative on the part of the student, or student-centered learning on the part of the teacher, and any experience or exposure to artistic expression is severely limited. There are no art programs or anything similar taking place within the school.

Another consideration is that teachers are highly underpaid, having received no salary for the months of November, December, and January. Teachers are also denied training or professional development opportunities and are punished for non-compliance. Understandably, most are not willing to take on any extra-curricular jobs or activities; when school ends, teachers remain to prep for the following day, sharing the one photocopy of each course textbook, and then they go home.

In response to Connie’s disappointment, Pat would agree that at first glance the drawings look very basic and simple. She did however, put the images in perspective by reminding us that “these students had never used most of the supplies, like marker pens, crayons, and paints, with the exception of perhaps the occasional coloured pencil”. Pat felt it was very courageous of them to try the watercolours and other materials, as none of them had ever had an art class before and, as both had observed, did not know to mix the water with the paint.

It was also fascinating for Pat to observe how students “had to use their *imagination* to draw subjects that many of them may have seen in a book or on TV - meaning they had nothing in front of them to give them shape and form”. As Pat notes, “Even the idea to free form, think, and use their imaginations is a huge leap here, as they are taught under a 1950's British “chalk and talk” system of education.



**Figure 47: Students from Jambiani School (Zanzibar Island) creating art for children at Braefoot Elementary School. Victoria**

Pat also added how, “Some of these children show talent and interest, unfortunately there is nowhere for them to develop it at the present time”. Both Connie and Pat recognized this hidden talent through *Rama Khamis*, a 16-year-old boy who *came out of his shell* through this artwork project.

### *Art and Healing: The Story of Rama*

Rama is known as a very shy and withdrawn young boy at Jambiani School. Rama’s mother died when he was a young boy, and he has many family-related problems and concerns. He had been treated at the Hands Across Borders clinic for chronic bed-wetting and fears of anxiety. The opportunity to express himself *for the first time* through drawing proved to be very meaningful for Rama.

Connie noticed “how his artwork stood out from the rest as being the most vivid, clear, and artistically skilled”, even though, like others, he had never utilized these art mediums in the past. Rama immersed himself in this activity in a way that he hadn’t revealed in other areas of school. It became a way for others (as well as Rama himself) to recognize his hidden strengths and talents. It also initiated an ‘art therapy’ strategy for Pat to follow up with at the clinic as a means to work through Rama’s fears and challenges.

Through this virtual dialogue with Pat and Connie it compels us to view the artwork project in Jambiani School with new light. In March 2005, Connie shared a sequel to her story that suggests how her views had somewhat changed:

In deeper contemplation of the project, the children’s art of Jambiani and my experience in the community, I feel that what came out of the project is perfect. The simplicity of the art is an honest reflection of their culture. Their images and words of hope are there to remind myself and others from my own culture how lucky we are and that we can share similar visions of peace, justice, and child honouring.<sup>10</sup>



Figure 48: Rama’s Voice

<sup>10</sup> Refer to footnote #9, page 97 for researcher’s reflection note

## An Artwork Exchange Emerges: Second Stage

### *Culturally Appropriate Art Projects*

Referring back for a moment to the Global Arts workshop held at UVic in April 2005, teacher (and research participant) *Debbie Linnell* - who had seen the Jambiani artwork, and heard the stories - had resonated with this part of the world, and decided to engage her students in an art exchange with children of this remote African village. She also decided to move away from the use of paper as an art medium by inviting her students to design two banners - one for Braefoot Elementary School, Victoria, and one for the Jambiani community of Zanzibar Island.



**Figure 49: Banners created by children from Braefoot Elementary School (Victoria) on route to Jambiani School on Zanzibar Island**

At this same time, Pat Elias had learned of the new connection with Braefoot School, and decided to embrace art mediums appropriate to an African context, rather than rely on traditional “Canadian” mediums such as drawing and painting. This decision contributed to our merging awareness for encouraging *culturally appropriate* forms of art expression in future Global Arts projects and initiatives.

With the Jambiani context in mind, Pat initiated song and dance routines and the creation of a banner with children from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) group - activities that took place outside of Jambiani School hours, either on the beach or the porch of the Hands Across Border’s clinic. Pat notes how, “Prior to this there was no help for the DHH children - they just sat in the classroom, unable to read or write”. The process of art engagement became *a true turning point* for many children living in

Jambiani community, particularly those whose voices have remained deaf and silent for so long. “It was truly amazing - the whole group learnt to sign songs and you can't tell who are the deaf and who are the non-deaf students, as they are all singing and using sign language”.

*Identifying the “Special” in “Special Needs” by shifting what it means to Learn*

Pat couldn't say enough about how special a time these creative experiences were for those involved in Jambiani community. Children, teachers, and village members “all formed a bond through music”. Students observed, and took part in, a whole other side of teaching by having fun and observing teachers relaxed, enjoying themselves, and learning how to do sign language. All of a sudden, even the shyest and quietest of children “came out”; “13 year old girls and boys, singing and dancing their hearts out”.

Ebrahim, for example, a boy who has struggles with Deaf and Hard of Hearing, not only found his hidden voice and talent through Art, but also “gained new respect from others” in the village of Jambiani.

*A Silent Voice is Finally Heard: The Story of Ebrahim*

Ebrahim is the boy everyone in Jambiani knows as “deaf”. He refuses to go to school because he cannot hear what is going on and is totally frustrated. Pat indicated how Ebrahim is very bright, but a very angry, frustrated teenager - “you know the kind that stands back with this ‘pissed off at the world look’”. Pat shares the *change in Ebrahim's attitude and disposition* through his engagement in the Global Arts experience. As Pat recalls, Ebrahim was not involved in the music side of the exchange, but he totally immersed himself in the banner artwork: “There was a window of opportunity and he jumped right through - he *focused on it for hours*”. (Ebrahim is the predominant artist on the banner that is now hanging in the library of Braefoot School).

Ebrahim's peers began to see his artistic talents that



Figure 50: Ebrahim's Voice

were never revealed before. As Pat indicated, “The artwork gave him an outlet and improved his status among his peers”. After his engagement in the banner project, Pat also noticed how Ebrahim’s *behaviour with others* who were involved in it *had changed* (not so much with others who were not involved). Ebrahim *shifted from being “angry and frustrated”*, to becoming *“smiley and happy”*. In Pat’s words, “this experience *touched him - got through to him - it lowered his level of frustration*”.

A door has opened for Ebrahim, and since this banner project he is always visiting Pat and asking, “What next?” - “He is just waiting for the next stage to happen”. Through this experience, Pat has also come to recognize Ebrahim as “a beautiful artist who would do brilliantly if he had some training”. If his English improves for example, Pat foresees how “he would be a perfect candidate for the upcoming Tourism School as a Resident Artist or something like that”.

#### *A Revisit from Elaine McVie*

When Braefoot Elementary received the banner from Zanzibar Island, Elaine McVie (vice-principal at the time) rejoins our story to share how students were truly “amazed by what had been put on”. She recalls the day when Connie Nimmon came to her class to share the context of Jambiani community and some of the challenges that children who live there face, including the lack of access to what her students regarded as just ordinary art materials.

Elaine refers to an “awareness” on the part of her students, that not everybody lives like they do, and not everybody has the same opportunities that they do. “They were just amazed at the outset when they realized that some kids don’t have access to art and art supplies, particularly at Braefoot where art is done amazingly well”. For some of Elaine’s students, they were “taken aback to think that art wouldn’t be part of a regular curriculum”.

The banner from Zanzibar “became very *alive* to her older students”, and it also inspired added excitement for taking part in Debbie Linnell’s school wide banner exchange. “There was never anybody who didn’t want to participate or who grumbled about it, so I would take that as a measure of their enthusiasm and excitement”. In fact, students became “intrigued that they could get to share something that was real - that that

actual banner - that piece of fabric that they [would] work on - was actually going to go to this other school”.

From an administrator’s point of view, Elaine feels that these art exchange projects are “really good at bringing cohesiveness and a sense of community to a school”, and “*really* appropriate for K-5 students”. The banner ideas became “one of those things where everybody did their little piece at *their level* to the best of their ability”. Furthermore, all teachers got on board, “completely by choice”:

It was *hugely successful* - my students were involved for the finishing details but it was that *buzz* in the school about something that everybody was involved in and everybody had a piece of it. (Elaine McVie)

### *Equalizing Effect*

As Elaine reflects on both the *World We Want conference artwork*, and the *Zanzibar banner exchange*, she notices the added richness that is generated through connections inspired by visual creativity rather than literary text:

I have done projects where kids have written letters to a class in a different place in the world, but somehow the pictures and the banner were a richer connection... because it was *visual, hands-on...created*.

From a learning perspective, Elaine would concur with Karen Chester’s earlier observations by noting how “children whose skills aren’t in reading and writing got an equal opportunity to contribute because it was a visual thing that they were contributing”. Elaine coined the experiences as one that was “very *equalizing* in terms of everybody’s contribution because it didn’t matter for the kids who were branded as “bad or poor spellers”, or those who “couldn’t write” or whose “handwriting wasn’t good”; none of those things came into play. Grading or assessment in the form of traditional letter grades were also not a part of it, so students felt at ease knowing that they “couldn’t make a mistake”. Overall, it was a “*very equal opportunity for everybody to participate at an equal [and validated] level of contribution*”.



**Figure 51: Debbie Linnell and her grade 5 students (from Braefoot School, Victoria) working on banner for Jambiani, Zanzibar**

*Two Teacher's Perspectives*

Both *Debbie Linnell* and *Lynn Hesnup*, teachers at Braefoot Elementary School, “jumped into the Global Arts program from a view of *curriculum*, noticing numerous links with the project and the B.C. mandated curriculum, including art, social studies, ecology, and physical education.

*Debbie Linnell's Story*

Debbie Linnell embraced the Global Arts opportunity because she felt it was “great for integration across curriculum”, and also more in tune with the growing “multicultural” nature of her classrooms. She adds how her students continuously try to find ways to “fit pieces together and make links between Jambiani and other projects”, indicating to her that “this first project with Jambiani School made a big impact on her students”. Debbie recalls a significant moment in her class when Sean brought in a memory book of his home and his life in Nigeria, and how students noted the similarities between Nigeria and Zanzibar.

*One World - One People: Focussing on Similarity rather than Difference*

Through Debbie we come to realize a critical and noteworthy point about education; one that may shift popular notions of multicultural education: “*By the time a relationship has been built among children through similarity, differences are not seen as a problem but more as part of the people*”.

Referring to the Zanzibar drawings (mounted in the halls of Braefoot school), Debbie’s students “recognized children there as ‘people first’ before acknowledging and becoming aware of difference”, pointing out similarities of playing soccer and riding bicycles. Through their ongoing exchange Debbie notes how students “were more introspective and interested” because they were able to make a connection on a personal level. Making the banners for example, compelled them “to think globally”, and to “think about how they are one small part of a bigger web”.

Debbie’s sentiments bring to mind the words of Tenzin Gyatso - the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet - who believes that, “Now more than ever we need to show our children that distinctions between 'my country' and 'your country', 'my religion' and 'your

religion' are secondary considerations” (Gyatso, 1999, p. 191). This is not to suggest that we educate children to abandon or ignore the culture and historical tradition they are born into; on the contrary this grounding of culture is very important. The danger “comes when this develops into narrow-minded nationalism, ethnocentricity and religious bigotry” (Dalai Lama, cited in Gyatso, p. 191):

If... I were to look on each as one of my own kind - as a human being like myself with one nose, two eyes and so forth, ignoring differences of shape and colour - then automatically that sense of distance would fade.... I would quite naturally feel well disposed toward them. (Gyatso, p. 170)

Tim Hopper adds to this conversation by suggesting how:

Suddenly the capacity to communicate something that gets rid of the racist ideas, the prejudice ideas; all those parts of the curriculum are addressed in this project when you call on one child to think about how they will communicate with another child who is somewhat strange to them in relation to how they understand their lives...so the capacity to break down that strangeness will just keep spreading.

### *Active Citizenship*

Given the nature of Debbie’s very active group of 23 boys and 7 girls, “it was remarkable how *all* her students wanted to reach out to the children of Jambiani through an art exchange”. She recalls a very powerful moment when one boy *Tristan* - generally not introspective - reacted to questions posed by a visit from Pat Elias. In response to questions such as, “How much money do you spend on clothes?”; and a dialogue reflecting on how this amount translated to yearly salaries in Jambiani, Tristan “ran up to his classroom and got his brand new school supplies to donate to children in Jambiani school”. According to Debbie, there was something about this discussion and the connections that he was making with children in Jambiani, “that *touched him deeply and he wanted to make a difference*”.

Debbie’s classroom observations conclude with a mention of *Jeffrey Pitcher* - a young African-American boy who became so touched by the Global Arts experience, and demonstrated such leadership, that he is now one of the Children’s Global Arts Foundation’s<sup>11</sup> most active Board members. As demonstrated by Jeffrey’s contributions at school, board meetings, and special events, (i.e. initiating art ideas, meeting the mayor, speaking on National television, etc.), the Global Arts initiative has become a significant aspect of Jeffrey’s young life, both within and outside of school.



**Figure 52: Jeffrey Pitcher presenting Children’s Global Arts initiative on Global-National television, 2006 (Sundance Elementary School, Victoria, B.C.)**

Debbie maintains that her students’ ongoing actions and interest in this initiative go beyond typical notions of social responsibility related to money or fundraising, or a “paternalistic, one way, mentality”; rather, they stem from the *reciprocal exchanges of culture across horizons* - a point that becomes increasingly important throughout this research anthology.

### *Lynn Heslup’s Story*

Lynn Heslup seeks out “activities and projects that are meaningful” with a belief that, “when teachers realize the importance of meaning, they will seek ways to make *all* aspects of the curriculum meaningful”. Lynn has a strong interest in linking art exchanges through social studies, particularly Geography, as well as from an ecological and a physical education (P.E.) standpoint. For Social Studies, her students keep a scrapbook of newspaper articles, helping to satisfy their “love of facts about the world at large”, and to “become familiar with different parts of the world”. Lynn notes how the Global Arts project offers a “very special and impactful” component, where students can *move to the next step* by “*actually connecting with a group of people*” in another part of the world.

<sup>11</sup> The Children’s Global Arts initiative was registered as a not-for-profit Foundation in June 2006. (see chapter 4, page 66 for details)

### *Fulfilling a Need to Connect*

Observing an increased longing in children to *make connections with real people*, Lynn's intent is to find opportunities for her students to build relations with others, both locally and globally. In our interview, she was reminded of a recent visit from children in neighbouring schools, and how "children of all ages bonded so quickly in such a very short time... big kids and younger kids had arms around each other". Lynn adds that when she went to school, "this wouldn't have been the case", indicating how the personal and relational needs of children have changed. As demonstrated in later stages of this dissertation, Lynn's observations reinforce recurring ideas found within this study.

### *Walking Over the Line from "Me" to "We"*

When considering shifts from "Me" to "We", Lynn suggests that it is easy for children to "walk over the line". Part of this perception stems from her belief that children *want to walk over the line*, and if we, as teachers and parents, *walk with them*, they are eager to come along. Lynn acknowledges how students realize they have a lot of "things", but also how easy it is "for them to move beyond this". Building on Debbie's comments, Lynn notes how experiences like the art exchange, "opens kids eyes to the global community", and "education and learning becomes meaningful". And when their eyes are open, "they see a nice perspective that allows them to embrace other cultures and other ways of being in the world". In essence, "*they can see themselves through others*".

These observations again bring to mind the sentiments of Tenzin Gyatso who believes that young people "have a natural enthusiasm for justice and peace, and tend to be much more open and flexible of mind than adults" (Gyatso, 1999, p. 188). For the Dalai Lama, meeting the young reminds us that children "constitute humanity's most precious resource", and advises that if we wish to "bring about a more compassionate - and therefore fairer - society, it is essential that we educate our children to be responsible, caring human beings" (p. 183).

As teachers like Debbie, Lynn, and numerous others are demonstrating through their Global Arts involvement, "Education is much more than a matter of imparting the knowledge and skills by which narrow goals are achieved....

It is also about opening the child's eyes to the needs and rights of others. We must show children that their actions have a universal dimension. And we must somehow find a way to build on their natural feelings of empathy so that they come to have a sense of responsibility toward others. For it is this that stirs us into action. Indeed, if we had to choose between learning and virtue, the latter is definitely more valuable. The good heart which is the fruit of virtue is by itself a great benefit to humanity. Mere knowledge is not. (Gyatso, p. 188)

### *Planting the Seed*

In terms of transformational effects, Lynn and Debbie ponder, “*How do you measure transformation*”? In their collective efforts they implant moments, experiences, and events into the lives of their students, and offer opportunities for them to think about things. Although they would agree that signs of transformation may well be there, they feel that for some “these effects may not come out for many years”.

### *Through the Eyes of Parents*

Through their children's refreshing desire and interest to talk about experiences of this project at home, parents find the project “fascinating”, and would like to see the art exchanges between children continue over time.

The art exchange between children of these distant lands has indeed continued, including a recent set of tie-dye t-shirts sent by Debbie's students to the children of Jambiani. Debbie has also continued to involve the entire Braefoot community in fundraising and art-related efforts that will strengthen these ties, and support the efforts of Hands Across Borders.

Future plans from the Jambiani side include completing the banners sent by Braefoot (by adding handprints and sending one back to Braefoot), distributing the t-shirts, and also creating a practical and transportable gift (bookmarks perhaps) for the children of Braefoot.

**Chapter 7**  
**CHILDREN'S GLOBAL ARTS**  
**AT ERIN WOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**



**Figure 53: Erin Woods Elementary School,  
 Calgary, Alberta**

Rethinking Education and What it Means to Learn

Global Arts Summer Institute delegate, and Principal, *Theresa Lewis*, has supported staff initiatives and student art exchanges with children at Erin Woods Elementary School in Calgary, Alberta, and children living in diverse parts of the world, including India, Belize, and South Africa. The following excerpts from two of these initiatives help to further our understandings of the value and significance of child engagement in Global Arts at personal, social, and pedagogical levels.

*Theresa Lewis: An Administrator's Story*

Somehow it is just a pure enough of an idea and safe enough on one level - but on the other hand - powerful enough that it is worth being involved in. I think that is what excites me the most. (Theresa Lewis)

*Theresa Lewis* was drawn to the Children's Global Arts initiative through her personal and professional commitment towards *learning through the Arts*, and *Arts-based education*. She admits how she “comes by it naturally”, blessed with generations of musicians in her family, including her privilege to study extensively in classical music and to gain exposure to dance and drama. Through these “rich” experiences, Theresa has come to realize the personal and educational significance of Art:

When our art is truly experienced and expressed well, eloquently, then you couldn't ask for a more peak experience in terms of learning or education because it allows a person to truly match what's in their hearts with what's in their mind and it usually has to come out in some kind of a physical form, so to me that is a peak educational experience.

Understanding the hegemonic trap that teacher's tend to fall into "with the best interests of children in mind", Theresa decided to fly a handful of her staff (herself included), to Victoria to take part in the July 2005 Global Arts Summer Institute (see page 66).

I think sometimes teachers lose their souls when they are teaching just from the cacophony of voices saying "do it this way"; "do it that way" and the interests have to do with "it's good for children", or "it's better for children" - more cases than not the very opposite is true.

### *Child Honouring*

Theresa recollects the emotional connection she had with aspects of the Global Arts Summer Institute, particularly those that reminded us all of the potential for children to work through barriers of difference, and in so doing, teach us - adults and educators - what is important:

I was almost crying by the end of Tim's presentation because I just saw the potential for *children again* doing things that we can't seem to figure out as adults to do.... to just break down barriers - barriers that we create around difference....

I think there is a lot of hope and promise for the kind of world we could live in if enough adults were prepared to honour what it is that kids want to do.

Without trying to romanticize, Theresa recognizes the need and the value of honouring a child's mind - a mind "that has not been tainted with or trained to decide that *"this difference means that you put up this wall"*, and *"this difference means you should put up that wall"*.

Although the staff of Erin Wood's School work hard to adhere to their school's mission statement that "honours, values, and celebrates diversity, human development, and active inquiry"; and "strives to make positive and significant differences in the lives

of all learners...” (“School Profiles”, n.d.), Theresa notes how the program of studies as written, “excludes the type of children that go to Erin Woods, almost 70% of the time”. Theresa continues to point out how these programs of study are “prototypes for middle and upper middle class white children whose first language is English”. Everything then becomes “a slippery slope” because the majority of experiences for children at Erin Woods involves either “working class to poverty”, or “being treated differently because of student appearance, their language, their dress, or their religion”.

With these realities in mind, Theresa reiterates how she and her staff are always looking for openings that honour the child by allowing them to discover, and be proud of, who they are and what their gifts and contributions are (rather than turn into something or someone they are not). What Theresa saw in the Global Arts program was “*Children first of all being in a position to say “I have something to offer”; “I have a way of extending my hands”; “I have a way of exchanging”....*

*The Global Arts program supports the mosaic of learners in our school,  
and helps them find comfort in who they are.*

### Locating Global Arts in Schools

#### *Learning as Values*

When Theresa was posed the question of where projects like Global Arts need to locate themselves within a school’s “program of studies”, she commented on how she too, is on this quest to understand. Through considerable thought and deliberation, Theresa determined that, “When considering where to locate it, it needs to be tied to one of the overarching *values* in a school - in the curriculum”. She explains how the Calgary Board of Education has just churned out its 5 “End” statements - one of those being “citizenship”, and another one “personal development”. Rather than slotting the art exchange idea into a particular subject area, Theresa asked her staff to consider, “*So what does this mean to you?*”, and “*How do you see yourself working with this kind of an opportunity with the children that you connect with?*”

*Generative Inquiry (Teacher as Designer)*

Through further deliberation regarding *where* and *how* Global Arts fits into the goals and context of Erin Wood's School, Theresa recognizes a certain link with staff "intentionality" and also through their journey for understanding "generative" and "inquiry-based" learning. As stated on the Erin Wood's website:

At Erin Woods...we know that children require a voice in decisions about their learning, choice in how they will take it up, and opportunities to make genuine connections between their lives and learning. It is for these reasons that we organize our curriculum around generative questions - significant, meaningful questions that have puzzled and engaged human beings for centuries. ("School Profiles", n.d.)

In Theresa's eyes, the significance of *generative* and *inquiry* based curriculum comes through the understanding that "we are cognizant of what the mandated curriculum is intending, but we have interpreted it in such a way that there could be some *really* interesting, genuine, and authentic learning opportunities for children". Theresa feels that this *orchestrating*, or *designing* of curriculum, with the honouring of students as *co-creators* of music and colour schemes, is the fundamental role of teachers:

That is our job as teachers - we get to orchestrate - somewhat like a designer - or an architect - we don't always necessarily know what the final colour scheme is going to be because absolutely that needs to be what we co-create with children - so we need to look for the opportunities, we need to listen for the opportunities.

Theresa's assertions are reiterated through Bangle's (2006) thoughts on how design and leadership are fundamentally about actively creating the future rather than reacting to the present. Adding to Bangle's assertion that "Art can help people be comfortable with uncertainty, ambiguity, and paradox", (cited in Nelson & Stolterman, 2003), and Theresa's understandings of generative and inquiry base curriculum, we can begin to see how the seeds of expression and innovation are rooted in *disposition* and *values*, and how this symbiotic relationship creates human potential and the impetus for creating new ground.

Through this process of understanding, designing, and interpreting curriculum, Theresa feels that it actually "honours and maybe even elevates" what the Calgary Board is intending by having "End" statements such as *character development* and *citizenship*.

“You know, it’s not just about helping an old lady cross the street and then you get your badge like you do in Brownies”. She feels generative and inquiry based programs meet these provincial guidelines and mandates, but they also meet, and need to meet, much more:

If it is going to be authentic, if it is going to be relevant, if there is personal meaning attached to it, if it allows for excellence, it’s got to be way more than what the program of study suggests.

The global arts initiative, in Theresa’s mind, “has the right elements for us to use some of that”, and “is safe enough that you can’t translate it into a methodology”. Theresa continues to deliberate her views on pedagogy by acknowledging how *methodology* is actually “the bane of our profession”, and “when we get strapped with methodologies I think we are all in trouble, including the children”.

This pedagogical concern and glimpse into a new curriculum paradigm is reflected in the following dialogue with a global arts facilitator in Mexico:

***Interlude: The Art of Orchestration***  
October 2006

**Facilitator:** I am interested in *looking for some lesson plans* (for kids here in the impoverished areas of Mexico.) I was looking at the website and saw plans for Canadian classes, but, as the problems and benefits here in Mexico are different, I need to approach the topic differently.

**Coordinator’s Response:** In regards to 'lesson plans', *there are no* standard guidelines, curriculum, or manual in which participants can follow step-by-step. The reason for this is that the ideas that transpire through the open themes of "the world we live in" and "the world we want", and through the art mediums of children's choice (taking into account the art resources that are available, and the comfort levels of leaders/facilitators), are as vast and wide as the children and participants who take part in this initiative. The lesson plan becomes created as part of the global arts process....

... posing this initiative open-endedly may cause confusion and apprehension at the start. However, once the discussion begins, and the process evolves, it is wonderfully rewarding and inspiring to observe how the project takes on a life of its own depending on the realities, the visions, and the interests of the children - hence the child honouring component of this project.

Hope you find this helpful and liberating.

***End of Interlude***

*Learning as Disposition rather than Curriculum or Methodology*

Theresa continues to process the nature of Global Arts in relation to learning and curriculum, and wonders if it has a lot to do with “*disposition*” [the prevailing tendency of one’s spirit; characteristic attitude; state of mind regarding something (Random House dictionary)]. Theresa notes how we cannot routinize a disposition as we do with curriculum, but we can articulate and scrutinize one, and we can even analyze how well it is coming across or how it is being experienced.

With the Global Arts initiative in mind, Theresa confirms how there is “the potential for transformation on many levels”, and how these levels of transformation will depend, first of all, on how knowledgeable and curious the teacher is in finding out about things other than “the gross national product and the number of people who live in a country”:

That is where the “disposition” [and designer] piece[s] comes in because you ask different kinds of questions when you are setting something up [like a Global Arts project] as a genuine inquiry - you don’t presume that you know.

Global Arts Visits Erin Woods School

*Kathy Sanford’s Story: Director of Teacher Education, UVic*

As part of her work and travels in Calgary, Alberta, Kathy Sanford paid a visit to Erin Woods School to share some of the children’s artwork from various places in the world, and to offer her support for the Global Arts projects initiated by a growing number of staff and students. The following shares Kathy’s account of this experience:

*Genuine Interest, Respect, and Curiosity*

When Kathy arrived at Erin Woods School, she wasn’t quite sure what to do with the children’s artwork from Iraq, Afghanistan, South Africa, Canada, and Belize, so she “just laid it all out in the library”, and teachers and students came in throughout the morning to see them. In *all* cases, Kathy recalls how students were *really willing and keen* to look at the artwork, and how refreshing it was to observe their detailed level of focus and interest:

You know how sometimes you take your kids to the museum or whatever, and they race around and say, “OK, I’ve seen it all now”... Well, it wasn’t like that, and that’s what I expected. I expected them to come in and say “*Oh yeah, yeah*”, but they *focused* on pieces, and they *talked* about the pieces, like, “*aw, this my favourite one*”, and “*Oh, I really like this one* and picked out details of particular pieces and talked about it, and wanted to know more about it; there was a lot of talk.

Instead of racing around the library, Kathy witnessed how students were *really impressed* by the artwork and how they would take time to select pieces that spoke to them for particular reasons, and also to look at the pictures and information of the child artists with keen fascination. “So then they looked at ages, and went ‘ah, this one is 10, oh, this one’s 15’, and ‘I wonder how old this one is?’”. Kathy claims that this helped students to realize that the pictures “were actually attached to kids ‘out there’... and that kids actually lived in different countries”. Kathy also recalls how students kept repeating over and over how *good* the artwork was - even the pictures of Belize that were seemingly less colourful and compelling than those from Iraq and Afghanistan - students didn’t just “blow them off”, they were interested in all of them. They would say “Awe, this was really interesting, I like the colours of this - *to a person!*”

When Kathy was asked why the students at Erin Woods were so interested in making meaningful connections with art, she suggested how it was clearly evident that *a culture*, and *a value* for Art was fortified within the school:

From the very littlest kids their interest is there, right from grade 1 kids that I saw coming in... like they were all connected - they were all really interested.... And so I don’t know exactly what the teachers had done, but it was like a school kind of culture that they valued. Clearly they value art in the school. That has already been set up, but they were able to appreciate these individual pieces.

She also claims that “students need reasons for doing what they’re doing”, and how the art provided this sense of meaning:

I think kids are really *desperate for purpose* in what they’re doing in school, and I don’t think they get that very much. And they see these as important, and the teachers are holding these up, like these are real people, and they really need us, and that you know, we really need to be learning from these people.

Kathy recollects how a “very different flavour” was generated through the viewing of the artwork when compared with traditional forms of knowledge such as, “We need to know how to draw a map just because it is an important thing to do”. She recognizes this experience as part of “developing a much more in-depth understanding and comparison between ‘our world’ and ‘their world’”, and how through this process students can resonate and actually think about life’s big questions such as, “*Who are the kids that are living in these places?*”; “*What is our life like?*”; and “*What are the physical needs, social needs, and emotional needs?*” In essence, students “actually had to think about their lives in significant ways when traditional curriculum doesn’t ask them to be introspective in any way at all”:

I don’t know what the teachers have done, but the kids are really keen to connect... there’s a lot of enthusiasm... it has the potential for incredible difference. But I see it’s already had a difference with kids depending on how the teachers present it to them.

*From Discrimination to Disposition: A Critical Transition*

Theresa’s understanding of “discrimination” fits well here, as she claims that - contrary to popular belief - “there isn’t anything wrong with discriminating”. Like Kathy, Theresa would say that students are finding value in discriminating between what life is like in Iraq and Afghanistan, as compared to Canada. Where problems can arise is not in the act of discriminating itself, but from the ideas that are formed from the act of discrimination - from the “physical piece” that forms judgments, assumptions, stereotypes, etc.. With this important clarification in mind, a concern might arise if students were - based on their comparisons and discriminations of life in Afghanistan and Canada - to come away with the perception or disposition that “all men in Afghanistan are terrorists”, or “we in Canada live the best life”, etc.

To conclude her observations and experiences at Erin Woods, Kathy shares how there is *absolutely* HUGE potential for children to shift the way they view the world and their role within it through projects like the Global Arts. “I don’t think we ever really realized; that was just sort of below the surface”. Kathy believes that we will gain these deeper transformational understandings by “recognizing how students represent themselves through art” and also through the act of human connection itself - an aspect of

education that Kathy feels, “for some reason, has disappeared from our Canadian schools”.

With the above considerations in mind, informed understandings of *what* these shifted views and roles look like, is of critical importance. As this anthology continues to unfold, it becomes increasingly important for us to better understand *what* dispositions are being generated through acts of discrimination and awareness. Although many appear to testify that involvement in the project has “made a difference” in the lives of participating staff and students, this dissertation intends to clarify deeper levels of understanding in regards to attitudes of difference and disposition. The following perspectives, shared by two teachers and various students from Erin Woods, help to shed light in these areas.

#### Erin Woods Meets Deenabandhu: Child-to-Child

##### *Cheryl Zelmer’s Story: Teacher and Artist*

The Global Arts Summer Institute had a significant impact on artist and educator, *Cheryl Zelmer*. Through each day’s activities I witnessed (as a coordinator of the Institute) an increasing strength in character and disposition in Cheryl, and an affirming commitment to embrace art and education for meaning and purpose. It was really quite beautiful to watch - observing firsthand an awakening of spirit and an innate sense of the Arts as a powerful source for life and meaning.

Cheryl was particularly touched by the voice and actions of guest speaker *Gita John*, and the children she introduced through a “Fair Trade Chocolate Theatre Production”. Cheryl recalls how, “I was so drawn to her, the kids, chocolate presentation - the *whole bit* - that it just drew me in - it was like - ‘that’s the place to be’”.

Cheryl retained her interest and connection with Gita by initiating a Global Arts exchange with Gita’s homeland Deenabandhu, India. *Deenabandhu* means “Friends of the Poor” and was inspired by Gandhi and established by Gita’s father - her life mentor - 50 years ago in a remote area of Southern India. Since the Institute in July



**Figure 54: Gita John at UVic’s Global Arts Summer Institute (2005)**

2005, Gita and Cheryl have been working together to initiate and maintain connections with children from Deenabandhu village and children in Cheryl's grade 3/4 class at Erin Woods. As Cheryl's story will reveal, children are learning a great deal about themselves *and* one another through exchanges of hand-made games and puppets, quilt-making, and a theatre production inspired by the Iraqi legend, "The Mouse and the Light".

### *Art as Universal Language and Communication*

As Cheryl begins her story she is quick to clarify that she does *not* call herself "passionate about art". For Cheryl, *art is her language - a universal language* that can be traced back to its oldest form of communication in history:

I relate it [Art] as a language and if we trace back languages and history of languages, art is one of the oldest - music, art, and dance - were the oldest forms of language - they predate anything we've ever done written text wise - and they also predate all of the other languages - we can communicate universally *that way*.

Cheryl continues to suggest that for kids, art is their first language - an immediate language that they can utilize to better express themselves because they don't feel the pressure, or the fear, of having it be perfect.

So if they are worried about someone not understanding their letter they are not worried about someone not understanding their drawing...the artwork just allows the kids to speak without worrying about not understanding each other... and when you get that kid momentum going it is much more powerful - and that is why we connected with the artwork so well - it is so open, so honest...

### *Art for Change*

From a curriculum point of view, Cheryl feels that the art exchange with Deenabandhu, India fits into their Calgary curriculum mandates "*easily!*" "It's easy to fit in social studies, language arts, the art curriculum, science curriculum; it fits *every single place* that you need it to". Cheryl concurs with Theresa's beliefs regarding methodology by stating, "If you are going to study social studies you have to study 'how to be a good citizen' - you have to touch base outside of yourself".

I find it bizarre that our Alberta curriculum says that we have to study these 4 different countries and talk about citizenship - but what's not a part of the curriculum is "action"! - It's a philosophical head argument about what makes a citizen - but there is no action plan in it. And you can philosophize about anything, but if you don't take action you can't embrace it and make it a part of who you are....

With this awakened realization, Cheryl utilized the Arts and the art exchange to alter no longer acceptable or tolerable situations and behaviours in her classroom through a creative and action-oriented legend called "The Mouse and the Light"<sup>12</sup>.

### *The Mouse and the Light*

Cheryl discovered "The Mouse and the Light" legend quite by accident - a *fated accident* perhaps. She admits how the impetus for seeking out this story was not initially for the art exchange idea, but rather derived from her anger and frustration towards the disrespectful situation brewing in her class:

I was mad at my class - they were acting up - they were being very disrespectful, cruel to each other, all about who wore what fashion, who looked cool, who didn't look cool - it was ridiculous and I was sick of it... It floors me to hear kids bashing each other about what kind of clothes they wear - I find it sooo trite!

At the time, Cheryl's class was studying "light and shadow" as part of their Science curriculum and their "big class generative & inquiry-based question" was "*How can a child change the world?*" Cheryl decided it was time to go deeper with these ideas. She searched the internet and discovered "The Mouse and the Light", written by *Lisa Suhay* - an Iraqi legend that invites young readers to grapple with notions of light and shadow in a metaphorical, philosophical, and relational sort of way. Cheryl's students read and discussed this story for over a week, and were encouraged to think about whether they were being or acting as *a light* or as *a shadow*, in any given situation: "*Are you contributing to the light in the class or are you becoming the shadow in the class?*" They learned to love this story and one day out of the blue, one student said, "*You know, we said we were going to get a filmmaker in the classroom, and we wanted to do a film*

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<sup>12</sup> Note: "The Mouse and the Light" video created by Erin Wood's grade 3/4 students can be viewed on the Children's Global Arts website (home page): [www.childrensglobalarts.ca](http://www.childrensglobalarts.ca)

*and send it to India... what if we did a film on this story?*” Then all of a sudden it became “oh, yea, yea...” and “it started taking on its own life”; “The next thing we knew we were putting it together for the film”. As the momentum and excitement increased, everyone became part of the film, and half the class became part of making a quilt (both representing the Mouse and the Light story); and these became the gifts for the children in Deenabandhu:

All of a sudden it just came - it wasn't even a full “let's think about this, let's talk about this” - there was no negotiation, no debate, it wasn't even discussed - the energy was there.

### *Serendipity*

With a knowing chuckle Cheryl recalls how soon after, Gita's sister *Bara* (living in Deenabandhu at the time) sent her an email explaining how she was working with a grade 3/4 class of about 50 kids, and how they wanted to sing and share a song about “*How children can change the world?*” Without knowing it, Bara was writing *her* grade 3/4 class with 52 kids who decided that their big class question was, “*How can a child change the world?*”

The day that I got Bara's email, Theresa and Karen [Erin Woods' administrators] were laughing hysterically because all they heard was this person [Cheryl], in high heels, dancing and screaming at the top of her voice.

As it turned out Bara was also sending “shadow puppets” at a time Cheryl's students were studying “light and shadow” so it became “*really* funny how it all just clicked and came together and we couldn't really escape it”. With all this exciting news from Deenabandhu, Cheryl's students became even more excited about making the movie and the quilt, and about sending it to their new friends in Deenabandhu.



**Figure 55: Child artist from Deenabandhu, India**



**Figure 56: Child artist from Deenabandhu, India**

*Creating the Space for Generative and Creative “Flow”*

A great deal of time and energy was allotted for the creation of the film and quilt. Of particular interest are Cheryl’s hidden insights regarding the importance of uninterrupted activity and the recognition that learning can transpire when unattached to traditional forms of “academia”:

The kids did no academic work that week, it was strictly quilt and movie and set designs and this and that - and then it all came together and the kids were having fun - *they learned a lot* - everything was really a buzz with enthusiasm and energy.

Theresa Lewis would share the significance of this uninterrupted experience through Elliot Eisner’s use of the word “flow”. “Flow” indicating the *relaxed time* and the *safe space* that is required in order for children (and adults) to reflect, experiment, and engage in meaningful dialogue, and embrace their creative energy to their fullest potential. Theresa feels that it is very viable and important for teachers to recognize that experience, and also “for children to see their teachers in that kind of a space”. Most importantly, Theresa feels it is our job as educators “to create the conditions under which children will meet with that more than once in a day”.



**Figure 57:** “The Mouse and the Light” quilt created by grade 3-4’s, Calgary, Alberta

Of added significance to the student’s sense of flow was that they had no idea what the film or the quilt would actually look like - it was *generated* through ongoing dialogue and experimentation, and through the deliberation of story content and student life experiences. Through this generative and inquiry based process, Cheryl observed how students felt very satisfied of what they had accomplished, and “very proud that these [kids] in India would actually *see* this”:



**Figure 58: Proud artists of Erin Woods School. Quilt was sent to Deenabandu in exchange for hand-made games and puppets.**

This was their gift - it was a big big deal, and the quilt was a big deal because it told the whole story... every single person in that classroom helped to create the story on the quilt and made sure that our story was told visually.  
(Cheryl Zelmer)

### *Local - Global - Local*

Cheryl soon recognized the important link between her students' newfound interest and connection with children in India, and her quest to bring respect and harmony to her immediate surroundings. In Cheryl's mind, it made sense to make the "connection with India BIG for these guys and really make them see that while they get their scribbles and they throw it on the floor and use it and step on it and break pencils... maybe they need to value those little things much more". Cheryl also felt that her students wouldn't be able to really understand how their actions impact upon themselves or another country until they "really got talking with kids from there and figuring it out". As children created and sent representations of their life *to*, and received artwork *from*, children in Deenabandhu, they began to discuss what they saw and felt, illuminating understandings of themselves and each other. In some cases, new insights of oneself and one another became transformative, revealing glimmering signs of hope that change for the better can transpire through purposeful and relational learning opportunities.

*Altering Dispositions by Hearing Silent Voices*

The following 5 short vignettes remind us of Ebrahim’s and Rama’s experiences in Jambiani village of Zanzibar Island, and the universal power of art in shifting attitudes and dispositions; signs of “passive objects” shifting into “active subjects” (Freire, 2002).

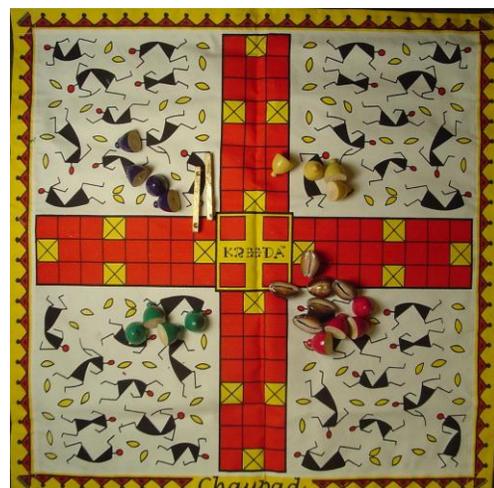
*The Voice of Materialism*

One particular incident relates to the *hand-made* gifts that were sent from the children in Deenabandhu - the colourful set of *shadow puppets* (see page 132) and a series of *traditional Indian games*. Although they had yet to engage with the puppets and the books, the students had had ample time to see and play with the hand-made games.

Their first reaction to these games were, “*You mean you could just go to your cupboard and make this?*” It didn’t occur to them you could do that, nor did it cross their mind how time consuming it would be to make them. The notion of making their own glue and dye, widdling sticks, making dice, etc.. was a real *eye-opener*. From Cheryl’s perspective, her students had lost that sense of “play with what you have - make what you have”, something that she remembers as a child knowing very well:

If the game’s not given to them, they don’t know how to make it... but here they got these things from kids that were more or less made very simple - using seashells, using what was around - and they were floored that that could be done.

Note: During my visit to Erin Woods School, I noticed these same students busy making their own games. Cheryl explained that they were so intrigued “that people could just *make* these”, they were trying to make their own games.



**Figure 59: Handcrafted game from Deenabandhu, India**

### *The Shadow*

One boy in Cheryl's class had a real "chip" on his shoulder - "huge - the size of the rock of Gibraltar", Cheryl describes. Apparently he and his brother had come from another school and "they had gotten the chance to claim the racism card". This particular angry and rather selfish young boy played the part of the *Shadow* in *The Mouse and the Light* film and Cheryl recalls how it became "really quite funny" and revealing how he spoke the phrases, "*I am selfish*", and, "*I am greedy*" because that was how he had been acting! It became "really quite an interesting thing that he *wanted* the part, he *embraced* the part, he did an excellent job in the part". Like Ebrahim's experience, Cheryl observed how "slowly we saw him become 'more active in class', 'smiling more', and doing a few more 'positive' things".

### *The Shell*

One other boy - quite shy and quiet - came out of his shell for a while throughout *his* *Mouse and the Light* experience. According to Cheryl, this boy "has particularly hard circumstances of his life and restraints on him", and this creative film and quilt-making experience gave him "peace" and "pride". In relation to this young boy's learning and education, *like Ebrahim*, this "was something that he could be proud of himself for; he can't read, he can't write, but he was able to do this and everybody loved his performance."

### *The Label*

A shy girl who is known and identified as "ESL" by her peers (like deaf and mute Ebrahim), had the *most* lines to memorize in *The Mouse and the Light* play. It was soon discovered that this girl "carried the film". As Cheryl recalls, "Without her being able to do that part we wouldn't have been able to finish a certain scene". Like Ebrahim and Rama, she was able to show a side of herself to her peers that was hidden and undiscovered. And, "because she was seen differently in that one incident, she became much more confident in the classroom".

### *The Fear*

Cheryl's last recollection relates to a young fearful boy - with similar struggles and challenges - who also "came to life" in the play. She identifies this boy as the one who shakes his fist and says, "I am not afraid of you!". Cheryl noted that "*there is a change in him*" - "We see him *more confident*", and "he has *started to try more things*".

Note: When author Lisa Suhay heard how her *Mouse and the Light* story had been brought to life through an international children's art exchange, she became so moved that she has offered to donate all of the proceeds of this book to the Children's Global Arts Foundation (once it has found a Canadian publisher). Having learned that the underlying theme of her story is "anti-terrorism", we have sent copies of Erin Wood's film "The Mouse and the Light" to children in Iraq and Afghanistan, with hopes that they too may be able to *find their light* amidst the *shadows* of their country.

### *Becoming Aware of the Silence*

Theresa Lewis re-enters the story, building upon the aforementioned experiences in relation to the bigger picture of *social justice* and the importance of giving voice to *all* children, particularly those who are silenced. Theresa encourages all teachers "to be that much more alert, vigilant, and sensitive to sources of *injustice* - whether it comes from a cultural piece or whether it comes from the treatment of human beings piece". Theresa sees how this awareness on the part of the teacher is key, because "if *they are* then the children stand to learn from that". It is the *silent* stuff that Theresa is most concerned about... it is not anything overt:

It's the fact that certain topics will never be brought up, it's the fact that certain voices will never be asked to speak in a certain way...even in the best schools because everything on the surface is nice and polite and lovely - we don't ever upset that other layer of *who's being excluded* from this particular conversation right now.

Theresa recognizes how this social justice piece "takes courage". It takes courage not only to give voice to the silenced, but also to "ask questions in a way that allows you to understand where the power differentials are and who is privileged and who is not... for the ways things are done". In other words, "You don't just accept things as just given

- you ask other kinds of questions”. Deep questions that as human beings we are trying to figure out such as:

- What could it be like?
- What could we learn from that?
- What would it be like if a country chose to use its collective money in everywhere else but a military?
- What could one do? or
- What would be the possibilities?

Theresa explains how deeper questions become the inquiry and a lens for setting up the way to study subject matter, like social studies, for example. Within that context, children are then afforded the opportunity to ask *each other* questions:

- Ah... what would that be like?
- How would *I* feel once I got there?
- How do *you* feel?

or to realize,

- Gee, I don't think of anybody hurting me when I leave my house to get to school”, etc.

In closing, Theresa asserts that this kind of inquiry gives both students and teachers other kinds of questions to ask that bring about a *different* kind of understanding.

#### Erin Woods Meets Guguletu: Child-to-Child

The following experiences bring other silent voices to life, opening up provoking and compelling understandings of the lives of children in shantytown villages in South Africa, *and* affluent neighbourhoods here in Canada.

#### *Nancy Steeve's & her Grade 5 Students' Stories*

##### *Big Questions*

The “big overarching question” that grade 5 students of Nancy Steeves' class were grappling with over the 2005/2006 school year was, “*What does it mean to be a responsible caring citizen in a global society?*” During my visit to Erin Woods and her

classroom, Nancy commented on how this question fit very well with the art themes that were presented through Global Arts (*the world we live in* and *the world we want*). Having viewed the documentary film of students attending high school in Guguletu, South Africa<sup>13</sup> (at the Summer Institute) - and revisiting her own travels to Africa - Nancy decided to pursue these themes further through an art exchange between her students at Erin Woods and those residing in Guguletu. To generate understanding of what life is like in Guguletu, Nancy's class viewed and discussed this documentary.



Figure 60: Children living in Guguletu, South Africa

### *The World We Live In: Fezeke High School*

This compelling 11-minute documentary begins in the stark, desolate township of Guguletu, with one boy sharing a view of his world, “*When you live in Guguletu, you are either a gangster, or you go to school...*” The remainder of this film vividly and visually shares “a day in a life” in Guguletu, from students’ and teachers’ points of view. These poignant and confident *voices* express silenced dichotomies of fear and hope, and poverty and resilience, and indicate a sense of solidarity in experience, thought and emotion: Basically children go to school because the streets are not safe - girls get raped by boys, and boys get harassed by gangs. And despite the seemingly overt and obvious struggles, strong messages of hope filter their way through the cracks:

- School “*takes students away*” and provides them a future, and
- Education *is the ticket to success*.

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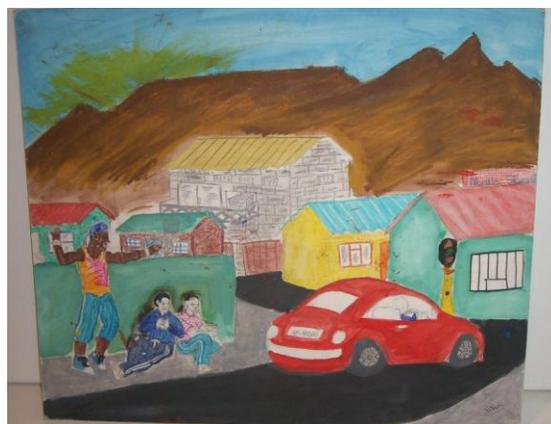
<sup>13</sup> This film, entitled “Education without Borders”, was produced by students of Fezeke High School in Guguletu, South Africa. It was sent to us as a Global Arts contribution and resource (through the not-for-profit organization Education Without Borders).

As one girl shares, “*Life has so much, you just have to be patient and work for the things you want in life*”. It becomes obvious throughout this film that for many children living in the township of Guguletu, school - barren of books, chairs, tables, etc.. - has become their “safe place”, and teachers, their “care-givers”. Living in impoverished households with single or no parents, teachers are viewed as role models who “provide students with food to eat or moral support; “don’t give up on children” and ones who “help everyone see a brighter future”. The film ends with a young resilient teenage girl, expressing her thoughts for a brighter future:

**I Am Confident**

*What this day will be, I wonder?  
 What will be my future, I wonder?  
 It will be so exciting to be exposed to the world.  
 My heart will be rejoicing.  
 Oh, what a confidence in me...  
 A successful lady working very hard,  
 What’s so strange about that?  
 Nothing at all.  
 Oh, I must stop this wonders,  
 If I don’t, I’ll just turn back.  
 I must dream of things that make me successful.  
 I have confidence in me.  
 Let them see who I am.  
 Strength doesn’t lie in numbers.  
 I lived all I trust...  
 All I trust becomes something that I own.  
 I have confidence in me*

By: Zimasa Mgengo - Fezeke Secondary School (cited in Kaplan & Meirelles, 2005)



**Figure 61:** Artwork painted by children living in Guguletu, South Africa

**The World We Want: Erin Woods Elementary**

Upon my visit to Nancy’s class, students had prepared painted images and poignant descriptions of *The World We Want*. Children stood proudly in front of the room, eager to share their artwork and their messages. The following snapshots demonstrate the deeper understandings and connections that are emerging between children across diverse lands, language, and culture:

- *I wanted a picture that showed that kids could go to school even girls, and that they would feel safe, and there wouldn't be gangsters or violence...*
- *I would like a world where everybody has a home and a family and feels comfortable. I want a world that is peaceful and there is no war. No one should have scars from war.*
- *I wish for a world where nobody is hungry or at risk of dying of starvation and that they eat foods that fill them up and are healthy.*
- *I don't want to see a world where people are forced to work against their will. I wish for a world where people could have freedom.*
- *I wish everybody had a house, not a box or a dumpster. I wish there were no big buildings or smokestacks.*



Figure 62: "I want all cultures to get along with no racism" (Grade 5, Erin Woods Elementary School, Calgary)

- *I want cultures to get along with other cultures with no racism. There are no bullies in the world that I want. The world I want has no robbers or gangsters.*
- *The world I want is for nobody to hide who they are or pretend to be someone they're not... I wish that everybody would be accepted regardless of what colour they are, what religion they are, or what country they are from. .*
- *There would be no pollution or destruction to the environment and that everybody would have friends and a family to look up to.*

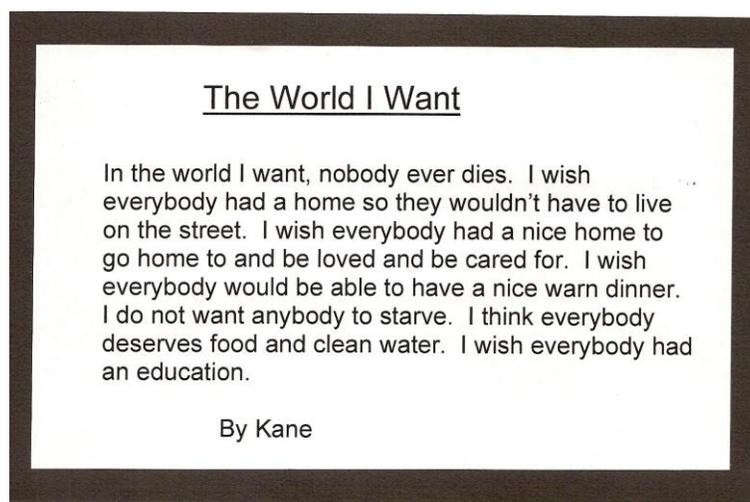


Figure 63: "I wish everybody could have a nice warm dinner" (Grade 5, Erin Woods Elementary School, Calgary)

- *My picture is where everyone<sup>14</sup> is peaceful and happy....*

I inquired...”Are there any words on this page?”

*No!*

“Do you think if someone in Guguletu or another part of the world looked at this picture, do you think they would get your message?”

*Yes.*



**Figure 64: “The picture tells the message”**

“Why?”

*Because it looks peaceful with the flowers and a river, and mountains... it just looks peaceful.... That is the beauty of artwork that goes across the world... you don't need words on it because the picture tells the message.*

### *Emergent State of Consciousness*

The overwhelming commitment to a safe, peaceful, and just world, shared unanimously by a group of grade 5 students, inspired me as an educator (and researcher), to explore these ideas further to see how authentic they were in relation to popular and stereotypical notions of childhood wants and desires. After the students shared their visions of the world they wanted, I opened up the following dialogue with Nancy and her students - who were seated intently on the floor in front of me. Nancy and I were rather ill prepared for the honest and reflexive dialogue that transpired through our questions:

“Sometimes when I talk to kids your age and I ask them what they would want in the world, they would tell me things like, “*I want an X-Box 360*”, or “*I would like to have a PSB*” or “*a Nintendo BF. music... etc...*” Why didn't those kinds of things come up in

<sup>14</sup> Notice the artist's written reference to “everyone” without any visual reference to people (this point will be revisited in chapter 9)

the world that you wanted? Be honest - there are no right or wrong answers - I am just trying to understand what you are really trying to say”

With determination and interest, a number of hands went up to share the following messages:

*Because we don't need them to survive... the things we need to survive are like a house, and food to eat, and water and shelter and stuff... That's what we want, not what we need!*

*...I want that kind of stuff, but like compared to no racism and no bad people, that's just something like a spot!*

*People around the world who don't have technology and the stuff that we have, they wouldn't want technology instead of a better life*

*Well, people in South Africa and places like that, they don't know about like, Nintendo Bf and stuff like that, they are happy with the way their life is, they are just happy to spend time with family...*

A clear message that came out was that it didn't cross the students mind to include materialistic things like play stations in the world they wanted; they saw or interpreted the world they wanted more as a world of need.

#### *Aside Note from Nancy*

When I asked Nancy later about the authenticity of her students' responses, she affirmed that they were “absolutely heartfelt”. She attributes this partially to past discussions about “wants and needs” and also to the readings of *The Breadwinner* and *Parvanna's Journey* - two novels that had a really big impact on them (similar to Deirdre Kelly's grade 5 class). Students have had the opportunity to inquire and talk openly about questions such as, “*What it would be like to be really starving, even though we say we're starving?*” and “*When you are starving what would you do for food?*”. Nancy also felt that the Global Arts themes and experiences have contributed to their deepening understanding of the world. She found it particularly intriguing how students interpreted the “world we want” with *needs* and *not wants* and feels that it may be because it was posed to them as “the world that *they* [or *we*] want” and not “what *I* want”. Nancy also noted how these kinds of projects have helped to shift the way students feel and live in

the world, and attributes this with their opportunity to first think about the world they live in, and *then* the world they want, and also the drawing and the writing that went with it!

Reflecting further on this question of authenticity, Nancy noted how one student had initially included, “I think everyone needs to have an NBA team” as part of his writing. Nancy recalls how they “just sort of talked about that” in relation to this “more serious” conversation. Apparently this boy had also included such things as “homelessness” and so Nancy asked him to consider, “*When you look at all these other things, is that [NBA team] what is really important and what really matters?*”; and, “*What’s going to be more important for people to have a healthy, happy, and a safe life?*” In the end, the student chose to cut the part about the NBA team out of his writing, acknowledging it as “just his sense of humour”.

Nancy’s experience relates to Cheryl Zelmer’s Christmas activity where her students collected the teeming amount of flyers in the neighbourhood. With a sack of toys and items presented to them students were then invited to go through each one and cut and paste (on a collage), “*everything you think you need*”. The process continued when students were posed the following question: “*Say you are on an island and you can only take 10 of those things... what are you going to take?*” As they moved through the dialogue they came to realize, “*Oh, I can have a CD player but I can’t eat... I can have this but I have to have shelter, etc.*” As Cheryl recalls, “That flip never occurred to them, and that flip happened because they saw, they talked, they dialogued....”

Well, the same thing will happen when they draw their artwork - even if it is a materialistic response to the universal question, *the response they get back will challenge them* - the artwork they get back will be their response to that challenge....

As long as a teacher doesn’t critique whatever a child’s sincere response or a classroom’s sincere response and just really goes with it, I think you will allow the communication to transform [the children] and more importantly allow the teacher to transform themselves (Cheryl).

These short excerpts are important as they invite us to deliberate the fundamental notion of *child honouring*, asking questions such as:

- What role do facilitators play in this process of child honouring?
- Are there “right” and “wrong” answers to these themes and conversations? If yes, who should decide right or wrong? If no, are there boundaries?
- When we explore Global Arts themes are we to assume that “the world we want” is necessarily in relation to health, happiness, and safety?

This dialogue continues throughout this dissertation, unfolding these important questions and reaching deeper understandings.

*Flashback: The World We Want - Grade 5 Perspectives*

*Generative and Inquiry-Based Learning*

Situating ourselves back in Nancy’s class with her grade 5 students eagerly exploring notions of the world, I decided to continue with my “teachable moment” train of thought by inviting students into the following visualization:

“...Close your eyes for a moment and visualize the following scenario (students all closed their eyes, sitting on the floor in front of me): After school today you go home and there is no television...when you go home today there are no computer games to play or your favourite toys and games ready to be played with... when you go home today your closet has one pair of shoes - a little ripped in the toe perhaps - one pair of pants, and no fancy watches to put on or your favorite jewellery... Just picture this for a moment. (allowing a few moments to pass)....

Now, open your eyes... If that really was your world - and I know that is hard for some of you who have those things to think about - is it possible that you might be happy and content? Tell me about that world if you walked home today and that was your reality. Again there are no right or wrong answers”.

This visualization process generated a surprising element of interest - there were no hesitations in responding. As revealed through the voices of these grade 5 students, the “things” that make children the most happy, are not materialistic items such as big TV screens and skateboards such as one might be lead to believe, but rather *family, friends, pets, and shelter*:

*I would still be happy for one reason because I would still have my family to cheer me up, and we don't need that stuff, like you could always go outside and play - with your friends - and play tag.*

*I would still be happy because we would have friends and family and like pets to play with, we could still have fun, we don't need all that stuff to play with.*

*I would be happy if I had at least a pair of clothes.*

*I would still be happy because we still have our lives and we would be taking little steps to build on what we can.*

Feeling like I was on the verge of some great discovery of humankind, I decided to probe a little further:

“Now put your hand up - and if no hands are up I completely understand - but put your hand up if you in a way, kind of, wish, that you didn't have all of those things...”

A *significant* number of hands went up without hesitation....

“Now tell me about that, why would you wish that you didn't have all of these things?”

Students responded with such eagerness, it felt like they didn't want to miss their chance to have their voices heard:

*I want to play with my sister sometimes instead of my sister hogging the computer and saying, “I don't want to do this, I don't want to play with you right now”.*

*I could have more time to play with my friends and family.*

*I would give up, like everything except for maybe one thing, for like the kids in Africa to play with cause they don't have that much stuff...*

*It doesn't matter if you have all of that stuff because as long as you have family to connect you don't need anything else.*

*I would rather not have them because then everybody is exactly the same and no one has to brag about stuff.*

*Well... you can have fun with anything, not just video games and stuff - just going outside, lying on the grass and looking at the clouds would be fun.*

I continued with the momentum generating in the class:

“Why do you think we keep getting or collecting these things?”

The grade 5 responses that came forward from this question sum up a startling reality about the nature of our “privileged” world:

*Your family might want to keep you entertained - so if your parents don't want you around and they are having private conversations, then they can tell you to go play it so you will be busy and won't listen*

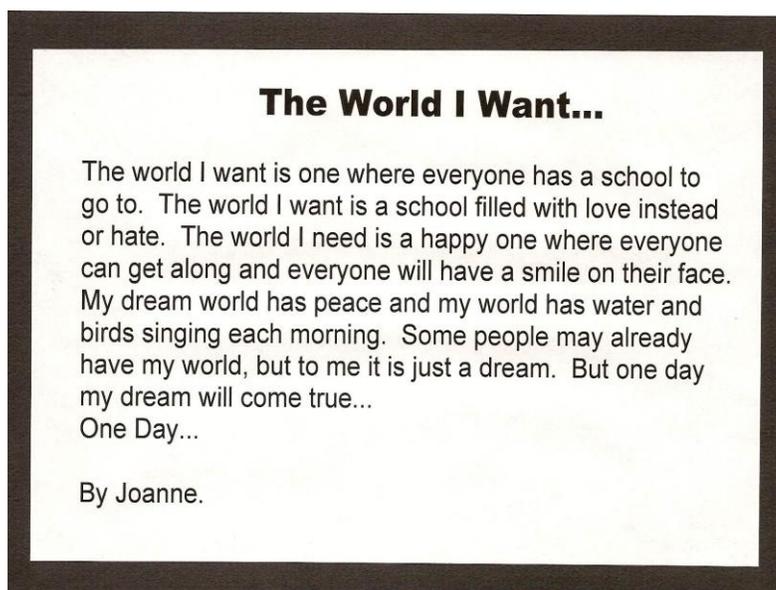
*To keep you happy by buying and getting you into games*

“Do you think kids at Erin Woods School have everything they need or want?”

*No. Not everyone has a real family*

*Some families don't really take care of them, and they get hurt*

*When people don't care about their children enough they like give them up for adoption.*



**Figure 65: “Some people may already have the world I want, but to me it is just a dream” (Grade 5 student, Erin Woods, Calgary)**

By this time I had glanced over at Nancy who had tears in her eyes. This prompted my own teary moment. We all had a brief recollective and quiet moment and then I shared with the students how touched Nancy and I were by their open, honest, and heartfelt responses to these questions. Their thoughts flooded me/us with a growing awareness and suspicion of how, “so often today, in industrialized nations, children are kept “out of sight” through screens that silence them” (Olfman, 2006b, p.39), and more generally, how children are spending increasing amounts of time in “isolate interaction with machines - television, DVDs, videos, computer games, and the Internet - rather than with human beings” (Bakan, 2006, p. 192).

While parents try to piece together a living income from multiple jobs, today’s child is commonly parked in front of a television and prone to the power of corporate advertisers, warehoused in day care centers, or left to fend on the street without adult supervision. The child in such circumstances is expected mostly to keep out of the way of busy adults. (Korten, 2006, p. 101)

I recalled hearing about similar responses from children attending a Canadian Society for Ecological Economics conference. In a room full of economists, Raffi Cavoukian and Mark Anielski asked these children *what mattered most to them*, and they replied with “the sun, kindness, good food, dogs, dancing, singing, bugs, chocolate, and spending time with my family”. When asked, “*What kind of a world do you want to live in?*”, they responded with messages that we have been hearing repeatedly throughout this research: “I wish our world was safe; I wish there were no more wars, and I wish no animals got killed” (Anielski, 2006, p. 175).

### *Moving Ideas into Action*

The genuine responses and emotions that were generated in Nancy’s grade 5 class became an opportune turning point for moving the conversation into “action”. I began by commenting on how similar their dreams for the world were with the leaders who designed the “The Declaration of Human Rights”, and how important their ideas were - as 10 and 11 year olds - in helping to shape the future of our world:

“Don’t think that just because you are in grade 5 that what you say is not important - you are very important because what you are saying right now, is who you are going to be in the future, and who you are in the future is going to determine the world that is shaped... so the world you want is not just some wish out there - it can happen!”

One student in particular seemed to be very moved by this message:

*Are you saying that if when we dream, when we grow up we have the ability to help other people?*

“Do you think that is what I am trying to say?”

*Yes.*

“Do you believe this to be true?”

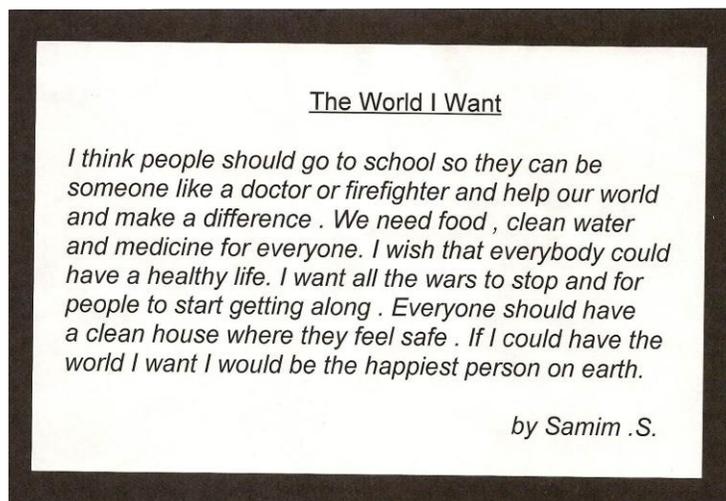
*Yes*

“Actually, this is really what you are saying... I am just expressing what I have heard from you... I couldn’t say that without you sitting here sharing what you are sharing today...”

Nancy entered the conversation by reminding her students of the importance of helping others, both locally *and* globally: “*And do you know what? You can help people across the world, but you can also help people around here by helping to get the message out about what really is important, so in some ways that is even a bigger help*”.

At this juncture in time, it felt like we were all sitting around a dinner table discussing important matters of the day - *on an equal playing field*. All voices were valued, and felt valued, and a genuine sense of solidarity and camaraderie was emerging. A student brought to light how our discussion was like the slogan (spoken by *Margaret Mead*) that was mounted on their classroom wall, of which we all read aloud, *together*:

**Never doubt that a small group can change the world.  
Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.**



**Figure 66: “I think people should... help our world and make a difference” (grade 5 student, Erin Woods Elem)**

I used this momentous opportunity to better understand the effects of the Global Arts exchange which, incidentally, was the impetus for these heart-warming discussions:

“Do you think that it might make a difference for the children in the Guguletu film to see your artwork or to see your words on the page?”

*Yes*

“How? In what ways?”

The grade 5 responses were poignant and honest, revealing their belief that the artwork and messages that were to be received by the children living in the struggles of Guguletu, would help them find a space beyond silence, fear, and oppression:

*Maybe some of the bad people down there will see some of the artwork and try to change their life around and try to be good again... maybe they will get inspired to go back to school....*

*It might give them some more confidence... if they see the accomplishments that other people drew, then they can think they can reach them too*

When I asked the students what they hoped would happen when their artwork and messages reached the children in Guguletu, they continued to respond with thoughtful and heartfelt wishes that inspired a sense of joy, care, and connection, and a desire for the children to move forward positively with newfound choices and confidence. The following poem captures these hopes and dreams:

*The World We Want*  
*for Children Living in Guguletu*

*We hope that children in Guguletu...*

*Enjoy our art and like our drawings,*

*Will be happy,*

*and know that we care for them...*

*...that they are not alone.*

*Know that other people care about them,*  
*in other countries*

*We hope that children in Guguletu...*

*Will be inspired to do their best,*

*Will be surprised and not be so negative...*

*...turn what they're feeling into something positive*

*We hope that children in Guguletu...*

*Actually get the message and try to do what they want to do*  
*and not what other people want them to do...*  
*and just be themselves*

*We hope that children in Guguletu...*

*Will put what we are saying to mind*  
*and be happy to know*

*that now*

*they can do whatever they want*  
*to be a good person.*

When asked “What are you hoping will come back to you from children in Guguletu?” the responses reflected a desire for the grade 5 students at Erin Woods to better understand who they are, and the affect their artwork had on their lives:

*I want to...*

*...be able to understand what their pictures are about*

*...to understand them... and,*

*...to know if the artwork affected them in some way.*

Strong notions of reciprocity came through when the grade 5 students responded to the question, “Why do you think an artwork project like this might be important?”. *Sharing culture with other countries, and understanding what other people are going through and how they live (and learn)* summarized their responses, and demonstrated their desire to reciprocate understandings about their world through artwork.

Receiving and imparting knowledge and information in this way appeared to have a transformative affect on how some of these grade 5 students viewed the world and their role within it, particularly in relation to *parents* and their notions of *needs vs wants*:

“Has this project changed at all how you feel about the world?” “In what ways?”

#### *Altered Relations with Parents*

It makes me want to listen to my mom because she has always been yelling at me at how I am luckier than other people.

I will start listening to my mom and dad more; you know, someday they may pass away and not be there, and you will kind of regret not listening to them - this project helped me to think that way...

Like when my mom tells me to be home at a certain time, that tells me that she really cares about me and she wants nothing to happen to me - I used to get angry at her.

### *Needs Vs Wants*

When I am buying games and things like that I will think, “What if you were in that kind of situation?”; or “What could you do without?”

Save money to get the basic needs that I need and not what I want.

I think...save some money because when you *need* medicine and your sick, and you don't have enough money to buy it, there is nothing to help you out.

The final messages that the grade 5 children of Erin Woods School send to children in Guguletu and others around the world, capture their matured ability to see a reflection of themselves through others, and a growing sense of the interconnectedness of our world:

*Our messages to children in Guguletu and others around the world are:*

*Keep working in school...*

*We are a big community...*

*There are some things there the same as what is happening here.*

### Learning from Children

Many of the world's problems and conflicts arise because we have lost sight of the basic humanity that binds us all together as a human family. We tend to forget that despite the diversity of race, religion, ideology, and so forth, people are equal in their basic wish for peace and happiness. In this children have much to teach adults. They naturally recognize other children as being like themselves and easily befriend each other. This is a source of hope, but we must ensure that such natural good instincts are reinforced through education.... To do so is truly to honour children. (The Dalai Lama, 2005, cited in Cavoukian & Olfman, 2006, p. x)

Nancy concluded her part of the story by stating how “the energy has been brought back to the forefront now with the video and today's discussions”. The next stage will involve continued dialogue leading to an “action component” with their theme “Canada's links with other countries”. Her hope is to move students beyond taking school for granted, and into a space where more effort will be put into meaningful and purposeful learning opportunities.

**Chapter 8**  
**CANADA MEETS ZAMBIA**  
**CHILD-TO-CHILD**



**Figure 67: Art exchange in Mumbi Village, Zambia**

I believe that involvement in the Global Arts project has made a huge difference in the lives of participating children and communities. (Keith Orchiston)

The following chapter shares art exchanges that took place between students in British Columbia, Canada and children in remote villages in Zambia, Africa. The stories continue to provoke our understandings of *self in relation to others*, and offer a glimpse into the effects of Global Arts on perceptions of Community and International Development.

Victoria International Educational Development Agency (VIDEA)

Working with schools [and villages], art created by *Zambian* children exchanged with *Canadian* students. This exchange, developed in partnership with the University of Victoria Department's Global Arts Project, uses children's art as a vehicle for deepening the understandings about the lives and challenges of children in *Zambia [and Canada]*. It has sparked long term supportive connections between participating schools in BC and Zambia. (VIDEA, 2006, p. 1)

With reference to the Global Arts Summer Institute (2005), delegate *Elizabeth Wallace*, moved the Global Arts initiative to the communities of Whitehorse, Yukon; and Kelowna and Nelson, British Columbia. As the education outreach coordinator for VIDEA - an organization that supports the promotion and delivery of global education - Elizabeth

felt that the Global Arts initiative was a timely fit, particularly with VIDEA's latest international development initiative in Zambia, *Harnessing the Wave* (a project that focuses on community action for Africa). The following stories and insights are shared through research participants who have immersed themselves in the Global Arts initiative in both Canada and Zambia locations - *Keith Orchiston* (VIDEA volunteer/Kelowna representative) and *Lynn Thornton* (VIDEA's executive director). The following narratives show how these art connections have helped to shift attitudes and dispositions in areas of personal, social, institutional, *and* international development.

### *Infusing Energy & Interest*

According to Lynn Thornton, one of the main reasons for fusing Global Arts into their *Harnessing the Wave* Project in Whitehorse, was to inject some energy into VIDEA's affiliated organization YDEC (Yukon Development Education Centre):

We tried to work with them before but it had been really difficult to do because it had existed as an organization in *name* - there were lots of people who wanted to do things - had very good intentions - but didn't have enough time - so it had been quite dormant for many years...

So they have completely taken the forum now and they have turned it into their own, and used it as a vehicle to further the aims and objectives of their organization.

When asked what it was that brought the renewed energy to the community of YDEC, Lynn attributed it to the focus and support that Global Arts brought to the *Harnessing the Wave* project. Given the myriad of community-focused opportunities in which affiliates of VIDEA and YDEC could utilize to jumpstart their missions in Africa - in this case Zambia, the *children's artwork exchange project* (as inspired through the DVD) became the primary driving force and inspiration:

With all of the different communities [Kelowna, Whitehorse, Nelson, Victoria], we put out a whole bunch of different suggestions about connections we would like them to think about making which ranged from the health authority, education, business, fair trading connections... BUT it was very interesting to me that not only did each of the communities grab onto [the art exchange] as something they were really interested in, but it became the *driving* factor in *all* of the communities.

When asked why she thought the art exchange became such an overriding inspiration, Lynn felt that it was “because people believed that *youth are the answer* to the issues that we have today!”

At the onset of an interview with Keith Orchiston he shared his initial uncertainty of Global Arts in relation to his area of *international development*, and how this *uncertainty shifted* as he experienced the significance of this project for building and exchanging cultural knowledge and ideas:

My background is in international relations, international development so I wasn't so sure how this art exchange fit with the project we were doing but, the more I read about it, and through the DVD and brochure, the more I began to understand the importance of art as a medium for exchanging knowledge, for exchanging ideas, for building relationships.

When asked international funding questions such as “yes, but what's the *tangible benefit* to our community?”, Keith came to realize (like Bob Dalton), “Wow” - can't you see, “children's art is like a window to assessing how a society is doing”:

If you continue to do art exchange you can use it as a benchmark to see how it changes from one year to the next to the next to the next - like that is a benefit in itself! - You mean, don't you want to know? If we collected artwork from Mumbi, Manga or here in Kelowna how would it look a few years down the road? What would be different?

#### A Window into Zambian & Canadian Culture

##### *Art as an Exchange of Knowledge and Ideas: Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada*

There are definite reciprocal benefits - it is definitely not one-sided at all, and that never even crossed our mind - it's benefiting both communities. (Keith Orchiston)

As a VIDEA representative living and working in Kelowna, BC, Keith initiated an art exchange with children in Zambia by first visiting four local classrooms in Kelowna (Grades 5/6 at Casorso Elementary; Grades 3/4 at Springfield and Glenmore Elementary; and Grade 3 at Aberdeen Hall). During his visits Keith shared a brief synopsis of the *harnessing the wave* project, and how important a *global arts exchange* was in helping to fulfill the goals of their mission in Zambia. In his discussion of the art exchange, Keith talked extensively about what *art* is and how it's not just about drawing or painting, but rather "*drawing or painting about things you know - things that you see, ideas, all sorts of things*". His message to the children was, "*when we exchange artwork, we are actually exchanging those things that we know*":



Figure 68: "When we exchange artwork, we are actually exchanging those things that we know"

The whole idea, what I try to tell the kids is that "*I just want you to learn about other people in the world so that we learn how to better share the world*"... and they understand that, I mean it is a concept that they can understand ... *sharing* ...

The beautiful thing about this artwork exchange process in Keith's eyes, is that when children send artwork, they receive not just the artwork itself in return, but all the knowledge and ideas that comes with it; "what they are getting back is just as important - if not more important to them":

It's about respecting that this other piece of artwork is just as good as yours, but it's different, it's bringing different ideas, it's bringing knowledge, and that's fun. (Keith)

During Keith's visits to Kelowna schools he left as much space for openness and student creativity that could be allowed within the mandated curriculum:

... I said, "This is what we sort of would like to see, but leave it up to the children, because children don't like to be told what to do" sort of thing.

In other Canadian contexts (i.e. Nelson, Victoria, and Whitehorse), the exchange process was facilitated in different ways, each reflecting the people and the context in which it was delivered. Elizabeth Wallace for example, spent a whole morning talking about Zambia with children attending Oak and Orca School in Victoria. In Whitehorse, YDEC affiliates collected First Nations artwork, again looking for ideas once they arrived at the school; whereas those working in Nelson decided to bring artwork back from Zambia *first* and *then* send artwork from Nelson.

*Establishing Relationships in Zambia: Art Exchange as the Entry Point*

Both Lynn and Keith explain how the artwork exchange became the primary focus throughout their first week in Zambia, and how the relationships that were built through the art exchange, proved instrumental for the overall “harnessing the wave” project.

Global Arts is a very effective vehicle for stimulating sustained and broader action - maybe the *entry point* into a community - an entry point *from* a community *into* a community - that then becomes something wider. (Lynn)

The feeling that Keith had when he was in Zambia was that the children and the people of the community “were just happy” to know that somebody out there - “somewhere far far far away” - cared enough to reach out and share a little bit of their lives - and that seemed to go a long way in building relationships and providing hope that through partnership there may be more education and schooling - “it just opened up a whole range of possibilities basically - and I think that’s great” (Keith)



**Figure 69: Students in Zambia preparing for an art exchange with students living in Canada.**

## *Lusaka*

In Lusaka (the central and most densely populated province of Zambia) *Robertson Bales* from YDEC<sup>15</sup>, “had brought artwork from a First Nation’s school in Whitehorse and it was all about the land and the environment and it was great because it created the conversation for us - it *started the dialogue* - there was many questions about it and it was really interesting” (Keith).



**Figure 70: “The artwork creates the conversation for us”  
(Zambian artwork on route to children in Canada)**

## *Mumbi Village (6 hrs, 400 km from Lusaka)*

Mumbi Village is a rural and remote village in Zambia, administrated by chief Mumbi. When Keith and Lynn arrived in Mumbi the entire village gathered to greet them. Many of the villagers could not speak English. Almost immediately playful forms of art exchange - such as song, dance, and games - were initiated to help transcend the barriers of language and unfamiliarity:

One of the best ways to break the ice and initiate relationships was through art, and basically how we would all start is we would sing a song to each other and then we would play some games and then move into doing some artwork and some art exchange. (Lynn)

<sup>15</sup> Robertson Bales is credited for many of the beautiful photographs that were taken in Zambia.

A brief presentation about Canada and the art exchange followed, asking children what they knew about Canada and if they would be interested in an art exchange with children living there. Everyone responded with a resounding “YES”, so Lynn proceeded by showing them the children’s artwork from “Oak and Orca” school in Victoria. Interested in “the children rather than the structure or the infrastructure of a school”, Lynn was grateful for the opportunity to pursue the theme “our life” with children (and others) in the village who did not attend school:



**Figure 71: All ages involved in a global art exchange in Mumbi Village**

I am really glad we did it that way - we did it with the community - with the kids there, so we had little tots and all of the kids who weren’t in school - it was just wonderful - it took forever - in a good way - we started doing the drawing and *everyone* wanted to do it - so there was tiny little ones sitting there with a crayon and not really knowing what to do with it - and the adults - for them there was no real concept that this was for children in school - it was ‘well we want to do it as well’.

### *Art Evolution: Overcoming Barriers by Stepping Out*

Lynn recalls how “very sweet” the art exchange was in Mumbi Village, with the whole community interested in taking part. Similar to the context of Jambiani, she also recalls how most people had never used paper, pens, or crayons, and how difficult it was to get the theme going because people didn’t really know what *our life* meant:

You could even step back from that - people didn’t even know how to ask the question “what do you mean by that”? - they simply didn’t understand the idea of transferring a concept of something that was structured onto this piece of paper...for many of these kids there was no school - no paper, books, pencils, crayons - school was a concept rather than anything that was structured.

Lynn began the art process by sitting with everyone on the open ground - all eyes looking at the paper and clutching the crayons. She then drew a stick person of herself on

a blank piece of paper and said, “This is *me*”. Pointing to others she said, “Now you draw *yourself*”. Everyone followed by drawing stick pictures of *Lynn*. Then Lynn drew herself again, wrote her name and encouraged everyone to write their names. They all wrote Lynn’s name. She drew a picture of her house, and then pointed to their house, and said “this is *my* house, draw *your* house”, and they drew *Lynn’s* house - “the kids around me had about 10 different drawings of *me* and *my* house, and *my* kids” (Lynn)

*And then it evolved...*

The process of evolvment was that I had no idea how to evolve them so I just stepped out of it! And then people just went for it... when I came back... it was happening.... people were drawing themselves... it was around what was there in terms of what their life was; their life was the cattle, their house, their water buckets, their parents you know, there wasn’t much visual they could draw other than that. (Lynn)

*Sense of Pride and Ownership*

Lynn explains how she “could *see* the effects” of the art exchange despite the language and translation challenges that limited conversation with village members. First and foremost, Lynn recalls a growing sense of pride in village members - the kind of pride you see when children cross the line from uncertainty and confusion to clarity and intention:

I don’t know how to quite put it into words but I see this with my kids when they do something like this and it takes a while to get into it and then you see them being proud of something they’re doing for themselves and it’s that moment where they say “Oh, *I* know how to do this... *I* know, and *I’ve got this and I can trade it*” and you could see those light bulbs going on with the kids just like I do with my 7 and 9 year old.

Lynn witnessed a genuine sense of “pride, determination, and ownership” emerge once children and other village members sensed that they were no longer being *told what to do*, but rather *they had the choice* to do what they wanted to do with their drawing and artwork.

This recollection inspired an image of a young teenager who was sitting next to Lynn doing her artwork. When this woman would bend forward to draw, the little baby

that was harnessed to her back would squiggle and cry, nearly coming off her back. The young woman was so intent on her artwork project that she tried to calm the baby down, while resuming her drawing. “This was so amazing (showed a picture of the young woman and baby)... I saw such *determination* there, that she was going to do the artwork even if she had the baby on her back - and it was very very cool” (Lynn).

### *Coherent and Untainted State of Conscientization*

Like the experience in Jambiani village (Zanzibar), Lynn affirms how the art exchange in Mumbi village generated a great deal of interest and excitement among all those involved:

The exchange piece took *a long time* - it took forever -, which was wonderful because people really got into it... So they would come and they would exchange their picture and then go back and draw another one and come and exchange that, and if they didn't like one of the pictures they got then they exchanged that picture as well for another one...there was a lot of trading going on.

What became of particular interest and fascination to Lynn was the unquestionable disinterest and disfavour that emerged towards two images drawn by children from Canada - images that featured *aggressive looking, Nintendo action figures*. It became very clear to Lynn that these images were not wanted by the children of Mumbi village - they were returned to Lynn EVERY time. She claims their dislike was not attributed to the fact that they were black and white as there were plenty of black and white images that had been exchanged. It just became very obvious to Lynn that there “*was something there* that they didn't like and that they didn't want”; suggesting that the images may have been “alien to their lives or maybe reminiscent of the scariness of the witchcraft in their community and in their culture”.

Lynn became similarly fascinated with one other incident that emerged with *artist trading cards* brought from Canada. One of the artist trading cards had a card background and loads of glitter and fancy bits attached. One of the children had taken this “beautiful” card, and many others had noticed how this child had received such a “special” card. To Lynn's surprise however, later in the day Lynn noticed this same child holding and “treasuring the piece of blank card” - all of the glitter and lace had been taken off. In Lynn's words, “it was the card that he wanted... *all of the embellishment he hadn't wanted*”.

These occurrences also intrigued *me* as a researcher, as I began to wonder about responses to other images drawn and created by Canadian children. When I inquired about how children from Mumbi village might feel about images such as big screen televisions, computers, etc., Lynn felt that these would be met with a similar reaction. She mentioned how the artwork that they brought to Zambia from Oak and Orca School, for example, shared very simple representations of their world. “My life” according to the children at Oak and Orca entailed such images as “a school, their bike, the school emblem, mom, dad, me and my brother... that kind of artwork”. If these children had drawn things like big TVs, cars, or computers, Lynn feels that they would have had the same impact in Mumbi village as the Nintendo action figures because images such as these don’t “resonate with people” living in this village.

When I probed Lynn further to generate a better understanding of these intriguing reactions, she suggested that people of Mumbi village don’t have “a place within their consciousness to really fit or understand” certain images or embellishments sent from children in Canada. Even colourful images such as flowers, caused puzzlement, as children struggled to make sense of them within their own familiar context and environment. Lynn attempted to bring a sense of familiarity to a flower image drawn by a child in Canada, by pointing out how the trees growing in Mumbi village were bright and colourful like a flower (although much larger). Some of the children would respond with “*ah...*”, indicating that some kind of a connection had been made. Lynn’s point being that even an image as seemingly familiar as a “flower” was different enough to the children in Mumbi to cause puzzlement, as there were no bright and colourful flowers growing in Mumbi village.

### ***Interlude: A Closer Look***

When these Mumbi village vignettes were shared with Tim Hopper, it conjured up a Paulo Freire story about a guy he had brought from Africa into New York. After walking down the streets congested with skyscrapers and people bustling around, Paulo asked his African friend what he had seen, and he said, “*Oh, I saw a man with bananas and he was carrying them over the bars of his bike*” (Tim Hopper).

Considering the work of Paulo Freire (1970) further, perhaps we can learn from his dimension of critical resistance education that deals with the “saturation of consciousness”

(cited in O’Sullivan, 2002). With the incredible saturation of information that our modern consciousness demands that we attend to, Freire would say that those of us living in modern societies are in a “submerged state of consciousness”. John Ralston Saul (1997), would go so far to say that we are in fact an “unconscious civilization” (cited in O’Sullivan, 2002). O’Sullivan (2002) adds that we are “caught in a situation where our knowledge does not make us conscious”...

Information, in modern societies, comes to us indiscriminately, and the information is disconnected from usefulness. We are swamped with information and have virtually no substantial control over it... We see a loss of coherence because we no longer have a coherent conception of ourselves, our universe, or our relation to one another and our world. (p.6)

A UVic student teacher who had viewed the children’s artwork from the Learning and the World We conference) commented on how “the children from our local area perceive their vision of the world as more materialistic and superficial”. She observed how the art from children in Victoria tended to represent images of “T.V., candy, toys, and other material objects” - items that she felt “do not even cross the minds of the children in the other countries”. In her view children living in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan [and Mumbi village in Zambia], would be “more concerned with making it through each day alive, having food on their table, and providing and contributing to their family, than anticipating what they will get for Christmas or what they will do after school”....

I think our North American culture tends to emphasis the importance of putting yourself first before others, and... other two countries place importance on others before the self. It is interesting how the beliefs of people around the world can shape how children perceive their vision. (UVic, student teacher)

Referring back to the images shared by Lynn Thornton (i.e. Nintendo figures, glitter, etc.) we begin to wonder if Canadian children are looking and making sense of their world through tainted, or incoherent lenses, unable to differentiate between ideas that are useful and those that are not. Children from Mumbi, Zambia, on the other hand - identified through their rejections to such images - are seemingly better able to differentiate information about the world in terms of their function and usefulness in their village lives. Perhaps it is easier for children in communities less saturated with images

and information to conceptualize and make sense of their worlds - a thought to consider further as art exchanges are promoted worldwide:

In Manga village there wasn't an actual school - it is another community just 5 kms down the road from Mumbi and we did an exchange there...we sang some songs, we played some games and what not - then we presented some of the materials that the school had donated - a map of Canada, a Canada puzzle - and *lots of really cool supplies* - some *shiny, sprinkly things* and all sorts of *stuff*. (Keith)

### ***End of Interlude: Return to Zambia***

#### The Relationship Continues: Canada - Post Exchange

##### *Resuming Interest*

Upon his return to Canada, Keith Orchiston revisited Kelowna schools to share Zambian children's artwork, enthusiasm, and ideas. Throughout his visits in various Kelowna schools, Keith recognized his increased energy and enthusiasm for presenting and sharing artwork ideas and images between children across the globe. Through his slide shows and presentations Keith had two goals in mind: 1) to share what kids their age in Zambia do (i.e. work in the fields, fetch water, carry things on their heads, etc.); and 2) to address certain issues and realities that students in Kelowna might not be aware of (i.e. water issues). To Keith's amazement he found that students "were all very interested" because in some ways "they could relate to or find relevance with", this knowledge and information:

There's 110,000 in *that* community, and 110,000 in *our* community - can you imagine if we had *one clinic* for our 110,000 people with *no doctors* - how would you treat yourself if you got sick?" And the kids start thinking about that... (Keith)

Keith got "energized" from the energy and excitement coming at him from *all* of the children - "they were very excited and asked a lot of really great questions". He observed children "really enjoying" the artwork exchange and how they loved seeing what other children in Zambia had drawn and created.

*Emergent State of Conscientization: Tainted Views Becoming Clearer*

Keith attempted to demonstrate and explain to the children in Kelowna that in Mumbi and Manga there is no electricity, television, computer, play stations, telephone or communication. When sharing this information through images and generative inquiry he would ask the students, “*What would you do with your time?*” Keith recalls how the students’ reaction was “*a look of puzzlement... at Aberdeen Hall the kids were like ‘Wow’*”. Keith was unclear at the time what these looks or comments meant, but he felt they were significant signs that indicated their “*chance to step back from their own society and look at it from the outside and say, ‘Hmm...wait a minute... and maybe these are things I want to explore more’*”.



**Figure 72: A chance to step back from your own society and say, “Hmm, wait a minute”...**

Keith recalls sharing slides and artwork from Zambia while sitting in a circle with students at Aberdeen Hall (a private school in Kelowna). The images conveyed immediate and functional aspects of children’s lives, and generated a great deal of dialogue and intrigue. When children were shown images of how children in Zambia “*grow maize in the summer time*”, for example, children inquired, “*So what is maize?*”, “*What do they use maize for?*”, and “*How do they grow it?*”. These questions generated discussions about staple crops, and tools used for growing food such as hoes, and who

does the hoeing. Keith recalls how “there was so much that came out of it” and how “curious” and “excited” students were about obtaining that knowledge.

Listening to Keith’s inspiring anecdotes, I inquired whether or not children would become as interested and fired up if they were to learn about maize and children in Zambia from their Social Studies textbook? Keith responded by suggesting “probably not”. He explained that when students “have a firsthand account and they are connected to it somehow, they want to know more about it”....

And they ask questions and I say “I will have to go back and find out because I don’t even know” - which is great you know - I think it’s fabulous! So again, it’s been a really great experience so far.

***Interlude: Global Arts in Bloom Public School, New Delhi, India***

Keith’s discussion of textbooks and curriculum brought to mind a conversation that I had with Roselyn Verwoord in September 2006 upon her return from a global arts experience in Bloom Public School, New Delhi, India. In a school that does not invite an “open” or “free” curriculum, and where students have predispositions - or preset attitudes, likes and dislikes towards certain subject areas - Roselyn (“Miss Rose”) decided to weave content areas (such as English, Art, Social Studies) into the global arts experience and frame it is an “integrated project” entitled “We Are All Related”. Initiating a more open-ended approach where students are allowed the space and time to be creative within class time, was not a typical or familiar experience for the students. Students typically have exams every 2 weeks and are accustomed to a very formalized, standardized, and academically-driven approach to learning where the brunt of work is done at home (after a formal classroom lecture).

Roselyn recalls how the huge motivation inspired by the children of Bloom school stemmed primarily from the fact that their *artwork was going to Canada - to children at Erin Woods School in Calgary, Alberta*. The benefits that Roselyn highlights are represented in the *real-life perspectives and connections* that they received through exchanging artwork with children in Canada - connections that could not otherwise be made through standard and stereotypical textbooks.



‘Can you make sure this gets to a kid in Zambia?’” Keith’s immediate response was, “Wow, this kid has been really really touched by this”....

For that one kid in that classroom to do that (take off his necklace) how did that affect the rest of the kids? I think it is complicated because there are so many possibilities and so much potential that who knows where this will go? ...but I would like to think that it is *making a difference* and it is *transforming* - you know - *the way people think*.

From the overall reactions that Keith observed through the artwork and presentations, “*it looked* like something had changed - something had transformed”. With his observations in mind, Keith puzzles over the notion of transformation, trying to determine whether or not *action* - as we normally perceive it - narrows the meaning of it. It became sufficient to view signs of transformation as those “*moments in our life that move us in some way*”:

We are all moved at some point in our lives by something... I guess that is how I look at a form of transformation... maybe it doesn’t have to be some sort of action. (Keith)

And perhaps the very fact that kids from Kelowna have initiated further exchanges with children in Zambia, and “want to *travel* to Zambia now” indicate that some form of transformation has occurred - a sense of connection and coherency perhaps in how they view the world and their place within it.

### *Transcending Borders*

As part of the art exchange process with children in Zambia, Keith Orchiston also arranged for an exhibit at the Alternator Gallery in Kelowna. This rather interesting venue is not known for this type of artwork exhibit, and so he was pleasantly surprised for the exposure the artwork would get to a more diverse audience, such as university students and other non-mainstream art groups.

Another “really cool thing” that Keith observed was when he explained to students that some of the artwork from Zambia was on display at this exhibition, it inspired a new and atypical desire to visit the local art gallery - “So now the kids want to go there - they are asking their parents to take them to the art gallery - which is *not typical* - *not normal*”.

The interest provoked a serendipitous effect within the Kelowna community, inspiring appeal not only from those directly involved, but other schools, university groups, and artists as well:

Now the kids are all really interested - schools are interested in doing fieldtrips to the art gallery - we are getting phone calls already about the art exhibition - the greatest thing about the art exchange in all communities is that when it's left sort of open - things happen....

Basically it's just someone sees it - there's a phone call - there's a connection - something else happens - so it's been really great!



**Figure 74: “Transcending Borders”**  
Zambian children’s art exhibit at Alternator Gallery,  
Kelowna, B.C.

“Transcending Borders” proved to be a very fitting title for this exhibit, as Keith discovered how “art really has no borders... there’s no language borders, there’s no conceptual borders regardless of how complex or complicated the artwork is - everyone can take something away from it”.

#### Flashback to Art Exchange in Zambia: A Closer Look at International Development

The stories shared by Lynn and Keith bring informed insights into the complex realm of *international development*. As it turns out the children’s art exchange between Canada and Zambia not only presented meaningful learning opportunities for children (as demonstrated above), they also provided the foundation and the impetus to ethically assess and address village needs:

So it [the art exchange] served a number of purposes for us - again building relationships, but it also enabled us to see things that maybe we wouldn’t have been able to see, or have picked up on... an unexpected benefit that I never thought of beforehand. (Keith)

*Artwork Reveals Urban and Rural Discrepancies*

From looking at the artwork, Keith and other VIDEA members were able to identify the issues of a Zambian village or community. They could see the divide between *urban* and *rural* - that “there are a lot of resources in the urban centers where rural centers have very little. Viewing how those living in the rural centers “are cut off”, told them a great deal about the municipality and government services of that area, for examples. As Keith notes, “You can see that from the artwork”.

Keith recollects how the images of “the world we live in” or “*our life*” as drawn by those residing in Mumbi and Manga, are of functional objects that are used every day. As these remote villages are “very subsistence agricultural-based communities” where daily activities revolve around basic “survival”, it came as no surprise that objects such as pots and pans are depicted in the artwork (Keith). In comparison, Keith explains how the artwork created in the urban centres demonstrate that children have had prior experience doing Art, and also exposure to various forms of Art around them, such as “billboard signs”. Keith sensed that there was an influence from their urban environment whereas in the rural areas there may be an influence but no exposure to those sorts of things - “which tells you a little bit about the level of development from one area to the next - those ideas were brought out in the artwork” (Keith).

*“Harnessing the Wave”: Assessing Village Needs through Global Arts*

Through his experiences in Zambia, Keith began to realize the seemingly different, yet interconnected nature between *global art exchanges* and *development issues*. While staying with Felix (a Zambian who works with water, food security, and environmental issues) for about a week in Mumbi village, the artwork became very important for establishing the relationships that were essential for moving the overall *Harnessing the Wave* project forward. As Keith explains, “You can’t just go into a community and ask them what they need, without first having a relationship with them,” because relationships develop trust and trust creates a level of comfort necessary to authentically assess village needs. Without these important elements in place often times people receive aid in areas where they don’t necessarily require it, or are denied aid in areas where they desperately need it:

Basically what happens is there is a lot of NGOs working in Zambia - all based on the areas in which they get funded [i.e. HIV Aids, food security, cholera, etc.]... under time constraints they pull into a community and ask, “*What do you guys need?*”, but they can only help if there are people that have HIV AIDS... dysentery or whatever it may be...

and so when people *have very little* there is an opportunity there to say, “*Yes we do have AIDs*”, when really they don’t; “*Yes we do have this*”..., because they are going to get *something* out of it. (Keith)

Keith continues to stress the value of the art exchange in this needs assessment process:

There is sort of an order to it and I can’t say enough about the art exchange and the importance of it for... developing the relationships, for getting to the point where people feel comfortable enough to say to you... “*You know, we’re not all done with this, but these are the issues*”...so the art exchange was really important.

Once relationships were established through art exchanges in rural villages such as Mumbi and Manga, Keith (and other VIDEA members) were able to “harness the wave” by identifying and assessing primary needs such as conducting emergency food distribution and the identification of orphans and the sick. As Keith explains, “the artwork was a HUGE link for this”.

### ***Mumbi Village***

#### *Gender & Cultural Hierarchy*

From an international development perspective both Keith and Lynn also found the value of children’s artwork for assessing the hierarchal relationships in Zambian communities - Mumbi village in particular. When orphans in the community were handed out crayons, paper, or artwork, for example, they were “snatched back off of them (by the other children)”. It was also observed how the boys would take the materials away from the girls, suggesting that a hierarchy or “pecking order” was in place.

It went from the men - to the boys - to the women - to the girls - to the orphans - and it was really obvious. The little girls were pushed out into the sun and weren’t allowed to sit in the shade if there wasn’t enough room for everyone - and you could tell who the orphans were because they were really really dirty and wore tattered clothes - it was sooo obvious in Mumbi. (Lynn)

These observations suggested a number of things about the structure of that community, “like gender inequality, gender imbalances”. When listening to Keith and Lynn tell their tales, it was obvious how significant the art exchange was for helping them to identify such imbalances and structures within each Zambian community.

*Art and Social Change: Mobilizing Villages for Action*

We need stories of sufficient power and complexity to orient people for effective action to overcome environmental problems brought about as a result of environmental destruction, and to reveal possibilities available for transforming this situation and the role people can play in this project. The scope and magnitude of transformative stories brings many cultural pieces together in creative dynamic tension. (O’Sullivan, 2002, p.7)

Throughout the interviews with Keith and Lynn it also became clear that the artwork itself was not necessarily what the people of the Zambian villages needed nor wanted. What was soon realized however, was how the artwork provided an important vehicle for motivating people in the Zambian communities to become actively involved in improving their lives and circumstances. In Lynn’s words, “while you are doing artwork, you may not be bringing medicine to the clinic, and you may not be putting a roof on the school, but, you are doing a couple of other things”...

*Inspiring Environmental Action in Mumbi Village*

On the last day VIDEA members were in Mumbi village Lynn recalls how “the kids had these *huge, long sticks* with lethal looking pieces of blade on the end, and kids, little tiny kids, were hacking up the earth!” Fearing they were going to chop their feet off, Lynn asked village member Yobe, “*What on earth are they doing?*”? A transformative and hopeful reply followed from Yobe: “*Oh, they are clearing the land because we are going to plant some seeds and plant some saplings there... because deforestation is a real issue*”....

You being here has motivated us to do this because this is a project that we had thought about years ago and we haven’t done anything about, but because you are here, you have made us think about other projects and now we are going to put them into action. (Yobe)

That is a total gift... and it was just great. (Lynn)

*Bringing Hope and Education to Manga Village*

Manga Village sits in a remote, rural area about 5 km from Mumbi village. Again, when Keith (and other VIDEA members) visited Manga, the whole village came out to greet them, proceeded by the sharing and exchanging of games, songs, and children's drawings. One of the "cool things" that Keith observed during the art exchange process transpired through a local teacher of Manga village - an unpaid volunteer who received a bag of maize each year for teaching grades one and two in a rented church (with very limited resources). Keith recalls how this local teacher saw the art exchange as an opportunity to address his village by telling them, "*Look, good things are happening here...you should send more of your children to school now!*".

I thought, that is amazing in itself! That's how important the art exchange was in that community... it was a sign... a symbol of hope - it just seemed like it was very important to that community to have that sort of thing. (Keith)

Following the art exchange Keith was invited on a long tour of Manga village, enabling him to look into some issues. Concerns such as water quality and food shortages were identified. They were also trying to build a school, but did not have the resources. With VIDEA's financial assistance and Keith's manual support, village members managed to attach an aluminum roof over a pre-existing structure, completing the dream for a school in Manga Village. Keith recalls how excited they were to be part of building their first school and expanding from grades 1 and 2 to grade 4. A comment from a volunteer teacher stuck out in his mind: "*Do you realize that you and I are now a part of history?*". Keith notes how, "Without the relationships that had been established through working with Felix to facilitate all of the art exchanges in the community", he didn't think this "would have even been possible".

As Lynn reflects on VIDEA's mission in Zambia she notes that at the onset they saw the process as "a lot drier", anticipating that the "entry point into the communities would be through the municipalities". After witnessing firsthand the benefits and effects of the artwork exchange, and how well it resonated in the communities, Lynn now sees

how projects such as Children's Global Arts offer a broader and more visually stimulating entry point into village and community life:

*Striking Realizations: A Promise is a Promise*

As Lynn reflects on signs of transformation, she identifies a huge difference in terms of what is actually real - "the difference between the theory of international development and what is actually real when you get there". After working in the area of International Development for over 15 years, her experiences in Zambia have moved her from an intellectual understanding of this realization, to levels of emotional and intuitive understanding. One of the things that really struck Lynn and changed the way that she thinks about international development was actually being there and realizing what an impact having no choices has on your life and what "lack of choices" really meant in life. Lynn had understood this at an intellectual level, but not from an emotional place.

Lynn attempts to explain her revelation and emotive awakening with a story about her encounter with Beatrice - a young woman from Manga village:

We walked around with a woman called Beatrice and she asked me if I had children and I said I had two; And then she said, "*I had heard that women in the west could do that*", and I said "What do you mean?"; and she said, "*Well, I have nine children, and I heard that women in the west could only have two children, and how do you do it?*" ...

And it was very real and she looked me in the eyes, and it will stay with me for the rest of my life, looked me in the eyes and said, "*You have to tell me now how I can do this because I don't want any more children, I really don't*" - and there was hope in her eyes that I was standing there and I would be able to help her in some way....

In terms of visualizing what their "world" is - a world of *no choice* - Lynn wasn't able to offer much to her... and she could see the hope drain out of her face, when she started saying things like, "There's a clinic in Mumbi"; and then realizing, "*how on earth would she ever get to a clinic in Mumbi?*", and *What do they have there anyway?*" ... no access to fresh potable water, condoms are just not an option, and she doesn't have the right to negotiate sex or anything (Lynn).

In this moment of conscious realization, Lynn recognized her “utter powerlessness”, and more so, the powerlessness of women such as Beatrice, who are living in a world of *no choice, no voice*. For Lynn it became the “guiding lights” in terms of switching of how she thought about those communities. Whereas she used to think “communication is really difficult”, she came to realize that “communication is impossible for lots of those people”.

### ***Transformative Understandings...***

When we begin to consider Lynn’s encounter with Beatrice as an experience of transformation, we see how it is part of an integrative and transformative process of feedback and perception (O’Sullivan, 2002). According to O’Sullivan, “In order to comprehend how the world and the mind shape each other, it is necessary to examine the two main ways that feedback works”: The first process is homeostatic or negative feedback, where the world around us is in line with our assumption and goals. The second form of feedback is adaptive or positive, which leads to change in internal presuppositions. Negative feedback indicates that one is on track, requiring no adjustment, while positive feedback indicates deviation from the “norm” and the need to correct or alter course....

Adaptive positive feedback occurs when there is a persistent mismatch between perception and code - that is, when we can no longer interpret experience in terms of our old assumptions....

In this particular context, living systems adapt by transforming themselves, and learning occurs. (p.3)

Merging O’Sullivan’s understandings of transformation with the Dalai Lama’s views of perspective and clear vision we see how - through Lynn’s relation with Beatrice - discrepancies and movement between her prior and new perspectives of *what is real* have altered, causing transformative shifts in her worldview, beliefs, and perception.

Listening more carefully to Lynn’s narrative we also see “moments of grace” (Berry, cited in O’Sullivan, p. 4) where she turns her experiences of hopelessness and powerlessness into spaces for creativity, hope, and opportunity. As Berry maintains, “in order to survive our moment, we must be prepared to take a journey into a new “creative

story”” (cited in O’Sullivan, p. 4). In her encounter with Beatrice, Lynn may have been experiencing two “stories”, moving towards a more collective, integral, and coherent story.

At the onset of their work in Zambia, Lynn “knew that we should not go into communities and promise them anything that we couldn’t deliver”. What she hadn’t realized - what had emerged as a *new creative story* - was that they were not the only ones who had the right to negotiate this perception of promise - “the fact that we were in that community was a promise to the community”. In Lynn’s eyes, they no longer had the right to say, “We didn’t promise anything”; “It’s a two way street - and the two ways aren’t both defined by us...” (Lynn)

When Beatrice was talking to me about contraception, it was *not* OK for me to say, “I didn’t come here to do this, I didn’t promise this, this isn’t my speciality”... just my being there, was a promise, and was a commitment, to those people...

...and I hadn’t thought about it in that way before. (Lynn)

Lynn relates the artwork experiences in Zambia as situations that “definitely gave choice and allowed voices to be heard - perhaps for the first time”. She also explains that although there are definitely more immediate needs within the community (than pursuing art exchanges), “for the people in the community to have anything like that” - allowing them to move outside of their very small world - “makes a huge difference, and it also opens up opportunities for other things”.

The “radical and integrative assessment of situations” such as the artwork exchanges and encounters with Beatrice inspired new understandings for VIDEA, including the documentation of commitment based on promise, action and empowerment. All of those experiences that confirmed, “Yes, my interactions with this person made some kind of a promise in some way”, VIDEA plans to follow through on, including Lynn’s *moment of grace* with Beatrice. Since their return to Canada they have researched and made connections with the organization “Woman For Change” and they plan to get back to Beatrice regarding the role *Women For Change* can play in altering her child-bearing circumstances.

Discovering how Women for Change has the infrastructure and the results to deconstruct powers of patriarchy and make differences for women like Beatrice, one of the strategies that VIDEA plans to initiate is to fund Women for Change to expand their capacity in Zambia by kick starting one of their programs in villages such as Mumbi and Manga.

### *Women for Change*

Another dimension of transformational learning is the critical examination of hierarchical power... patriarchy is a system of power where men dominate.... A critical transformative deconstruction of patriarchy is one learning task that will pick up the feminist movement's challenge to the destructive effects of patriarchy throughout contemporary societies. (O'Sullivan, 2002, p. 6)

Members of VIDEA noticed a huge difference when they entered a Women For Change area in Zambia. Moving from Mumbi and Manga villages in the Eastern district, into the Central district of Mumbwa - where Women for Change had been for 12 years - was like moving between night and day. After driving for 12 hours, Lynn recalls how "it hit you before we even got out of the car". They sat in the car "like a cartoon, looking at each other" because unlike anything they had experienced in Zambia thus far, they were welcomed by a wall of powerful, proud, vibrant women. As Lynn recalls, "They were eloquent, and they had arranged our day, and we could even tell the difference by the way the women held themselves, and the looks in their eyes and their faces - it was amazing!" Men appeared to be in the background, and when they attended the meeting that VIDEA had arranged, it *was the men* who were carrying the water, *they* were tending to the children, and carrying children on their backs - roles that only women held in the more patriarchal, male-dominated villages such as Mumbi and Manga.

Lynn's visit to Mumbwa brought hope that the circumstances that confront women like Beatrice could be different through situations that empower, rather than silence them.

It was just a gift that you empower the women and you change the whole community, you change every aspect... it thrives... the difference between this community and the other community that we went into - probably one of the most powerful things that I have ever seen - the difference - I had not expected it.

Lynn's experiences reflect Freire's & Macedo's (1987) dream for a different society: "One in which saying the word is a fundamental right and not merely a habit, in which saying the word is the right to become a part of the decision to transform the world"....

*The reinvention of society... requires the reinvention of power.... Why are the majority of people silenced today? Why should they muffle their own discussion? When they are called upon to read, why do they read only the dominant discourse? (p. 55)*

### *Men for Change*

The stories and conversations shared throughout this chapter remind us of Freire's (1971) insights, that "the fundamental effort of education is to help with the liberation of people, never their domestication" (p. 62). They confirm that when people reflect on their domination or oppression, or observe others in this light, they begin a first step in changing their relationship to the world.

Experiences with the Global Arts and Harnessing the Wave projects not only altered the way Lynn feels about the world and her role in International Development, they also shifted Keith Orchiston's disposition by infusing new meaning and confidence. In Keith's eyes, the interactions and presentations with children and art around the world have "changed him as a person" and "instilled confidence in him to be himself". They have also inspired Keith to take on a more empowering role with VIDEA, attributing this shift to a number of incidents inspired through the Global arts exchange project:

*It changed my role with VIDEA because I got so fired up about the [global arts] project I started to put a lot of time into it and that wasn't really the main focus of my role... it has changed my role in a sense that I got very attached to the project - I saw art in a different way....*

Keith has become a board member on VIDEA and uses his experiences at a different level than a community representative... a number of different projects have had their genesis in this global art exchange project. Keith concludes his story by suggesting that "if it wasn't for the artwork exchange I wouldn't have felt that the relationship would have allowed me to stay behind and get all of this firsthand experience - so in that sense it has provided the impetus for my role to change with VIDEA.... it's been more successful than I ever imagined it to be".

**PART III:**  
**RESEARCH ANALYSIS**

## Chapter 9

### SLIPPERY SLOPE: RECIPROCITY OF CARE, COMMUNICATION, & CONNECTION

[We need] a new international consciousness that recognizes and assures every community, language, culture, and civilization a future, with each culture and civilization open to learning from others. (Wangoola, 2006, pp. 125-126)

#### The Paradox

Throughout his extensive travels worldwide, the Dalai Lama observes how “everywhere, by all means imaginable, people are striving to improve their lives” (Gyatso, 1999, p. 5). Yet the Dalai Lama also reminds us of the paradox: *Those living in the materially developed countries, are in some ways less satisfied, are less happy, and to some extent suffer more than those living in the least developed countries:*

Frequently when I arrive in a new country, at first everything seems very pleasant, very beautiful. Everybody I meet is very friendly. There is nothing to complain about. But then, day by day as I listen, I hear people's problems, concerns, and their worries. Below the surface so many feel uneasy and dissatisfied with their lives. They experience feelings of isolation; then follows depression. The result is the troubled atmosphere which is such a feature of the developed world....

Through the Children`s Global Arts initiative, I have also sensed greater suffering, dis-ease, disconnect, and fear from the artwork created by children living within my own privileged society. As did the Dalai Lama, I had expected that with physical hardship much reduced, as it is for the majority living in the industrially developed countries, happiness would be much easier to achieve than for those living under more extreme conditions (like Vietnam, Iraq, India, Belize, and Afghanistan). Instead, increasing advancements in consumer culture seem to have achieved little more than an attitude of entitlement to material rather than relational attachments. “In many cases, progress has meant hardly anything more than greater numbers of opulent houses in more cities, with more cars driving between them” (Gyatso, pp. 6-7).

To help shed light on this paradox and prevailing concerns on a worldwide scale, the Children's Global Arts stories and events of this chapter invite us to explore further, the notion of *reciprocity* and the slippery slope around perceptions of *rich* and *poor*, *poverty* and *privilege*. They bring us a little closer to home, provoking us to look critically at Canada's privileged society and culture, and question further the world we live in and the world we want.

### Avoiding the "Poor Them" Syndrome

As the Tales of Transformation continue to unfold as part of a larger anthology of meaning, the theme *reciprocity* continues to rise to the forefront. Theresa Lewis revisits this dialogue with a cautionary reminder about the *slippery slope* around Global Arts:

Of critical importance is making sure that we do not come across as the "Oh, we in the western countries are all helping you poor folk over there", because we have some silent values around material acquisition and technology and when we see the absence of it we say, "Oh, you poor people" as if somehow there is something lacking, when we are really not recognizing, "It is we who are poor" for being disconnected with original knowledge and organic knowledge.

As Theresa advises, if Global Arts is pursued with the "poor them" syndrome, "all we would be doing is a very good job of emulating our ethnocentric ways of being - and that would be doing a disservice". To avoid this slippery slope, she suggests that the first thing one needs to do is recognize what our vantage point is or what our perspective is; then be open to the genuine opportunities to learn from the connections and experiences.

As a researcher with limited access to children's artwork around the world, and limited background in art education, the understandings that follow stem primarily from my vantage point of studying the artwork from a bird's eye view, reading extensive literature, working with children as an educator, and listening to the diverse array of stories that have found their way into this dialogue. My attempt to understand is rooted in my quest to *conceptualize*, rather than *generalize* what I see and learn as the stories and the pictures unfold. At first glance one might ask, *how much can we learn about the world from children's artwork?* From what we are beginning to observe and understand, the answer is *a lot, and it's powerful!*

I wish to make no mistake in suggesting that the dire realities of hunger, war, aggression, and inequality that face millions of children worldwide are insignificant in our world today. Indeed, the alarming statistics are of utmost concern to all of us:

600 million children in the world live in absolute poverty, on less than one dollar a day. Ten million children die each year from preventable diseases;

60 million girls and 40 million boys do not have access to basic schooling....it is estimated that from 50 to 60 million children, instead of being in a classroom, are forced to undertake intolerable forms of labor;

Millions of children have died as a result of armed conflict in the last decade alone, while countless millions more have been left physically and emotionally disabled by armed conflicts where children have been deliberate targets;

In sub-Saharan Africa, it is estimated that 13 million children have lost their mothers or both parents to AIDS.

(Machel, 2006, p.186)

An important point that this research raises is that *despite*, or *in the midst of*, these dire struggles, children from war-torn and economically impoverished nations, are sharing signs of hope, resilience, family & community connectedness, and in some cases, even joy, through their creative representations of *the world we live in* and/or *the world we want*. Children living in Canadian culture, on the other hand, are showing signs of alienation, confusion, and a submerged state of consciousness<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Note: These observations are not meant to over-generalize or imply that *all* children's artwork from these areas of the world show these patterns or signs. They are included as a means to open up alternate views of the world, and to bring awareness to the paradox brought forth in this chapter.

*Reconsidering Quality of Life*

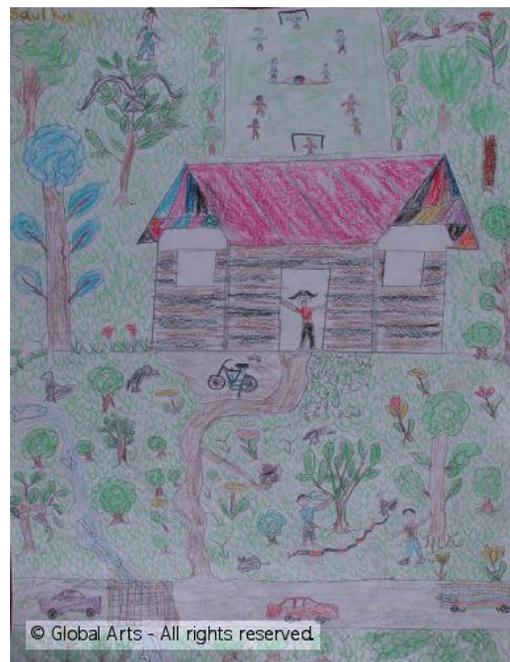
*Belize*

The artwork sent to Canada from children in “impoverished” Belize convey the message that the world *children want*, is the very world *they live in*. Perhaps “impoverished” by Canadian economic standards, yet “rich” in the qualities of life related to green space, family, joy, and simplicity. Cheryl Zelmer sensed that the children in Belize are *happy*, and that they had found a centeredness that she hopes her students in Calgary, as well as herself, may experience one day:

*A drawing that I remember had so many colours, the land was so green, people were just holding hands and it was more or less calm - it was like they had found that balance between work and hanging out with the family - something that I have not mastered - at all! ....*



**Figure 76: Child artist from Belize**



**Figure 75: Child artist from Belize**

*They were so happy with what they had they didn't want to change their world - wasn't that just "profound"... they didn't have much but they were "happy" with who they are - they are content, they understand who they are - what a reality check for our kids! (Cheryl)*

## *India*

The following reflections from *Carrie Rowlandson*, a UVic student teacher who initiated an artwork project with girls from “Balika Girls Upper Primary School” in the state of Rajasthan, India, further demonstrate the communicative and emotive power of the Children’s Global Arts initiative:

The pictures and the messages are amazing and made us all quite emotional.... What an opportunity and experience! Thanks for letting us in on this powerful platform for delivering important messages from children in India.

Carrie’s deeper and more detailed reflections of her global arts’ experience affirm the value of global arts for gaining trust and openness, literacy, and reciprocity. With the funds raised by friends and family before her departure to India, Carrie bought pencil crayons and paper for the school. When she arrived she did a warm-up, drum-rolling exercise, and then asked the girls questions about the world they live in: “*What do you do in a day?*”; “*What is school like?*”; “*What is it like being a girl in Govindgarh?*”; then proceeded to invite ideas about the world these girls dream about: “*What would you like your world to be like?*”; “*What do you wish the world was like for girls?*”; “*What are your hopes and dreams?*”; “*What do you wish you could be?*”.

As Carrie recollects, at first the girls were very shy, wanting to give the “correct” answers and looking to their teacher for approval; they needed to be assured that there were no marks allotted to their ideas and opinions, and that there were no right answers. The girls had been trained to sit in perfect lines, how to stand at attention, and how to behave correctly. Carrie observed many long, silent pauses when the girls were asked questions related to their personal outlook on life, indicating it was a very difficult request. “But, slowly and with patience from the adults around them, the girls began to warm up and open up”, moving beyond their difficult silence.

After a brainstorming session, the girls were then asked to illustrate either, “The World (We) Want,” or “The World We Have”. Carrie describes their artwork and ideas as “lovely, simple, and innocent”; answers of human beings who have been exposed to love and service to family and community, and “who knew from a young age about tolerance and toil” ...

I had instantly fallen in love with these girls when I met them three days prior, but I began to know them the day I stepped into their world. This was participation and I was beginning to understand what all of those articles I had read were talking about. (Carrie Rowlandson)

The voices of the grade 8 Govindharh girls indicate their love and service to their community, and remind us to value this perspective when considering the priorities of many young privileged Canadians:

*"Since my village does not have a hospital, I have drawn a hospital. I want to work for my village people. I want to keep my village safe and secure"*



Figure 77: "I want to work for my village people"

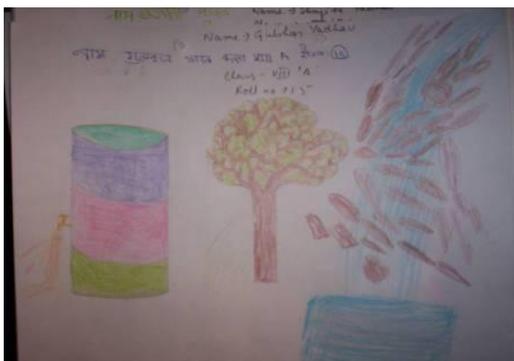


Figure 78: "Our village should have a water tank"

*"My name is Gulshon. Our village should have a water tank.... Our village should have a canal to lift irrigation.... I make dung cakes. I clean my house. I wash feet of my parents. I respect elders. I study for hours."*

*"Houses are incomplete without the trees. If there are no trees outside the house, we will not have pure air and oxygen to breath... We should thank the tree goddess Amrita because she sacrificed her life for trees...."*



Figure 79: "Everyone should get an education"

*"I want to plant trees in my school, but we do not have space.... Some people get their children married at an early age which is causing an increase in the population.... That is why I think everyone should get an education."*

*"I like to ride bicycle. When I learn to ride bicycle then I can take my Elders to any destination.... My name is Mina"*



Figure 80: "There should be no fights in our village"

Carrie returned to Canada with a truckload of inspiring memories, and a strong desire to carry the Global Arts initiative further through an art exchange with students in her hometown of Calgary, Alberta. She treads cautiously with her plans in mind, recognizing the cultural implications of bringing voice to a once silent group of Govindgarh girls, and the assumptions that will need to be broken down regarding “what is a good life” and what is not.

The irony of Carrie’s emergent understandings go hand in hand with Anielski’s (2006) comments that suggest that “the value of some of the important things in life, like clean air, safe neighbourhoods, and the quality of time we spend with our children, counts for nothing if no money has changed hands” (p. 174):

- *Are we measuring what really counts or what really matters in defining our happiness or quality of life?*
- *How should we measure the value of loving relationships, [trees, bicycles, and hospitals] when compared with time consuming stuff?*
- *What about what matters to our children?* (Anielski, p. 174)

Anielski continues to note how, “While an economy might be growing rapidly..., quality time with our kids, our grandparents, or our life partner is shrinking” (p. 174). To merge Cheryl Zelmer’s words, sometimes we as Westerners think that “we know what is better for you, we know that the right way of life for you is this, but we don’t even realize that maybe it’s *us* that is starving”!

*Gita John* reappears as an important character in this dialogue. As discovered earlier, Gita’s homeland is Deenabandhu, India - a village initiated by her father 50 years ago in hopes of bringing Gandhi’s ideas of simple living and lost cultural traditions to life in this remote, rural community. As part of their daily life, in the evenings children come together to do art, theatre, and to play. Gita’s 3 children spent their early years in Deenabandhu, until they moved to Victoria a few years ago. Her children are presently schooling in the Victoria school system here in British Columbia, Canada. Having lived in “two” worlds, and having initiated an artwork exchange between children in Calgary and children in Deenabandhu, Gita’s insights to the Global Arts initiative prove highly beneficial.

In numerous meetings Gita is clear in stating that, “Despite all of the struggles in India there is still a *sense of community and happiness and you hear children laughing so much*”. It scares Gita that children don’t laugh as much here in Canada, and admits how she too used to laugh *and* cry more when she lived in Deenabandhu. Gita would attribute this foreign disposition to “behave in a very mature and non-emotional way”, to our conditioned response to speak and communicate with one another from our *rational minds*, rather than our *intuitive hearts*. Of particular importance, are Gita’s understandings of this difference, as observed through the children’s artwork from Canada:

What I have noticed about the children’s artwork from Canada is that initially they speak from their heads - a cerebral response - a conditioned response - where they strive to produce the “right” or the “correct” answer to the questions of “the world we live in” and “the world we want” - that is what I recognize from looking at the artwork.



Figure 81: “The World We Want”  
(Child artist from Victoria, Canada)

Through Gita’s eyes, the Canadian childrens’ images of the *world* reflect “disconnect and distance”; “the peace that children want is peace for others - *elsewhere* - it does not reflect aspects of themselves”, and the abstract, peace signs and doves represent the “lazy way” of expressing peace.

In contrast, Gita (and others) see the artwork from children overseas as “so personal, reflecting a connection to their own realities, hopes, and dreams”.

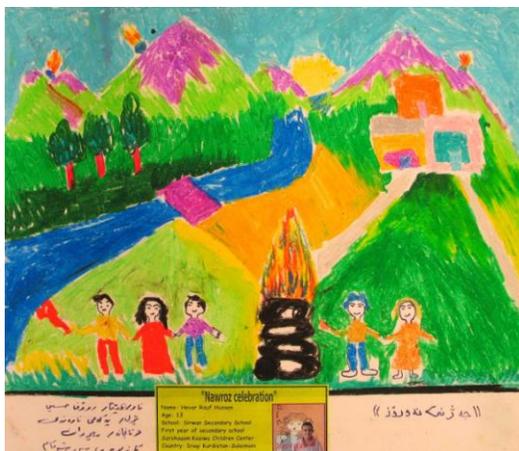


Figure 82: Nawroz Celebration  
(Child artist from Iraq)

*Nawroz* literally means “new day”. It marks a day of victory of an oppressed people over tyranny; *Nawroz* stands for peace, tranquility, and respect for life and nature. (UVic student teacher)



Figure 83: Child artist from  
Kabul, Afghanistan

*Birds in a Gilded Cage of Materialism*

Gita's anecdotes are rich with meaning and metaphor, reminding us of the important messages shared by Nancy Steeve's grade 5 students, and revealing the irony of children's realities from around the world: "Our children in Canada are prisoners of materials, they are 'birds in a gilded cage of materialism' - filled with entire sorrow".

Gita recalls a conversation with her 12-year-old son Dean, soon after his move to Canada. According to Dean, his home in India, where children had one pair of clothing, *made children smart*. Dean likens children in Deenabandhu to 'fast runners' who have powerful resilience and inner strength; they learn how to wrap their shirt around their waist while washing their pants, and *this* is what makes them smart. Here in Canada Dean has observed in contrast, "because children have so much, they are like couch potatoes and they don't know how to do anything useful". When Gita asked him, "*Why do you go to school, why study?*" Dean responded, "Well, so I can get good grades, good education and a job". Reminiscing on the way *she learned* about living in Deenabandhu and about her culture - i.e. through the tamil alphabet: a - aram seiya virumbu (give joyfully); aa - aaruvathu sinam (calm anger) - Gita continued, "*But where do you learn about life, about how to live*"? Dean pointed to Gita and his father and said, "From you I learn how I can be happy, how to make others happy, and not just think about where money comes from".

"You don't get that with "a is for apple and b for ball"!! (Gita)

Upon reflection of her son's comments, and the experiences she has observed through Global Arts, Gita is convinced that "The material privileges that we provide for our children is not the answer":

Whatever we are doing for our children here in Canada, we are actually shooting them in the foot - there is fear, psychosis going on in their heads, and this is reflected in their artwork. There appears to be more hope in the refugee camps in Uganda, and the war-torn communities of Iraq and Afghanistan, than here. (Gita John)

*A Space Beyond War and Conflict*

*South Africa, Iraq, and Afghanistan*

Observing for a moment some of the familiar selections from South Africa, Afghanistan, and Iraq, one can see how children, in one sense, are strongly connected to their challenging conditions and realities, and yet in other remarkable way, able to *remember, imagine, or believe in*, a more rejoicing space beyond:

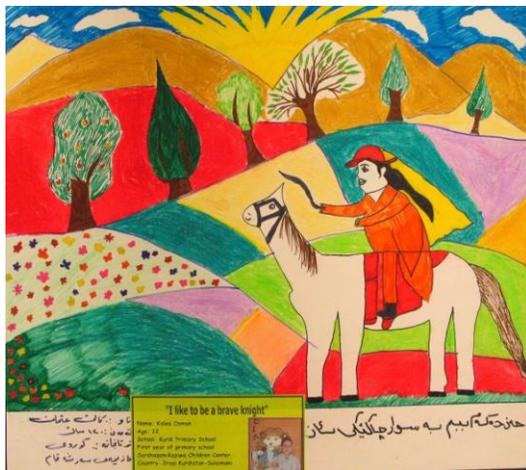


Figure 84: “I like to be a Brave Knight”  
(Child artist from Iraq, age 12)

*I Am Confident*

*It will be so exciting to be exposed to the world.*

*My heart will be rejoicing.*

*Oh, what a confidence in me...*

*I must dream of things that make me successful...*

*I have confidence in me.*

***Let them see who I am...***

By: Zimasa Mgengo

Fezeke Secondary School

Guguletu, South African

(cited in Kaplan & Meirelles, 2005)

A common response that is invoked through the viewing of children’s artwork from Afghanistan and Iraq can perhaps best be summed up through the following student teacher comments:

*As I walked throughout our University classroom, observing the children’s art, my heart both ached and rejoiced. Though I was in Victoria pursuing my Elementary Education Degree, the artwork pulled me in and forced me to travel to a world I had never witnessed; a harsh and wicked world....*

*Though the child artists from Iraq and Afghanistan live in a tragic, barren and war torn reality, many of their pictures of an ideal world depicted a bright, colourful and hopeful world in which the children are surrounded by beauty and love, a world where they are safe.*

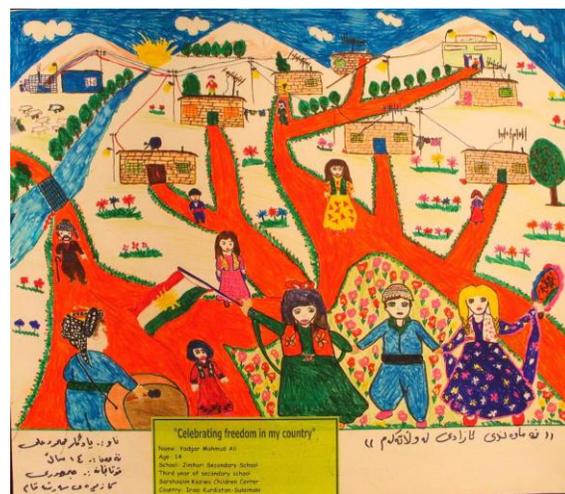


Figure 85: “Celebrating freedom in my country” (Iraq)

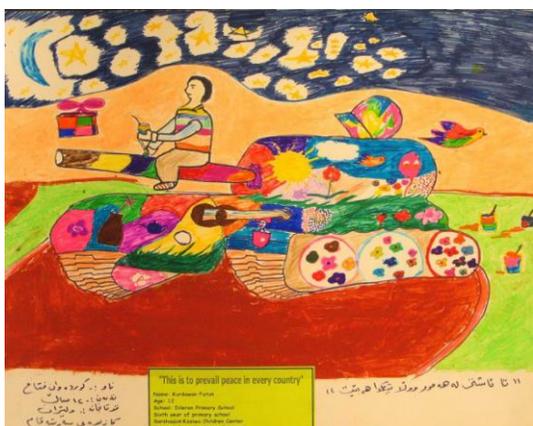


Figure 86: "I want peace to prevail in my country" (Iraq)

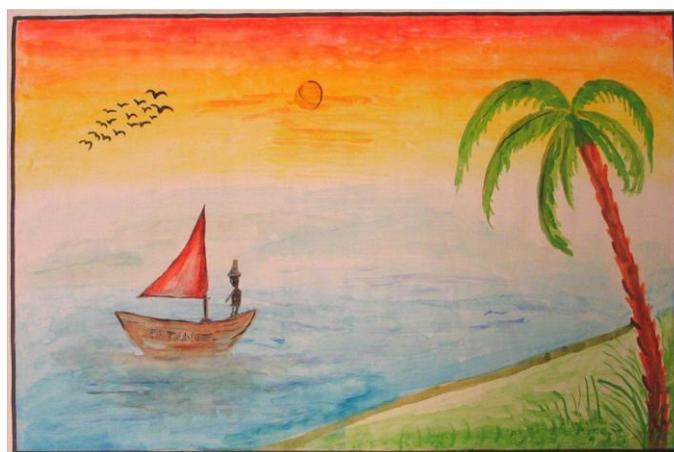


Figure 87: Child artist from Afghanistan

### *The Vietnam Friendship Village*

A more recent set of artwork that the Children's Global Arts Foundation has received is from children living in the Vietnam Friendship Village. Having little awareness of this village, nor the reason for its being, I decided to find out a little more about it before receiving or viewing this artwork. What I found out was quite horrifying, as all war stories tend to be.

As explained by Dreyfuss, (2000), in the years since the American-Vietnam war has ended, the reality of America's chemical warfare in Vietnam's forests and rice paddies has slowly begun to unfold. Millions of Vietnamese combatants and civilians were showered with a poisonous carcinogen called *Agent Orange*. This poison, once described as "the most toxic molecule ever synthesized by man," infiltrated the country's water and soil, entering the food chain and accumulating in people's tissues, even passing from mother to child through breast milk. According to Vietnamese estimates, the millions of gallons of Agent Orange that soaked the southern half of Vietnam during the 1960s eventually killed or injured 400,000 people and reportedly contributed to birth defects in 500,000 children. Chillingly, its effects are still being felt today, not only among older Vietnamese, whose cancers and other illnesses are often linked to Agent Orange, but among second and third generation children of the war, whose twisted bodies and crippled minds bear silent witness to the scourge. New research shows that in at least one

region of Vietnam, dioxin residues are still present in the environment, in fish, and in humans - including young Vietnamese born long after the war.

With increasing intrigue I ordered and viewed the award-winning documentary by Canadian filmmaker Michelle Mason, called *The Friendship Village*. This compelling film tells the tale of an international group of veterans who built a village in Vietnam for children with Agent Orange-related disabilities. Following the story of the village's founder, American veteran George Mizo, the documentary moves us through his horrific war experiences to the personal transformation that led to the origin of this remarkable village. Working alongside the Vietnamese general, Tran Van Quang, who was responsible for killing his entire platoon in 1968, the film shows George Mizo's - and other veterans from the USA (and international community) - attempt to alleviate the ongoing effects of the toxic Agent Orange herbicide sprayed during the war. As such, "the Vietnam Friendship Village demonstrates the potential to change not only the lives of the children who live in it and the men who build it, but all who come to understand its mission" (Mason, M., n.d.).

An interesting point about this background is the anticipated expectations that I had about receiving the artwork from children living at the Vietnam Friendship Village. Given the devastating effects of Agent Orange that have seriously maimed and wounded the children from this war-effected village, I was anticipating the artwork to somehow reflect this atrocity of human suffering. What was received from Vietnam however (similar to Iraq, Afghanistan & Belize), was a series of children's artwork that showered me with *colour, beauty, and joy*, and a strong sense of *affiliation and interdependence with the people* and the surroundings of this village.



Figure 88: Child artist from Vietnam Friendship Village



Figure 89: Child artist from Vietnam Friendship Village

Without romanticizing the context, the images portrayed in much of the artwork from Afghanistan, Vietnam, Belize, India, and Iraq in particular, also bring to mind the inherent nature of traditional tribal or indigenous cultures, whereby “family, work, spiritual, community, and recreational life flow naturally one into the other” (Korten, 2006, p. 102). Despite the stark, looming realities that could rupture these familial traditions with one fatal blow, the children, as observed through their artwork, are intimately connected to their struggles and realities, and seem to remain connected to culturally embedded beliefs that suggest that the continuity and flow of their life will endure through uncompromising connections to community, place, and generations past and future.



Figure 90: “Children Daily Life” Shanaz Araz Otham, age 10, Kurdistan, Iraq, 2005



Figure 91: An Iraqi Village



Figure 92: "Different Faces" (Iraq)

*The community ingredient is very evident in the art from Iraq. It is apparent that they are a very communal society. Almost every picture contains many people - men and women, young and old. Clearly, when resources are limited people have to help support one another. The individualistic mentality simply doesn't work. (UVic student teacher)*

### A Closer Look at Home

#### *Social and Emotional Starvation*

With all we are learning about the world, perhaps it comes as no surprise to discover the general *lack of family or people* represented in the artwork created by children in Canadian communities. Whereas the artwork from India, Vietnam, Belize, Nigeria, and Iraq - in particular - are seemingly inspired by family, friends, and a strong sense of community, the artwork created by children in Canadian communities is - overall - *devoid of people*. What we find predominantly are colourful depictions of symbols (i.e. doves, hands around a globe), buildings (i.e. homes, schools), and natural surroundings (i.e. mountains, meadows, oceans, trees), with little representation of human connection or relationship:



Figure 93: The World We Want (Canada)



Figure 94: Child artist from Canada

Take for example, the artwork reflecting “the world we live in”, drawn by grade 5 children at Erin Woods Elementary School in Calgary - even the following three images that feature homes, backyards, school grounds, and swing sets, are absent of children, family, or people. Indeed, only 2 out of the 24 images drawn by these grade 5 students show any sign of human form (“Erin Woods School”, n.d.).

*“The World We Live In”*



Figure 95: Child artist from Calgary, Alberta



Figure 96: Child artist from Calgary



Figure 97: Child artist from Calgary

In a compelling number of images where people *are* seemingly present in Canadian children’s artwork, they are viewed as cartoon-like representations<sup>17</sup>, disconnected from real homes, families, and/or communities:



**Figure 98:** Child artist from Vancouver, Canada

“The World We Want”:



**Figure 99:** Child artist from Vancouver, Canada

### *Loneliness and Isolation*

Cheryl Zelmer reflects on the isolated realities of Erin Woods community, Calgary, Alberta:

You think of this community [Erin Woods]...how many times these kids feel lonely. They don’t have a sense of who they can go to; then I look at the pictures from Gita and these kids always have someone to go to, and they know it...

I’ve had little girls who pull me aside because “my mom is with her boyfriend and I am supposed to go have my bath, eat my dinner, and go to my bedroom, ...and I feel lonely and I miss my mom, but she’s always with her boyfriend”....



**Figure 100:** Students living in Deenabandhu, India

<sup>17</sup> These cartoon-like, media images have also been recognized in a select few of drawings shared by children in Kabul, Afghanistan. Interesting links might also be made with Zambian childrens’ overt lack of interest or regard for images such as these (i.e. in Mumbi village).

Recognizing her own alienated circumstances as a single mom living in an urban center of Calgary - without the support and liberty of a close-knit village community - Cheryl poses an important question:

*How can we feel less isolated is the question?*

Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, helps us to understand the significance of these observations and questions in relation to the magnitude of alienation, loneliness, and disconnect that plagues our so called “rich” and “industrialized” nations:

We have created a society in which people find it harder and harder to show one another basic affection. In place of the sense of community and belonging, which we find such a reassuring feature of less wealthy (and generally rural) societies, we find a high degree of loneliness and alienation. (1999, p. 9)

Throughout the Dalai Lama’s travels worldwide, he continues to observe how [generally speaking] people living in the modern industrial societies, caught up in the absorption of *acquiring*, “actually lose the dream of happiness which riches were to have provided”....

As a result, they are constantly tormented, torn between doubt about what might happen and the hope of gaining more, and plagued with mental and emotional suffering - even though outwardly they may appear to be leading entirely successful and comfortable lives. (p. 6)

### *Submerged State of Consciousness*

According to Bakan (2006), the average child in United States watches 30,000 television advertisements a year - most of which pitch directly to them... and all “conveying a series of subtle, and corrosive, messages: that they will find happiness through their relationships with products - with things, not people” (p. 192). Children are also routinely exposed by mass media to graphic and inappropriate violence and sex as corporations aim to boost sales and ratings.

Recognizing how high school students bombarded with media images of consumerism and violence have become de-sensitized to real life events, student teachers from the University of Victoria see how this de-sensitization can be combated by viewing *real* children affected by war and terrorism; how “actual historical and political events can be brought to life in the social studies classroom through Global Arts” (response paper). Equally important is the belief that when children are left to create their own images of “the world they want” in an unrestricted environment, a more authentic representation of what each child is actually thinking and feeling can be explored. “So many children in our education are ingrained into producing correct replicas and specific responses... it is really important that adults, and other ‘power’ figures, are not telling these children what to include in their pictures... that students know that there is no right or wrong answer”....

The success of this project is dependent upon children being allowed to freely exhibit their train of thought for the world that they would like.  
(UVic, student teacher)

*A Middle School Experience (modified from Cruickshanks, 2006)*

The following classroom study shares how these elements of transformation have worked through the authentic honouring of student voices and through the viewing of children’s artwork from war-torn Afghanistan:

Educator, *Joe Karmel* decided to open up the notion of “the world we want” through a middle school socials studies program. Without pre-prompting or setting boundaries, Joe invited his students to draw their visions of the world they want freely, without restriction or expectation. When they had completed and shared their artwork, Joe’s story reveals how most students seemed amused with what others had drawn. A few themes came to light quickly: The first was the increased presence of guns and violence in their pictures representing the world they wanted. Other images of their *ideal world* featured elaborate skateboarding parks, bike tracks, big screen televisions, computers, large houses, fancy cars, dollar signs, and so forth....



Figure 101: "The World We Want"  
(Child artist from Greater Victoria, Canada)

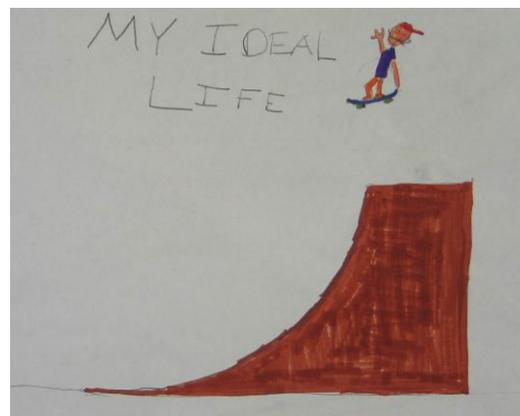


Figure 102: "My Ideal Life"  
(Child artist from Greater Victoria, Canada)

While not a singular observable theme like guns and increased violence, collectively these fanciful wishes indicated a vision which included more possessions and items of luxury, aggression, or recreation. (Joe Karmel)

A week or so later Joe presented the 2003 images of the world children - *their same age* - in Iraq and Afghanistan live and dream for. As shared throughout this research, the emotions and events illuminated in the drawings from Kabul are ones of fear and personal suffering, and scenes of war, destruction, and injustice. The vibrant and colourful images from Iraq reveal somewhat similar realities, including a world of freedom, justice, and beauty, with young girls going to school, fish swimming down a stream, and smiling, happy people celebrating family traditions and dreams for peace in every country.

As Cheryl Zelmer and UVic student teachers would have predicted, the contrasting nature of these drawings clearly challenged what Joe's students had drawn. As they experienced these images one by one, it was observed how their *reactions were rather sombre, becoming uncharacteristically attentive* as they listened patiently to the captions read out and the comments shared by classmates. Several students noted the quality and colour of the drawings, and they seemed very surprised - given what they knew of war-torn Afghanistan - that the children there would be able to draw so well. By comparison, the drawings done by Joe's students were mostly in pencil, with some colour added to indicate visions of blood, explosions, tracer bullets, or skateboard parks.

His students also noted the different themes expressed within their own drawings and those from Iraq and Afghanistan. Instead of guns or violence in the world wished for by students in Iraq and Afghanistan, their pictures were filled with *happy looking people doing things together*. Some of Joe's students *expressed embarrassment* in their own work, and felt that they could do a better, more serious job if they had a chance to do it again. In summary, Joe made reference to the transformative learning potential of this experience:

Thinking about the world as it is and the world we want to see was an interesting way to start off the social studies and philosophy program. It is a theme that seemed to keep popping up in a lot of the current events discussions that start off our mornings. I think the artwork had a real effect on my students. It would be interesting to see what they might draw given a second opportunity to do so. (Karmel, cited in Cruickshanks, 2006, p. 45)

### *A High School Experience*

Our generation is sometimes described as 'untouched' because we have not been affected by war. While this has truth, it is also quite false. We are very fortunate to not have to see the disastrous events that take place in Iraq, but we still live in fear. My friend's son once asked me if planes could fly into his place. Our whole world runs on fear. (UVic student teacher)

Through a separate teaching assignment - at a high school in Vancouver, B.C. - Joe Karmel decided to embark on the Global Arts themes once again. Building on his previous middle school experience, Joe invited his students to create, in whatever art form they wished, depictions of "the world we live in" and "the world we want". Throughout this inquiry, a number of noteworthy points for discussion emerged.

Firstly, it became vividly clear that student perceptions of the present state of their world in relation to the world they hoped for, were in direct contrast with one another. As reflected in both their images and their words, this group of high school students unanimously feel that the world in which we live is "bad" and the world we want is "good":

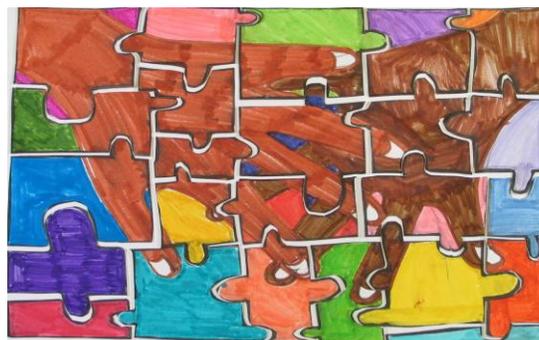


**Figure 103: “The World We Live In”**  
(High school student artists, Vancouver, Canada)

We first made two identical puzzles. We also drew on the puzzles two hands together....

One of the puzzles we coloured in with dark and sad colours. We then cut it out and placed it on a separate piece of paper with the puzzle pieces spread out on the page. This is the world we live in... our world today is not united and nation is fighting against nation....

On the second puzzle we coloured it in with many different colours. We then cut the puzzle out and placed it back together again on another sheet of paper. We did this to represent that the world can work together as one and we can repair the world if we put effort into it.  
(Yolanna Zlotnik & Alexandra Shafran, ages 14)



**Figure 104: “The World We Want”**



**Figure 105: High school student artist, Vancouver, Canada**

My picture is about the world we live in and the world we want. In the world we live in there are planes flying into buildings, air pollution, tanks going through streets and bombs everywhere....

In the world we want, every country is together, united and holding hands, which is my idea of having a peaceful, safe place to live in, in our world. (Selah Williams, age 13)

### The World in Our Eyes

Our collage is made up of only negative and bad things that we found in the newspaper and that are happening in the world. Considering that there were very few positive things in the newspaper, we think that this represents the most part of our world today. We also



decided that black would be an appropriate colour for the empty spaces and the background, because our world is dark. It is full of war, crime, terrorism, racism, discrimination, and other negative events happening all the time....

**Figure 106: “The World in Our Eyes”**  
(High school student artists, Vancouver, Canada)

We attempted to make a collage of good things and events that are happening in the world today, but we couldn't find enough to fit a whole big sheet. We decided to make this collage on a much smaller sheet. This symbolizes that there are lot more bad things and events in the world than good ones.

(Guy Ardon; Brian Bauer; Shay Segal; & Ilan Vonderwalde, ages 14-15)



**Figure 107: “There are more bad things than good things”**

Looking deeper into these messages, we see how these teenage depictions of the world “reflects disconnect” (Gita John) from personal realities, and how abstract visions for peace and happiness (as indicated through rainbows, hearts, etc.), reflect a peaceful desire *for others - elsewhere* - they do not reflect particular aspects of themselves.

A further point of interest is how student reflections of “The World in *Our Eyes*”, are actually media (i.e. newspaper) representations of the world - *the eyes of the media!* Through images and deductions that imply a causal relationship between “there were very few positive things in the newspaper”, and “this represents the most part of our world today”, informs us about the influence the media has on the portrayal of our world, and how desensitized one can become from personal circumstances, dreams, and realities.

Moving this dialogue further, as various students presented their images in front of the class, one girl commented on the looming and negative depictions of “the world we live in”, wondering if anyone felt any positive and beautiful aspects of our present world? This provoked a thoughtful discussion with her peers, revealing two points of interest: When looking to the eyes of the media (i.e. the newspaper) for representations of the world we live in, students discovered a *negative, scary world*; and for some, it was felt that these fearful depictions provided the “right”, or the “correct” answer.

At first glance, perhaps we should not be too surprised of Joe’s students’ responses given the nature of our education system that thrives on test scores and exams based on ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, and also the mental toxins that infiltrate the hearts and minds of children through television programs, video games, and media’s “Top Stories”. Beyond the scope of this dissertation, important questions emerge for future consideration:

- *Why do students feel there is a ‘right or wrong’ answer for this process of inquiry?*
- *Why, if there is such an expectation, do students feel that the ‘right’ answer is the depiction of a fearful, negative world?*
- *In what ways do film, television, and video games influence children’s perceptions of the world?*
- *If children acquired perceptions of the world through a form of media that focussed primarily on “good news” stories (i.e. [www.goodnewsnow.com](http://www.goodnewsnow.com)), how might this shift their perceptions about the world and their role within it?*



**Figure 108: Child artist, Netanya Karmel (age 9)**

### *Lonely and Confused Realities of Our World*

#### *Global Arts at the Lifelong Learning Festival*

In September 2006, the Global Arts initiative set up a booth at Victoria's first Lifelong Learning Festival. Children`s artwork and information were displayed alongside a creative and interactive table where visitors (of all ages) were invited to use an art medium of their choice to share messages of “the world we live in”, and/or “the world we want”. Amidst the heart-warming dialogues and creations that transpired around these themes (between toddlers, teenagers, adults, grandparents, and

grandchildren), I observed with great interest a silent and creative discourse that transpired between *a young girl* of 6 years old (who was drawing her world of flowers, meadows, and happy skies), and her *mother* (who drew a large blackened blob in the middle of the page representing her truth about the world we live in):



Figure 109: The World We Live In (Child's Eyes)

### TRUTH

*This is the world we live in, This is the fear we embrace,  
Kill by the millions, believe we are good,  
Taxes make bombs - Work! Work! Work! Citizen! Obey!  
This is the world we live in  
The darkness sniffs out all light to extinguish maim!  
This is the world we live in  
Enslave! Savage we shop and kill by the millions, we shop we shop,  
Kill we kill as we shop; We shop and we kill kill!*

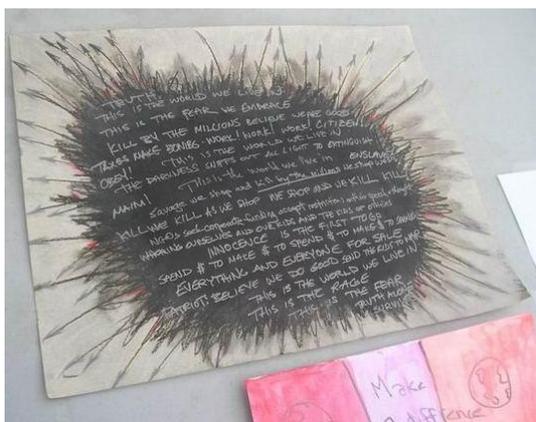


Figure 110: The World We Live In (Mother's Eyes)

*NGOs seek corporate funding accept  
restrictions on their speech & thought  
Whoring ourselves and our kids and the kids of  
others  
Innocence is the first to go  
Send \$ to make \$ to spend \$ to make \$ to  
spend  
Everything and everyone for sale  
Patriot: Believe we do good send the kids to  
war  
This is the world we live in  
This is the reality  
This is the fear  
  
Truth alone survives*

I observed this silent and artistic discourse for over an hour, noticing how the daughter was clearly disturbed by the drawing her mother was venturing on - she kept looking over with agitated signs of grief and discomfort. Whenever her mom would stand up, or shift her glance, she would turn her mother's picture over - black blob facing downwards on the table.

As time went on, a vocal conversation emerged, with the mom explaining why she was drawing what she was drawing, and the daughter expressing her views on how she felt about what she saw her mother drawing. Through this discourse I noticed how the young girl became more at ease with the situation, and more in tune and in focus with her own drawing of meadows, sunshine, and family. It was a merging picture of health where amidst a dichotomy of darkness and light, a growing understanding emerged between a mother and her daughter, about the world in which we live.

#### Hegemony: Avoiding the Threat of Global Isolation

Once upon a time in the western communities of these [Calgary] townships, where my grandparents grew up and passed away, townships you knew everybody, everybody helped, you got the crops in, and if the crops were late, everybody went farm to farm to farm to make it all happen - you weren't alone unless you chose to be - that was the essence of the farm community - that is how it originally worked - but now it has changed. (Cheryl Zelmer)

The most vivid and disturbing images of the Global Arts initiative that Gita recalls are the ones created by children in Nigeria that show the world *we live in* as a world of *farming*, and the world *we want* depicted as a box with a *television in it and people sitting around watching it*. In Gita's mind, "we need to change these images of the "better world".



**Figure 111: “The World We Live In”**  
(Nigeria student artist)



**Figure 112: “The World We Want”**  
(Nigeria student artist)

My master’s and present doctoral research in education come to mind here. In brief, ethnocentric notions suggesting that “there is no real alternative for primitive societies to the scientific rationality of Western civilization which is in any case, ‘manifestly superior’” (Musgrove, 1982, cited in Cruickshanks, 1997, p. 66), are permeating every corner of the world. And these oppressive notions are rarely challenged since the “formatively appropriate” O’Sullivan (2002) and dominating ideologies are so all inclusive that individuals are taught to view them as natural, commonsensical, and inviolable (McLaren 1989, cited in Cruickshanks, 1997). It is an image where the values, beliefs, and practices of the dominating, industrialized societies appear so correct that to reject them would be unnatural, a deviation of common sense.

Like many other points raised throughout this dissertation, this notion of hegemony merits further exploration. For now, I merely state the importance of Global Arts pursuits in preventing pervasive and hegemonic notions of superior or privileged culture, in hopes that participants all around the world - through reciprocal interactions and understandings with each other - will think more deeply and consciously about the world in which we live and hope for. The power of Western hegemony rests on claims of superiority, universality, and ethical neutrality of Western education.... “Continuing to accept these Western claims is detrimental to creating a healthier and more humane world (King, 1995, cited in Cruickshanks, 1997, p. 76).

Indeed, the challenge of the new millennium is surely to find ways to achieve international - or better, intercommunity - cooperation wherein human diversity is acknowledged and the rights of all are respected. (Gyatos, pp. 6, 208)

Acknowledgment of this paradoxical slippery slope has been an ongoing feature of the Children's Global Arts initiative. As one example, the wording of a proposal for Global Arts representation in OWL magazine was altered through the following dialogue:

**Proposal to Owl Magazine:**

*Art: The Universal Language of Connection*

GOAL: To make connections with kids in other parts of the world through art.

Many kids in Canada are among the luckiest in the world. Most Canadian kids live in a country at peace, get to go to school, have clean water to drink and nutritious food to eat, and have a healthy environment to grow up in. Lots of kids in other parts of the world are not nearly as lucky. Kids in many other countries experience hardships like war, having to work instead of going to school, a lack of clean water, hunger, and pollution.

**Children's Global Arts Response to Proposal:**

*Thank you for taking the initiative to send off a document to OWL.*

*For the most part, [we feel] you have captured the essence of the Children's Global Arts Foundation, however [we] feel strongly about the need to move away from the mindset that "children here in Canada are the luckiest and most privileged" to an understanding that "we have a great deal to learn from one another".... As noted on our Foundation "mission" and "constitution", and [we are] discovering more and more from listening to participant "stories" and experiences, the act of reciprocity is a crucial part of this Global Arts initiative.*

**Response from OWL representative:**

*You raise an interesting point... about focus.... I think, like Freire, that liberation can neither be a gift from the oppressor, nor a self achievement of the oppressed but a joint project. The issue provided for an interesting tension as I made the revisions:*

Kids in different parts of the world live different lives. Some live in peace and others at war; some go to school and others have to work; and some have a healthy environment while others breathe polluted air. Although there are many differences, kids everywhere have things in common. Art is one way that kids can connect with each other, using creativity to become friends and teach each other about life. What kind of world do you live in? What kind of world do you want? Kids everywhere have the answers.

*Refer to Appendix 5 for finalized OWL publication*

*The world really is a small place,  
we just have to connect to know that.  
We are all the same,  
and we just have to connect to realize that.  
And each child is important because they create the next world.  
And the more we help them connect  
the better the world is going to be.  
(Tim Hopper)*

The preceding chapters highlight ways in which experiences in Children's Global Arts *shift the ways those involved view the world and their role within it*. Using poetic representation as an analysis strategy, the following chapter addresses my second research question: *What are the key elements of a Global Arts experience that contribute to those shifts and experiences?*

## Chapter 10

### SIGNS OF TRANSFORMATION THROUGH CHILDREN'S GLOBAL ARTS

With the prevailing belief that involvement in the Global Arts project has made a difference in the lives of participating children and communities, the following chapter highlights the emerging *factors* or elements that facilitate transformation, as well as the actual *signs* that characterize transformational learning experiences<sup>18</sup>. Weaving elements of transformation at personal, societal, international, and pedagogical levels of understanding, the following insights have evolved through the merging of participant stories and events, and with transformational theories and the present research inquiry in mind. In my attempt to make sense of the mass recollection of words, thoughts, and emotions, I have employed a phenomenological approach to pedagogy and theory. Using a poetic-style of representation (outlined in chapter 3, p. 47), I have merged and highlighted authentic lived experiences (as represented throughout this dissertation) into a textual form of understanding; thematizing participants' own words and phrases in such a way that the poetry acts as a "reflexive re-living and reflective appropriation of something meaningful" (van Manen, 2001, p. 36).

In this sense, I have also employed an interpretive and humanistic approach to theory by deriving meaning and understanding through an "inductive" recollection and analysis of participants' stories. Viewing "insiders" interpretations as primary and legitimate data sources, the following text-as-poetry is essentially a validation of participant words and phrases - recollected and validated by lived experience (van Manen, 2001). My role in this interpretation of data has been primarily in the weaving and thematizing of words and phrases into conceivable elements and signs of transformation.

As discussed earlier (chapter 3), my interest is not in 'grand theory' for its own sake; rather in revealing "'Ah ha' effects where evocative expression through story... fuse old experiences with new ones, thus opening up readers' minds towards new horizons" (Willis & Trondman, 2000, p. 12).

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<sup>18</sup> Keeping in mind the perspective that suggests "*signs of transformation are those moments in life that move us in some way*" (Keith Orchiston), and how oftentimes the true indicators of transformation *evolve over time*, the transformative signs provided in this chapter highlight significant moments of a global arts experience that appear to have made immediate or forthcoming alterations in the way one thinks or acts; or in the way learning, teaching, and/or education are perceived.

### Key Elements of Transformation

Like the intricacies of a spiders' web, there are a myriad of interwoven elements, or factors, that contribute to transformational learning through children global arts experiences. It would be difficult and perhaps ineffectual to attempt to pin specified elements of an experience onto particular signs of transformation, for these factors play out in different ways, and in different combinations depending on each project, participant, and circumstance.



**Figure 113: Elements of Transformation are like interwoven spiders' webs.**

With this in mind, the interrelated web of stories and insights gained from this research have helped to identify the following indicators that contribute to transformation at varying levels and combinations. Signs of transformation through Children's Global Arts experiences are more likely to occur when elements of the following *12 factors or practices* are in place:

1. Global Arts experiences are tied to overarching values and dispositions of a school or organization; woven and integrated into what a program of study or mission statement suggests, but not strapped or bound by content areas, methodology, or traditional forms of academia.

***Global Arts: Where Does it Fit?***

Methodology is actually “the bane of our profession”

It needs to be tied to one of the overarching values in a school

Orchestrating and designing of curriculum

Study “how to be a good citizen”

Touch base outside of yourself

Go beyond money or fundraising

Into the reciprocal exchanges of culture across horizons

*So what does this mean to you?*

Textbooks provide stereotypical understandings of places and people

Other kids exist in the world

It gives children a “real-life” perspective

A real person is attached to this drawing -

a human component that children don’t get from movies or textbook facts

It is not part of the standard curriculum to learn in this holistic way

2. Teachers or facilitators approach Global Arts initiatives as creative designers, open to liberating and transformative ways of knowing.

***Teachers as Leaders and Designers...***

...have the courage to give voice to children,

asking questions that identify

where the power differentials are -

who is privileged and who is not for the way things are done.

...are curious and patient,

willing to step into a child’s world

- participate -

and discover the rich meanings embedded there.

Formal pretenses are dropped

through the building of trustful relationships.

3. Voices of children are honoured and there is an understanding that young people can make important differences in the world.

***Honouring the Voices of Children***

Giving voice to all children...  
particularly those who are silenced.

Finding one's *own voice as separate from others*

Children taken seriously regarding their messages about the world  
- someone is *seeing* and *hearing* their voices

Children are so poignant in the work...  
so true and unbiased.

They don't care about who did what,  
they care about their families, friends,  
and other people around the world.

Honour what it is kids want to do...  
honour a child's mind that has not been tainted  
or trained to decide that difference means to put up walls

Inviting students as co-creators of learning and designers of projects...  
A voice in decisions about learning - how they will take it up

We need a belief that youth are the answer to the issues we face today

4. Art is placed as a priority in a school, village, or community - an "art culture" that values art for care, communication, and connection, rather than a "Friday afternoon craft".

***Art Literacy***

*How much can children show through their artwork?*

The answer is a lot, and it's powerful!

Art is one of the oldest forms of language  
We can communicate universally that way

Finding a child's way into art...  
overcoming distractions that put walls up...  
placing art as a priority and need to overcome dire needs of humanity

Approaching art as a message to be shared - a medium to convey a message  
- making a statement - advertising in a sense

Proper display of artwork demonstrated value

They could relate or find relevance with the knowledge and information...

We are actually exchanging things that we know!  
 You don't need words because the picture tells the message  
 The pictures really spoke to me...  
 A picture is so worth a thousand words!

*It gives the message to me that everyone can have a dream*

Not asking for artwork back but excited to communicate by sending to another child

Everybody understood the possibility that communication might make  
 a little bit of difference

*We made these pictures to make them feel better...  
 to make them feel that they are all part of this world...  
 and to make sure we are sending them our dreams and our love  
 I hope that they will put what we are saying to mind  
 and be happy that now they can do whatever they want  
 to be a good person*

The art will make them happy because their world is sad right now,  
 it will give them some hope and happiness for their life

Someone is *hearing it* - or *seeing it*

This was their gift you know -  
 our story was told visually

Art transcends the relationship between the work and its maker  
 and connects the viewer, *you*

Art provided a voice for students  
*I hadn't thought about that before*

We have this kind of notion that language carries all thought, and without language you can't communicate, and I think we've demonstrated through this project that there's other things that go *beyond* language, that kids can come to quite easily, and valuing that.  
 (Kathy Sanford)

5. Meaningful relationships transpire through artwork:  
Real people, real knowledge about the world - child-to-child.

*Schools*

There is an increased longing in children to make connections with *real people*  
This notion of connection is so important...

Transformational understandings through art...  
Through the act of human connection itself,  
and tangibility in the real world

To be able to relate to other human beings is the most important skill  
we could offer our children  
- it transcends writing and mathematics

We need to know how to draw a map just because it is an important thing to do

*I want to learn about other people in the world  
so we learn how to better share the world*

Learn about someone through the *way they drew*  
*what they drew*

Genuine connections between their lives and learning  
Connecting art with life experiences and personal challenges

There was greater purpose to the art exchange project

Students became intrigued to share something that was real

*A firsthand account* outside of textbooks...  
real life perspectives

Exchange of actual artwork created by real people  
rather than photocopies, fax, or textbook images  
They could relate to what the world should be,  
and what kids universally need to be healthy

Real children involved in war and injustice  
Real people denied human rights

- they become connected to it

How fascinated these kids were by having  
a connection with somebody else....

Through these connections they know we are  
*listening to them*  
 and *to each other*

The *relationship* part will continue on...  
 the part that ties you to someone else  
 Creating awareness, understanding, appreciation for each other

Images that resonate with children link us universally

*It makes our relations stronger and we*  
*know more of each other through*  
*the exchanging of art*

We need to see the connectedness of human life  
 and projects such as this one can help us to do this.

### ***International Development***

You can't just go into a community and ask them what they need  
 without first having a relationship with them.

Relationships develop trust,  
 Trust creates comfort,  
 Comfort is necessary to assess village needs

One of the best ways to break the ice and initiate relationships was through  
 Art

Playful forms of art exchange  
 Song, dance, games  
 They transcend the barriers of language and unfamiliarity

The art created the conversation for us  
 It started the dialogue

There is sort of an order to it  
 and I can't say enough about the art exchange  
 and the importance of it for developing the relationships...  
 For getting to the point where people feel comfortable enough to say to you...  
 "You know, we're not all done with this, but these are the issues"  
 The art exchange was really important

The art went a long way in building relationships  
 It also *provided hope*

6. Experiences trigger deep emotional responses, creating dissonance and disorientation in thought, beliefs, and assumptions about the world.

When you give the kids the opportunity *to look deeper* - to explore these questions from inside themselves, rather than outside themselves - they begin to speak from their hearts. Then these heartfelt responses will have a greater connection to themselves, to their families, to their communities. (Gita John)

***Accessing the heart not the head***

Art touched hearts across cultural boundaries...  
it anchored children

Providing a conversation through pictures  
provides a direct and powerful link  
on an emotional level

Comes from a child's heart not head

Triggers emotional breakthroughs...  
anger, silence, outrage,  
puzzlement, confusion,  
amazement, shock,  
curiosity, excitement,  
and  
shifts in world view

Building on a child's natural feelings of empathy  
... a sense of responsibility for others

With Children's Global Arts and the present research in mind, *intuition* is known to arouse the possibility of art and aesthetics, of love and beauty, of care and kinship - all kinds of creativity and compassion are intuitive (Osho, 2001). People of the heart, known as painters, poets, musicians, dancers, and actors, tap into a totally different way of knowing that 'brackets out' logic and reason in order to reach the heart of their creativity and insight. As Marks (1990) suggests, "until you can learn to listen to your heart, you are operating with incomplete information. Closing your heart, you lose touch with your own nature and the natural world. You lose your sense of self, your sense of purpose and your sense of the sacred" (p. 36).

Logic or intellect is the functioning of our *head* and intuition is the functioning of our *heart*. Philosophers such as Immanuel Kant maintain that it is through intuition that we construct and maintain the basic elements of our world -- our sense of space and time, our sense of identity, our sense of the truth of things, our sense of beauty and goodness (cited in Mishlove, 1994). The word “tuition”, as described by Osho (2001), is a training that comes from outside, somebody teaches us, the tutor. “*Intuition*” has an emotional component that arises within our being; it is our potential; something happening to us like a flash without any causality anywhere, not coming to us step by step by an external source (p. 13).

7. Democratic structures/context are provided that allow for freedom of thought, emotion, and imagination:

- i) Participation and commitment to a Children’s Global Arts initiative is *voluntary* and *optional*.
- ii) Project is left open, allowing the process to evolve and take on a life of its own. Embracing the learner’s experience as the starting point allows for individual thought and expression, and greater diversity, value, and commitment to project.

*When it’s left open - things happen....*

*This is what we sort of would like to see, but leave it up to the children,  
because children don’t like to be told what to do.*

*Stepping out to let the process evolve!*

- iii) Children or participants are given the *creative and cultural freedom* to engage with thoughts, feelings, or ideas.

### ***Creative and Cultural Freedom***

Art allows kids to speak without worrying ...  
That’s why we connected with the artwork so well

Moving away from always being told what to do,  
how to think,  
and what the right answer should be...  
not limited by imposed rules or standards  
Opportunity to engage with freedom  
without pre-prompting, restriction,  
or expectation

- iv) *Uninterrupted and relaxed time* is provided to allow for the “flow” of creativity and experiences to emerge. Participants are allotted longer periods of time (rather than piecemeal) to focus and immerse oneself, allowing the mind and heart to engage.

***Creative Flow***

When you’re into something, that creative space is open  
Time to just immerse yourself...

*It was refreshing their detailed level of focus and interest*  
*Absolutely mesmerized for about 2 hours*  
Becomes a *hum* of engagement shall we say...  
everything was a *buzz* with enthusiasm and energy

One of those memorable days....  
when they had time without any pressure to really plan their project

- v) Artwork or project activities are *not graded* or *assessed* using traditional evaluation or reporting methods.

Students felt at ease that they couldn’t make a mistake....

No critiquing of a child’s response  
No right or wrong answers  
No pressure for perfection  
No worry of understanding each other

Non-competitive  
Cooperative

- vi) Practices of *generative inquiry* and *critical reflection* are meaningfully employed (note - this is **not** a uniquely *adult* characteristic). Inviting students to think about, dialogue, and debrief life’s big questions in significant ways, and deliberate personal life experiences in relation to others’ experiences, creates a transformative space for discrimination, retrospection, and discernment.

***Provoking Generative Inquiry***

We can learn so much from these artistic voices,  
and by making people think,  
the art is making a difference

A rich offering for inquiry -  
a child's entry point to their own personal passions

Ask questions to understand where the power differentials are...

Who is privileged and who is not?

Don't accept things as just given

Don't presume that you know

Ask other kinds of questions....

Actually think about life's big questions...

open up ideas outside of "right and wrong"

*Who are the kids that are living in these places?*

*What is our life like?*

*What would your world be like if you could define it?*

Went from viewing art as a visual thing to going into it as a story and thinking about  
what it would be like in that place

It was very "rich"

Students actually had to think about their lives in significant ways

They could relate to this knowledge and information

Uninhibited freedom to engage in deep conversations

- vii) *Equal educational opportunities* are provided for children and participants. By embracing creative and imaginative intelligence, those whose skills and abilities are not reflected in traditional subject areas such as reading and writing, receive an equal opportunity to contribute.

### ***Equal Educational Opportunities***

It's the fact that certain topics will never be brought up,  
certain voices will never be asked to speak in a certain way.

It was a very equal opportunity for everybody to participate  
at an equal level of contribution

Equalizing

Validating

Not disabling in any way

It engages *all* of the students

We have learnt that *everybody has a voice*  
and everybody has the possibility of making a difference

*Art really has no borders... everyone can take something away from it*

Sitting around the classroom on an  
equal playing field...  
all voices valued...

The Global Arts program supports the mosaic of learners in our school  
and helps them find comfort in who they are

8. Experiences value inclusion and collaboration; projects and activities involve large groups of students, teachers, parents, and community members relaxed and engaged in a common theme(s) (i.e. *The World We Live In* and/or *The World We Want*).

***Inclusion***

An activity where everybody gets involved  
Whole group took part...  
even teachers and community members

Children observed adults and teachers in a new light...  
relaxed, enjoying themselves, learning

Children took part in a whole new side of education  
by having fun

Strong home-school link

Cohesive learning  
Sense of community

It was truly amazing...  
The whole group learnt to sign songs,  
and you can't tell who are the deaf and who are the non-deaf students,  
They are all singing and using sign language

Genuine sense of solidarity and camaraderie emerges

9. Art exchanges are embraced in a spirit of collaborative reciprocity.

***Collaborative Reciprocity***

The beliefs of the world  
shape how children act in the world

Avoid the slippery slope...  
the “poor them” syndrome...  
the “one-way” mentality

Approach Global Arts as a  
*reciprocal understanding* of our world

Emergent understandings...

To actually understand that there are children like themselves  
living in other parts of the world,  
but experiencing life in very different ways

10. *Social Responsibility* is embraced beyond fundraising, to include contribution and commitment at a personal level.

***Making a Difference***

Teaching children to be nice to others  
instead of just caring for themselves....

Students are curious and excited to work on something valuable to others....  
Making someone else happy makes us happy  
Providing a direct link to something bigger than themselves...  
outside themselves

Fulfills a sense of purpose for people...  
a universal need

11. Understandings are embraced through a lens of commonality rather than difference.

*Transcending Barriers of Difference*

*I was almost crying...*

*I just saw the potential for children again doing things that  
we can't seem to figure out as adults to do...  
to just break down barriers that we create around difference.*

By the time a relationship has been built among children through similarity,  
differences are not seen as a problem but more as part of the people

*I was struck in a powerful way by viewing the art of children  
from other parts of the world.  
I was reminded how small the world really is  
and how common our needs really are.*

*I believe the Global Arts project is a meaningful and powerful means  
of increasing international understanding.*

12. Moments, experiences, or events are implanted that *move a person in some way*. The primacy and centrality of experience offer opportunities for people to think and feel about the world in different ways.

*Transformation are those moments in our life that move us in some way  
Maybe it doesn't have to be some sort of action*

## Signs of Transformation



**Figure 114: Student artist from Teacher Education Program, UVic – Secondary Level**

The following overarching signs of transformation indicate that when transformative elements of a Children’s Global Arts initiative (as outlined in the previous section) are actively employed, shifts can occur in the ways those involved view the world and their role within it. These 9 indicators of transformation confirm and enrich our understandings of transformational learning, particularly in areas related to learning, teaching, and educational pedagogy.

### 1. An Emotional, Intuitive Awakening: From Head to Heart

Children’s Global Arts experiences open up emotional and spiritual pathways for understanding the world. Movement occurs from an intellectual understanding or a cerebral response to right and wrong, to intuitive, “aha” responses from the heart.

As elements of this research suggest, if logic and intuition are in symphony, then realities of the world we live in and revelations for the world we want can be authentically and meaningfully perceived. This shift allows the ability to avoid social structures that often inhibit us - providing a grounding and a reference point to express care and emotion.

Although delving into the area of intuition in any great depth is beyond the scope of my present research endeavour, the following global arts' experience highlights the significance of awakening our innate sense of place and our role within the whole of humanity. "In this harmony comes the revelation of the source of one's life... and that is the greatest ecstasy possible - not only to human beings but in this whole universe, nothing more is possible (Osho, p. 5).

***"AHA" Moments***

*All of a sudden it just came*  
 It wasn't even a full "let's think about this, let's talk about this"  
 The energy was just there  
 It all just *clicked and came together* and we couldn't really escape it  
 That moment where you could see the *light bulbs going on*

***From Head to Heart***

Initially they speak from their heads  
 The "right" or the "correct" answer  
  
 It opened hearts on an emotional level  
  
*My heart both ached and rejoiced -*  
*the artwork pulled me in and forced me to travel to a world*  
*I had never witnessed*

*Your artwork made my heart beat stronger*  
*You touch our hearts across cultural boundaries*

We need to send a *part of ourselves* to make a difference...  
 it was a clear breakthrough moment

*Way down deep inside my heart.*  
*I feel sort of sad for the people in a war...*  
*I feel sad for those countries*  
 "I care for you" - he meant it!

The ability for young children in Canada  
 to connect to messages and expressions of hope was very moving

They were *astonished* looking at the artwork  
 A look of *puzzlement?*  
 "Wow"

Overwhelmed by the expression of guns and war  
 Outraged at what they were looking at  
 Shocked, amazed and angry  
 Willing to discuss the issues

Reactions were rather *sombre* and *attentive*  
 They became *quiet* when they had to think about  
*Why does this bother me?*  
*What have I seen?*  
*What have I noticed?*

Something about the discussion and connections  
 being made with children  
 that touched him deeply  
 - he wanted to make a difference

Well, *I cried* - I mean that is hard to do, right?

It has transformed my heart

I don't think it can be done in an any more powerful or meaningful way  
 than through an exchange of art between children

### *Spirituality*

Students were quieter than she had ever seen them...  
 as though a *spiritual forum* was taking place and not an art class

It is spiritual in a sense of going back  
 to what it was that really caused us to want to live

The transformative nature of art  
 spreads directly to the  
 soul of human beings

This *innate desire* towards compassion at this global time  
 is stimulated in the Children's Global Arts Project

## 2. Illuminated understandings of Self in Relation to Others

Children’s Global Arts experiences foster new identities - a new awareness of oneself in relation to others. By reading and communicating one’s own world through art and discourse, new perceptions of individuals within a collective society are provoked - from an insider’s reflection of Self, and an outsider’s perspective of Other. Mezirow’s (1990a) interpretation of “individuation” fits well here; participants become more autonomous thinkers as they begin to freely participate in discourse through art.

Those who are silenced with “special needs” for example, are able to find their place and shine, and make important links between personal challenges, and solutions for the world. This new vitality and confidence instils a sense of personal empowerment; improving status within a community, and altering feelings of disconnect and distance within the world.



Figure 115: Child artist from Iraq, 2005

### ***Profound Sense of Self and Personal Empowerment***

They felt empowered that *even as children*  
they could make something,  
they could do something,  
send something,  
and have it received!

It became *very individual*  
They all *knew* something -  
you could see it in their little faces,  
*they were feeling what they were doing was important*

*Let them see who I am.*  
Oh, what a confidence in me...

All of a sudden even the shyest and quietest of children came out  
Singing and dancing their hearts out  
Everyone formed a bond through music

Crossing the boundaries of nations and language  
*That's what art can do!*

We are taking this seriously as little kids!  
 We are taking this seriously to express  
 the world that we want

Became *a true turning point* for many children,  
 particularly those whose voices have remained deaf and silent for so long

The shy children developed new respect from others...

*He came out of his shell*  
 He not only found his talent through Art,  
 but also gained new respect from others

His behaviour shifted from being  
 “angry and frustrated”...  
 “pissed off at the world”  
 to  
 “smiley and happy”  
 “positive, and more active”

This experience *touched him*...  
 got through to him....  
 It lowered his level of frustration  
 and improved his status among peers

Behaviour with others involved in the project had changed

Because she was seen differently in that one incident,  
 she became much more confident in the classroom  
 From social anxiety to social grace  
 From fear to confidence  
 From shy to extroverted

It was something that he could *be proud* of himself for  
 He can't read, he can't write,  
 but he was able to do this,  
 and everybody loved his performance

It has changed me as a person....  
 It instils confidence in you to be yourself

### 3. Unearthing of Other: From Me to We

Participants discover new realizations about the world outside themselves. They “walk over the line”, shifting from the center of the universe according to “Me”, to a more inclusive perception of the world with a new consideration of “We”.

[The Global Arts] presentation definitely allowed me to view life and the world in a new light. So often we get caught up in our own problems and our own lives that we fail to see what is really going on in the world... (UVic student teacher, Physical Education course)

#### *Unearthing of ‘Other’*

My children will now have an affinity for children in another country

They are seeing it differently...  
 Pictures of these people are real  
 They are more real every day.

*What would you say to a kid in that part of the world?*

*The response they get back will challenge them  
 The artwork they get back will be their response to that challenge*

The sharing of life between distant communities;  
 It builds empathy and understanding for the children involved

They are making a link with a being other than themselves

They can *see themselves through others*

What if *you* were in that kind of situation?  
 What could you do without?

### 4. Altered Vantage Points: From “Privileged” to “Shared Realities”

Though the true nature of the world is rooted in its connectedness, there are many forces in our society that create disconnections between people and the power structures in their world....

We need to see the interconnectedness of human life and projects such as this one [Global Arts] can help us to do this. (UVic student teacher)

There is a general impression in the world that those living in “rich, developed” nations such as Canada, are far better off than those residing in “poor, underdeveloped” countries such as India or Africa. From the vantage point or perspective that children in Canada are the “luckiest in the world”, egocentricism about the world is generated. By experiencing a Children’s Global Arts initiative through the lens of “collaborative reciprocity” participants acquire new understandings about the world. Instead of perceiving the world from a privileged “eurocentric” vantage point, children’s artwork and inquiry open up the world to a shared reality: “*Children living in different parts of the world are ‘just like us’, but experiencing life in different ways*”. These realizations break down barriers that are created around power and difference, and provoke an understanding that we have a great deal to learn from one another, and that children everywhere, can provide the answers for a shared humanity.

Informed by our understanding of reciprocity, Gita John stresses the importance for children to have an “internal, intuitive, dialogue with themselves and others through art”. Discovering how “real art comes from a deep, spiritual, and emotional place”, children are able to see beyond what mainstream media and stereotypes provide for them, and generate altered and more genuine perspectives of the world in which we live:

I think when teachers and children get connected to some other realities and start to look at not just the poverty, but go below that and realize that people are very resilient and strong and not just think, “*Oh those poor people we have to help*”... it can give a more real and genuine understanding rather than what we get in mainstream media. (Gita John)

### ***Shifts in Worldview***

Art creates the conversation....

It is making a difference and it is transforming the way people think

It truly has changed my perspective in the world we live in  
and it has definitely made a big impression on me

Reconsidering quality of life  
Breaking down assumptions of  
what is a good life  
and what is not

We know what is better for you,  
 we know that the right way of life for you is *this*,  
 but we don't even realize that maybe it's *us* that is starving

Things that make children the most happy are not materialistic items  
 such as big TV screens and skateboards  
 But rather  
*family, friends, pets, and shelter*

You wonder if some of the parents feel that they show love to their kids,  
 and if they knew their kids really wanted *time*

They were so happy with what they had they didn't want to change their world  
 What a reality check for our kids!

A moment of pause where they would say,  
*"There are actually people and communities involved in this.  
 There are actually kids over there that are not much different from me"*

Knee jerk, stereo-typical reactions to international events  
 to  
 moments of pause

A chance to step back and say,  
*"Hmm...wait a minute..."*

A chance to step out of themselves and  
 consider the whole of humanity as a connected experience



Figure 116: "Our World" by Matthew Biggs, Grade 5,  
 St. Joseph's Elementary, Victoria

"Our world is good, but not perfect. We have trees, flowers, water, and electricity. We also have homeless people, rapers, murderers, robbers, and serial killers. You think about how good our country is, but you forget how good Afghanistan is."

Drawing on Abram's (1996) understandings, tribal cultures experience their own consciousness as merely one form of awareness among many others. The traditional magician cultivates an ability to transform out of his or her own state of consciousness precisely in order to make a connection or contact with other intertwining elements of human and living existence:

Only by temporarily shedding the accepted perceptual logic of his culture can the sorcerer hope to enter into relation with other species on their own terms... the ability to readily slip out of the perceptual boundaries that demarcate his or her particular culture - boundaries reinforced by social customs, taboos, and most importantly, the common speech or language - in order to make contact with, and learn from, the other powers in the land. (Abram, p. 9)

## 5. Conscientization: From Conformity to Freedom

Children's Global Arts experiences provoke a realization that the dire circumstances of the world we live are not fixed realities that one must tolerate and accept; rather they are complexities to be confronted and resolved. Participants discover their power to alter personal circumstances, and the conditions that are confronted by society. Greater ownership and deliberation of ideas prompt a "new creative story" that opens up spaces for hope, opportunity, and action. Participants move from feeling desperate and helpless in their response to the future, to determined and empowered that they can actually make a difference. As Freire (2002) would suggest, they "break into consciousness" as they move from passive "objects" to active "subjects" with a new sense of pride and determination.

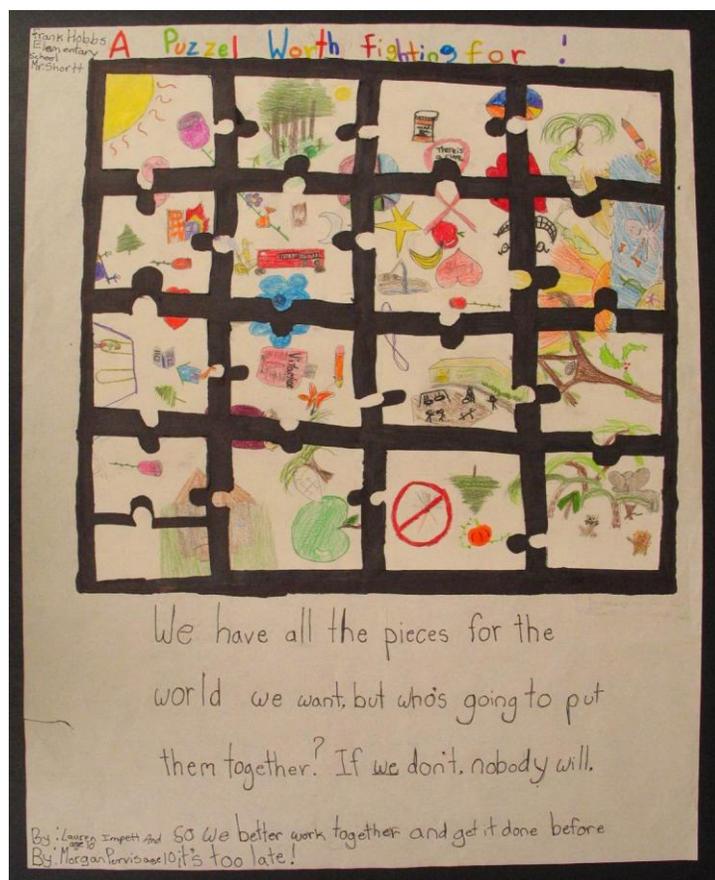


Figure 117: Victoria artist, age 10

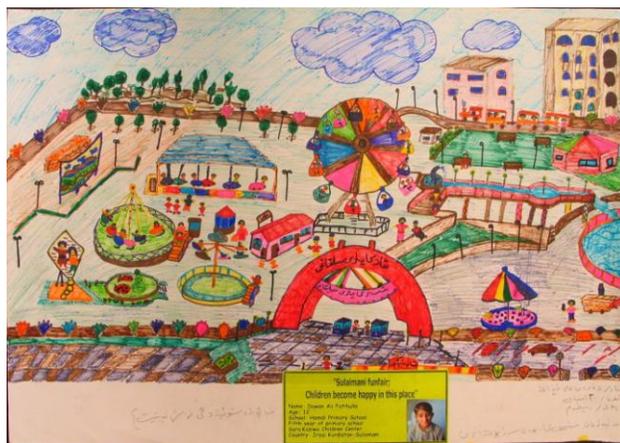
With reference to the Okanagan (sqilxwcut) way of living, the artistic beauty as featured in a spiders' web symbolize this interplay between creativity and survival (Simon, 1999). From a spider's artistic perspective, we discover the transformation that takes place when one realizes how dire circumstances that permit one to merely survive, can be actualized differently through creative and cultural forms of art.

Survival, when it is strictly only survival, is an ugly thing. Life is something more than just survival. To be alive is to know splendour and beauty. Living is an art form. I am immersed in art. I am forever spinning art from out of my flesh. My purpose in spinning webs is no longer merely to catch flies to eat. There is much more to it now. (Simon, 1999, p. 210)

In relation to the Children's Global Arts initiative, perspectives of a fearful and desperate world can be transcended by creating and imagining a world of splendour, possibility, and purpose. In this context, *the world we live in* is not necessarily perceived as something inexorable, but as something that is co-constructed by people engaged together in life. It's the perspective that sees *the world we want* as situated within the realm of our present reality, and not a mere vision pre-determined, or unattainable.



**Figure 118: “I want the world to be a peaceful, beautiful place” (ESL student artist from UVic)**



**Figure 119: “Sulaimani funfair - Children become happy in this place” (Child artist from Iraq)**

***Liberation***

*Once we find our way into art  
then the energy and strength  
that come from that experience  
are immense and help us overcome  
so many dire things*

*That ability to get out of the social structures that often inhibit us  
Pulls us out of our comfort zone*

*You have to trust each other*

It was a gift that you empower the women and you change the whole community! You  
change every aspect!  
... it thrives!  
*I had not expected it*

Turns experiences of hopelessness and powerlessness  
into spaces for creativity, hope, and opportunity

Art gave choice and allowed voices to be heard...  
perhaps for the first time.  
For people in the community to have anything like that  
makes a *huge difference*.

It also opens up opportunities for other things:

*You being here has motivated us to do this;  
You have made us think about other projects and  
now we are going to put them into action*

*Look, good things are happening here...  
you should send more of your children to school now*

It was a sign... a symbol of hope

*Do you realize that you and I are now a part of history?  
I was like "WOW"*

Without the relationships through art exchanges in the community  
I don't know that it would have even been possible

## 6. From Apathy to Care, Compassion, and Action

Children's Global Arts experiences stimulate intrinsic gestures of compassion, and rekindle an innate desire to care. In some ways these introspective experiences enable participants to "return to an understanding of what it means to be alive and happy" by triggering ways to act on the deep feelings that emerge from creating and exchanging artwork. As one young participant observes, it "changed the way people *act* in Canada and how children in Afghanistan *feel* - instead of feeling like being mean because their world is sad, they felt like being kind again after getting the pictures".

Instead of reliving apathetic responses to the future, participants begin to "think differently when an opportunity arises to help people". These experiences demonstrate that those living with fear, apathy, or despair are emotionally capable of change - children can become more inclusive and compassionate with one another if inspired by the opportunity to do so.

### *Motivation to Act Differently*

Global citizenship has been inspired in the kids at a very young age

They begin to see the world as their neighbour and they  
"really live" the interconnections

It triggered ways to act on the deep feelings  
that they were getting from the pictures

For that one kid to take off his necklace...  
*How did that affect the rest of the kids?*

I think the kid's assumptions changed

I see it spilling over from their relations with each other in the classroom  
to the playground.

I have seen children become more inclusive with one another  
and more compassionate...

*A Chinese kid came and felt a bit self-conscious about being different  
and they really embraced him.*

*A fearful boy came to life in the play... there is a change in him;  
We see him more confident and he has started to try more things*

*We saw him become more active in class,  
smiling more, and doing a few more “positive” things*

It changes the way people *act* and it changed the way people *feel*

*I will start listening to my mom and dad more*

*He ran up to his classroom and got his brand new school supplies...  
There was something about this discussion and the connections  
that touched him deeply and he wanted to make a difference*

*Can you make sure this gets to a kid in Zambia?*

Wow, this kid has been really touched by this

It re-changed my own personal commitment to “make a difference”,  
help others to be teachers that take responsibility for the world

I never heard - “*I am going to shoot you*” - ever!

Global Arts is a vehicle for stimulating sustained and broader action  
The *entry point* into a community  
An entry point *from* a community *into* a community  
- that then becomes something wider

## 7. From Conflict to Clarity - From False to Real

The astounding number of stories and events brought together in this dissertation bring to light an essential and unifying, “sign of transformation”. Through Children’s Global Arts experiences that compel one to create, communicate, and deliberate beliefs and assumptions about the world, one is able to move through emotively charged responses of confusion and contradiction, and reach a state of greater coherence and clarity. Transformation occurs as one becomes better able to question and differentiate between new knowledge and ideals, altering previously held beliefs and assumptions about the role of oneself in relation to the world.

The *flip happened* because they saw, they talked, they dialogued

Asking other kinds of questions bring about different kinds of understandings  
Questioning of assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience...  
an awareness of a contradiction among one’s  
thoughts, feelings, and actions

This unifying characteristic can be attributed to discrepancies between perceptions of what *appears to be real*, and what is being discovered as *actually real*, about the nature of the world. In this anthology what “appears to be real,” relates to what is perceived through a submerged, incoherent, or tainted viewing of the world. What emerges as “unmistakably real”, refers to a perception of the world based on clarity and coherence; a view that illuminates the self in relation to all others, and one that only begins to make sense in terms of *relationships*:

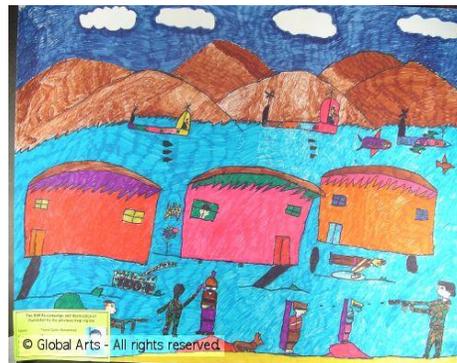
*In high school Social Studies I clearly remember being bored, but also having great difficulty conceptualizing other people and cultures from around the world. I had trouble believing they existed. France was a pink blob on the map of Europe, and Germany was a yellow one. Iraq was a distant place. I was never really sure where bombs were being dropped on people. None of it was very real to me....*

*Through Global Arts it becomes much easier to envision real people living in these places, with real families who have hopes, dreams and needs. The fact we are all human with the same basic needs, is brought to life in a meaningful and concrete way. This is one powerful way that Global Arts can be used in a Social Studies classroom.*  
(UVic high school student teacher)

Through this “process of discernment” (Boyd, 1989), participants acquire a clearer sense of reality about the world, a “reality check” so to speak. Desensitized or politically false images of the world are challenged by images of real children affected by war and injustice. Discovering a more coherent perspective compels one to see how an *ideal world* full of Nintendo and cartoon-like aggressive characters (for example), reflects the actual lived “reality” for many children. These authentic forms of communication remove distractions that taint an incoherent lens of the world, provoking viewers to act differently in recognition of oneself in related wholeness (see Sign # 8, p. 237).



**Figure 120: “The World We Want”**  
Child artist from Canada, age 12



**Figure 121: “The World We Live In”**  
Child artist from Iraq, age 11

Exchanging images of the world outside of present realities, can also offer opportunities for children to reflect back on, and challenge, their own visions and circumstances with a critical worldview – particularly those living in North American “privileged societies”....



Figure 122: “Fishing in picnic” Child artist from Kurdistan, Iraq, age 10, 2005



Figure 123: “My Ideal World” Child artists from Victoria, Canada, ages 12

In a clearer state of consciousness, *the world we want* can also be reflected in *the world we actually live in*; opening up spaces beyond isolation, despair, and media representations of the world.



Figure 124: “The World We Want” (Child artist from Gordon Head Elementary School, Victoria, age 12)



Figure 125: “The World We Live In” (High school artists from King David School, Vancouver, ages 14)

Furthermore, global arts experiences open up a more complete picture of the world, and remind us of our interdependence and responsibility to one another. Through the act of art exchange, children, and all those involved, become part of the realities, the visions, and the promises of a more just and peaceful world.



Figure 126: Child artist from Kabul, Afghanistan, 2003

### *Shifts in Perception*

There is a huge difference in terms of *what is actually real*  
The difference between the theory of international development,  
and what is actually real when you get there

*A big realization for me -*

It changed the way that I think about international development  
What an impact having no choices has on your life!  
Intellectually I understood that,  
but from an emotional place,  
I didn't have that understanding

It became the guiding lights...  
Switching how I think about those communities

We didn't have the right to say  
*"We didn't promise anything"*  
It's a two way street  
and the two ways aren't both defined by us

Just my being there was a promise...  
A commitment to those people  
*I hadn't thought about it in that way before*

## 8. Cultural Maturity - From Local to Global

Through Global Arts experiences children move from limited understanding of the world to broader more inclusive perceptions of the global community. Children begin to identify with life's most basic and universal needs, rights, and responsibilities, and view themselves as one small part of a bigger web. As eyes are open to the global community, this new perspective compels children to learn from other cultures and other ways of being in the world. As children find solidarity and connectedness with others in the world, feelings of loneliness, alienation, and disconnect are dissipated through a renewed desire to care and communicate in a spirit of a shared humanity.

In essence, what is transpiring within the myriad of global arts' experiences is a spiritual and intuitive revolution based on universal responsibility. It is a call to unearth the wider community of beings with whom we are connected, and for attitudes and actions that consider others' interests alongside our own.

It highlights a subtle but ultimate truth: interdependence rather than independence defines our lives and is everything around us. None of us is an island. The world is a vast web of intertwined events, people, and things. These linkages may be difficult to see, but they are real, always there, lurking just beneath the surface (Dalai Lama, cited in His Holiness, 2004, p.150)

### *An Indigenous Look*

What these global arts experiences have allowed, is a returning to how our ancestors perceive the world - indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing that bring greater clarity and meaning to our confused existence:

Everything we do or don't do affects everything around us, and in turn we are being influenced by everything and everyone around us. Cognition of the spiral effect, like ripples in a pool, and the spinning of webs, the conscious act of simultaneously creating wonderful structures for survival and art, combine with the reason for our existence, our children; and therefore it is *sqilxwcut*, the Indigenous way. (Simon, 1999, p. 303)

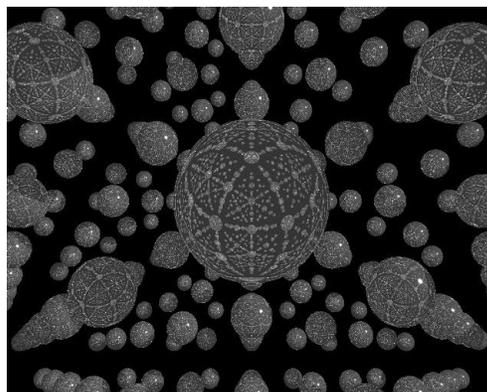
Clark (2002) explains *perspective* through two distinct metaphors that represent two mutually exclusive worldviews (gestalts); namely the "Billiard Ball"

gestalt, and the “Indra’s net” gestalt. According to Clark, the universe is envisioned as either a mixed assemblage of discrete objects colliding with each other as they follow independent paths, or as a single, interlocking net of mutually dependent entities. As the artwork and stories highlighted in this dissertation suggest, the sense of disconnect and confusion felt in today’s world could be attributed to the distorted, billiard ball perception of our world:

In many of us this sense of loss has grown hand in glove with an uneasy sense that our window on the world – our worldview – is somehow distorted, deeply destructive in its impact, and quite insufficient either to understand what is happening to the planet or to do anything fundamentally about it. (Selby, 2002, p. 78)

Clark’s (2002) metaphor of *Indra’s Net* provides an all-encompassing image that demonstrates the interconnected and indigenous nature of our universe. The image comes from a 2,000 year old Mahayana Buddhist tradition, depicted by a jewelled net where each jewel is connected to and reflected upon all others. Each entity contains the whole, *is* the whole, and it is through their reciprocal interactions that the whole universe is kept functioning (p. 9).

#### Indra’s Net



**Figure 127: We see a reflection of ourselves through each other....Each other is a reflection of ourselves.**

These indigenous ways of viewing the world - [awakened through en-riched global arts experiences] - are found at the very heart of transformation (Dei, Hall, & Resenberg, 2000), and at the core of this research. Indra’s net provides an ancient symbolizing image for understanding the awakened and heightened consciousness of the world as experienced by many global arts’ participants.

*One Art Exchange at a Time*

If we could get children to know about the global community  
 through an exchange of culture,  
 then the more they know about the “other”.  
 That will do a lot to help us solve some of the problems in the world

*Well, someone in another country,  
 in a house that is half way around the world,  
 has exactly the same picture as me, and I drew it...  
 This is a good thing cause then they know that,  
 well, that I care for them...*

These children have succeeded in bringing about change.  
 And in so doing have achieved a small triumph  
 over the problems and chaos  
 plaguing our beautiful planet

We learned that children may have impact right around the world.  
*We know that there are small actions that you can do that  
 actually will make a difference  
 in the world that we live in*  
 An organic quality where  
 one child shares to another child shares to another child  
 and it creates a social change  
 in either attitude  
 or how they want to relate back in their own community

You know, one piece of artwork  
 knocks another brick out of the wall  
 and it progresses that way

Through encouragement and the building of relationships with one another,  
 strong education and a promising future will prevail

The love and connection as communicated in their artwork  
 will provide hope for a newborn country

And the result will be for you guys that if  
*our* kids have a good education,  
 if *our* kids have good ability to learn something...  
 and they have good relations,  
 we can *give that back to the world*

*The world really is a small place,  
 we just have to connect to know that....*

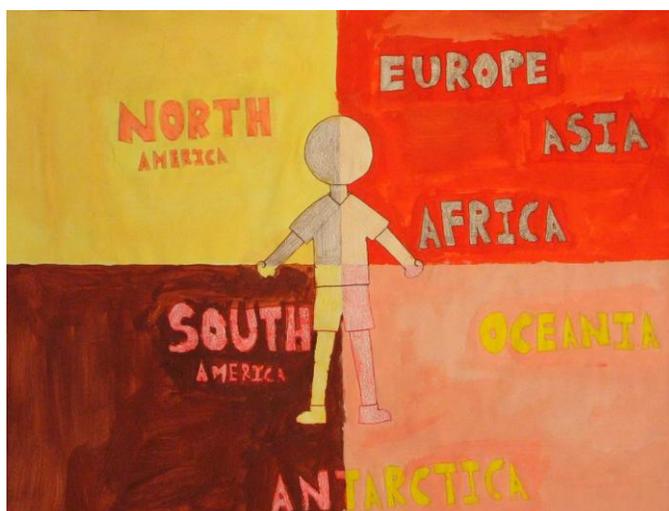


Figure 128: “The world I want would be a place with no racism. Where everyone is treated with respect”.  
Child artist from Gordon Head Elementary School, Victoria

In essence, what can be revealed in these global arts’ experiences, is a reflection of others inside oneself  
- a discovery that “me is actually we”  
- *we are one.*

“In the picture I drew a person with 4 skin colours, black, peach, yellow, and red. I also wrote seven continents to show that it doesn’t matter where you come from. We are one!”

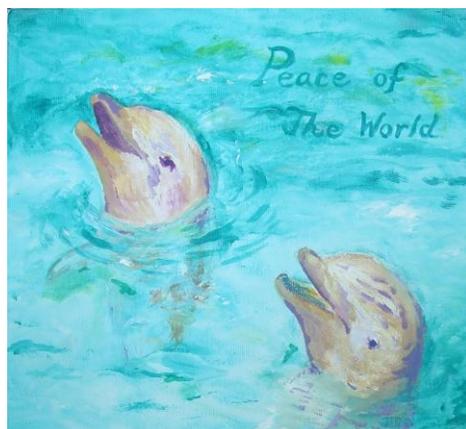
### *An Educator’s Perspective*

The following story (Cruickshanks, 2006) weaves the essence of transformation and ideas as highlighted in this chapter and in this dissertation thus far. When ESL instructor Laura Nimmon first told her UVic art students (from Mexico, Spain, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Brazil, and Italy) about the Global Arts project she wasn’t sure if they understood her because their English proficiency wasn’t very high. But once they understood that they would have the opportunity to have their voices heard by others about such an important topic (the world we want), it gave them a momentum that she hadn’t seen in the class before. Laura was amazed at how focused students became when her lesson was connected to some kind of tangibility in the real world. When they worked on the art projects students were quieter than she had ever seen them - as though a spiritual forum was taking place and not an art class. Through this sacred, creative energy, Laura’s class was reminded of the power that resides within the visual form of communication and the beauty in language that need not be spoken. Once the artwork was completed, Laura observed how The World We Want representations were as eclectic as the group itself and all embodied the fundamentals that make us human:

love, peace, and hope. What Laura found most interesting about the images was that they were *centered not only on the world that the artist wanted, but the world that the artist wished other people to have*:



**Figure 129:** “In the future I hope that we will have a healthy environment”



**Figure 130:** “The dolphin is recognised as a symbol of peace and ease. Today, there are many wars and conflicts between cultures all over the world. My generation desires the disappearance of war, and permanent peace of the world, like the parent and children of dolphins”

*This is probably the theme that strikes me most about this project on a whole. That it helps people all over the world step out of themselves and their own worlds and consider the whole of humanity as a connected experience... the project reaches us at a time in the world when we feel increasingly compelled towards an intrepid compassion. Thus, this innate desire within so many of us towards gestures of compassion at this global time is stimulated in the Global Arts Project (Nimmon, cited in Cruickshanks, 2006, p. 45)*

## 9. Altered views of art, education, and/or international development

At a pedagogical level of understanding, insights that we have gained through Children’s Global Arts initiatives change not only what we know about education, but how we come to know. It has compelled us to “think of both art and children in a new light”, and also to “think differently about international development and aid projects”. The goals and ends of education have shifted from “get good grades and a job”, to, “learn how [to] be happy, how to make others happy, and not just think about where money comes from”.



**Figure 131:** Child artist from Sundance Elementary School, Victoria, age 8.

Projects are remembered for a long time afterwards, and fulfill a desperate sense of purpose in schools, villages, and communities. They are teaching us “how to be nice to others instead of just caring about ourselves”, and provoking us to ask crucial questions about the meaning and purpose of education.

*New Understandings*

I plan to explore important questions:

*What does it mean to teach?*

*How do I honour children?*

*What don't I know?*

*What do I take for granted?*

*What is transformative about arts learning?*

-----

Global Arts enabled us to see things that may be  
we wouldn't have been able to see,  
or wouldn't have picked up on

You can tell *urban* from *rural*,  
you can tell that there is a divide here

You could see the hierarchy...  
a pecking order

Suggesting gender inequality, gender imbalances  
It was good for us to see that through the art exchange

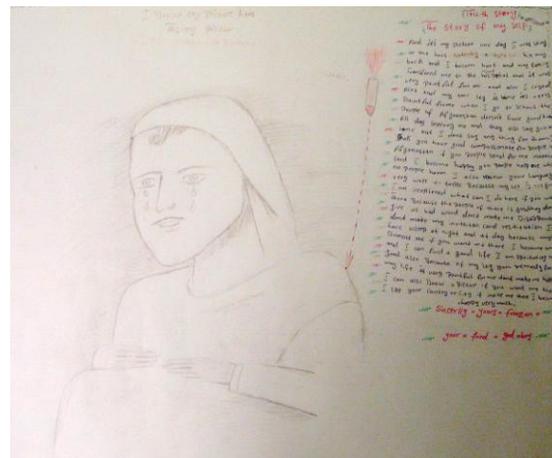
My uncertainty shifted  
I began to understand the importance of art as a medium for  
exchanging knowledge,  
for exchanging ideas,  
for building relationships

*They are going to remember this for the rest of their lives*

It has changed my role  
I saw art in a different way

## Changed Lives

The myriad of stories and events that are intertwined throughout this dissertation confirm how meaningful pursuits in the area of Children’s Global Arts can change lives. Moving from a submerged state of consciousness or disenchantment, to a realm of clarity and vision is however, not always easy. We can be comforted by Freire’s (2002) words that suggest that the role of transformative education is not the making of a complete being. And if human beings are in the process of becoming, as Freire suggests, then Children’s Global Arts can only attempt to play a part in an ongoing process of transformation, with the hope that those who have been significantly moved by an art exchange or experience, will continue their journey as personal situations and circumstances will allow.



**Figure 132: “One day I was sitting in the house and a bullet hit my back...”**

**Froozan, Kabul, Afghanistan, 2003**

*The artwork from Afghanistan affected me very deeply, especially the self-portrait of a young Afghani girl named Froozan who had lost her legs when a missile hit her in the back as she sat in her home.... As I read [her] letter I felt as if she was pleading for me to come and save her. “What can I do?” I asked her. I felt so helpless, so useless, as I looked into the portrait’s eyes. (UVic student teacher)*

It is also reassuring to think that transformative learning is “irreversible” (Mezirow, 1990a). This awareness leads us to believe that those individuals who were emotionally altered by their experiences will not only remember these moments, but will be forever changed by them. And although many agree that transformative learning involves experiencing deep, structural shifts in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and action (Morrell & O’Conner, 2002, p. xvii), perhaps the *action* that takes place involves internal changes that are brought about through these moments of value and meaning. For when this shift occurs, it will inevitably alter a person’s way of being within the world.

The beliefs a society [groups of individuals] holds about the universe and about human nature in particular tend to create the very behaviours they predict. How we see the world does shape who we are. (Clark, 2002, p. 11)

The following chapter (11) builds on these final points and answers my concluding research question:

*What are the implications of these research findings for learning and education?*

Chapter 11 takes a closer look at basic school structures and identifies ways in which they can be viewed differently in order to accommodate transformational understandings as identified throughout this dissertation.

## Chapter 11

### CHILDREN'S GLOBAL ARTS IN SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS *WHERE DOES IT FIT?*

The pathos of the human being today is that we are totally caught up in this incredible transformation, and we have significant responsibility for the direction it will take. What is terrifying is that we have it within our power to make life extinct on this planet. Because of the magnitude of this responsibility for the planet, all our educational ventures must finally be judged within this order of magnitude....

Education within the context of 'transformative vision' keeps concerns for the totality of life's context always at the forefront. (O'Sullivan, 2002, p. 2)

#### Schools for Change

The findings of this research propose that the more revolutionary and transformative views of educational change be considered more seriously. A radically different form of "transformative criticism" claims that the dominating culture is no longer "formatively appropriate" and calls into question the fundamental mythos of its form and its educational visions for conformity and replication. In contrast to educational reform which suggests the need to "get things back on track", transformative criticism maintains that a "radical restructuring of the [dominating] culture and a fundamental rupture with the past" is in order (O'Sullivan, 2002, p. 3). And the moment we begin to shatter our beliefs in our present education system, and question the appropriateness of its form and its function, then freedom and "transformation becomes simultaneously very urgent, very difficult, and altogether possible" (Blades, 1997, p. 97).

*"I chose peace for my theme because that's the way I want the world to be. I drew two doves carrying a peaceful world. I also drew a sun because I think the sun represents a new beginning" ...*

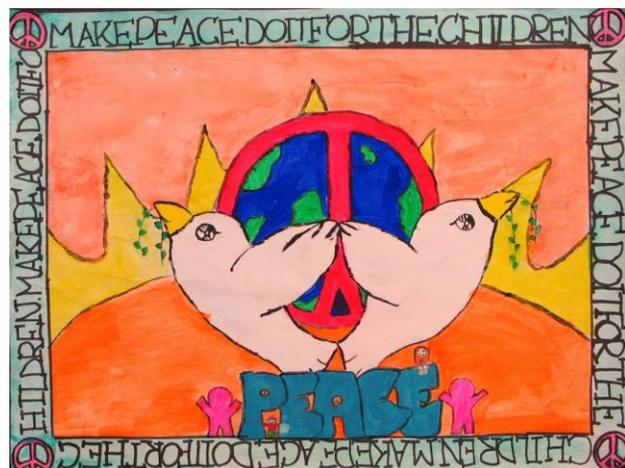


Figure 133: "The sun represents a new beginning"  
Grade 7, Gordon Head Elementary School, Victoria

With reference to transformation and educational change theories and the myriad of events and stories highlighted in this Global Arts research, I will adopt the stance that fostering transformative learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires a vision of education that seriously challenges us - as students and educators - to assess and redefine our roles, practices, and perspectives, and subsequently become changed by this experience. The artistic visions of *the World We Want* as set forth in the preceding chapters have in a sense become a reality - a touchstone of humanity that inspires us to imagine schools where the interconnectedness of the world comes together in support of a free and democratic society - a global society where the elimination of war, injustice, environmental degradation, isolation, and despair become the cornerstone of educational values, programs, and dispositions worldwide:

In an educational system within the context of a social change movement, the collective practice of perspective transformation can convey useful lessons to other learners about the harmful effects of hegemonic structures and their programs and expectations. It can also heighten the urgency of the need to rectify injustices resulting from societal inequities. (Aureto, 2001, p. 52)

Alongside the commitment for change, school practices will need to transform the very nature of the way the world is viewed - only then can we expect behaviours and actions that benefit the common good to emerge. For the most part, public schools and universities continue to promote narrowly defined views that serve society's dominating agenda and preserve the status quo. "They emphasize the development of individuals who, through schooling and mastery of knowledge and skill, will be 'advantaged' in rigged competition for status and fortune" (Heaney & Horton, p. 94). And with the recognition that schools generally reinforce isolation and injustice (through *billiard ball*, *slippery slope*, and *hegemonic* practices), a dramatic shift is in order where transformative learning practices reflect the understanding that we live in a shared and interdependent world.



**Figure 134: Quilt sent to children in Belize.**  
Child artists from Erin Woods Elementary School,  
Calgary, Canada

## Rethinking School Structures

If it is accurate to trace many of our present dilemmas to what has been called the "disenchantment of the world", then the solution, presumably, must somehow involve a process that breaks the spell and circle of routines built up by modern culture and begins the transition into a different stream of experience. (Gablik, 1991, p. 11)

*How can we feel less isolated? is the question*  
(Cheryl Zelmer)



**Figure 135: Child's artwork from Victoria, Canada**

The implications of the present research findings change what we have come to know about knowledge and education - altering notions of how school should be organized, what motivates teachers and students, what learning and teaching is, and how they could be practiced "in the best interests" of children and the world at large. In an attempt to find a legitimate place for the Children's Global Arts initiative - particularly in public school institutions in which it is currently finding itself - it is important to consider, or *re-consider* basic *school structures* in light of a new and different stream of experience as highlighted in previous chapters throughout this dissertation. For those inclined to impart Global Arts in their practices, the structures of *content (curriculum)*, *space*, *people*, and *time*<sup>19</sup> have been woven into a pedagogical framework based on *values and dispositions*<sup>20</sup> - providing educators with a number of guiding principles to assist them in moving forward with meaning and opportunity. The insights gained from the identification of factors and signs of transformation (outlined in the previous chapter) have been influential in providing the pedagogical framework as outlined below. As transformation is necessary to provoke schools for change, then the factors that contribute to transformation have come to form the basis for the following educational pedagogy.

<sup>19</sup> These structures were considered through the work of Walter Werner (1995).

<sup>20</sup> The framework of "values and dispositions" has been devised through the synthesis of participant stories and events, particularly those provided by "Theresa Lewis" (refer to chapter 7). It is intended to be viewed - in part or as a whole - as an interconnected and cyclical process rather than a set of standard or linear mandates.

*Children's Global Arts: A "Thought-Object"*<sup>21</sup>

*Content (Curriculum)*

Based on two themes,  
 "the world we live in" and "the world we want"  
 children from around the world  
 are invited to create and exchange  
 cultural art forms  
 in pursuit of a more  
 peaceful, just, and compassionate world

When looking at the pedagogical structure of Children's Global Arts, it is crucial not to label or routinize it in our attempts to break barriers and open up learning outside of the box - it is something *we have to be guarded against all the time* (Theresa Lewis). With this in mind, when we consider Children's Global Arts, it shouldn't be perceived as a handbook, a manual, or a curriculum. If it becomes prescribed with a curriculum label, it will become ultimately defined and constrained by it. By slotting Children's Global Arts as a content or subject area to be studied and evaluated - like "math" or "social studies", there is also a good chance that it will be met with a great deal of resistance by students, parents, and teachers; the walls will go up before it even enters the conversation. With "Fine Arts" as an example:

... how many schools in the city call themselves a "Fine Arts" school, and "*you're going to do a plasticine piece, you will do water colour this year, you will do this and this in your classroom, and that is how we are a Fine Arts School*"... that is the mandate... and that won't intrinsically turn somebody into wanting to do Art! (Cheryl Zelmer)

Theresa adds that if educators approach Children's Global Arts by having students simply "draw a picture and send it to Zimbabwe" - as "exercise 3 point 2b" in the prescribed learning outcomes - then we have "missed the boat again".

*Where then*, does Global Arts fit in a "school system" that is regulated by curriculum and a mandated set of learning outcomes?

---

<sup>21</sup> Tim Hopper coins the Children's Global Arts' initiative as a "thought-object".

With reference to the elements and signs of transformation put forth in the previous chapter, and the myriad of events and experiences offered throughout this dissertation, Children's Global Arts has been designed and orchestrated through a range of educational *values* and learning and teaching *dispositions* that view education as a lifelong investment in the larger web of life. In the process of this transformation, educators begin to replace older views of curriculum and instruction with an expanded vision of the role of Children's Global Arts in human experience.

The Global Arts project is critically important to adults and children because it reminds [us] what is important about learning...it reinforces what learning *not just looks like*, but *feels like* when you have an investment in it. (Kathy Sanford, DVD log)

#### *Values and Dispositions for Learning and Teaching*

Rather than focusing on the “what” of education, the following eleven values and dispositions provide educators with characteristic understandings of *how and why children learn* - ways to go about pursuing Children's Global Arts initiatives that provoke transformational learning and new ways of looking at the world. “Values” represent the overarching *beliefs* or *principles* of a Children's Global Arts experience - the basic philosophical foundation that embody the key elements and dispositions for transformational learning. “Dispositions” reflect the *perspectives* or characteristic *attitudes of heart and mind* that educators espouse and promote when pursuing a transformative Children's Global Arts initiative. When these dispositions are upheld they provide a set of axioms or maxims so-to-speak, that help us become clearer about how and why children learn, and the implications transformative education has for shifting the way children see the world and their roles within it. As these beliefs and perspectives have been explored at great length in the previous chapter (through poetic factors and signs of transformation), and throughout this research, they will be outlined briefly in the following section.

### 1. Value: Teachers are Leaders and Designers

**Disposition:** The designing of a global arts initiative, with the honouring of students as co-creators of projects and ideas, is a fundamental role of teachers.

*That is our job as teachers - we get to orchestrate - somewhat like a designer - or an architect. We don't always necessarily know what the final colour scheme is going to be because absolutely that needs to be what we co-create with children. We need to look for the opportunities; we need to listen for the opportunities. (Theresa Lewis)*



**Figure 136:** Bara and students from Deenabandhu, India, packaging up artwork for children in Erin Woods School, Calgary, Canada

It is important that teachers (educators/facilitators) are recognized and legitimized as significant leaders in education - leaders who are willing to challenge the status quo, take risks for the common good, and unwittingly generate energy and momentum throughout the classroom, school, and/or community. In a democratic society, it is troubling to note how teachers, for the most part, “have been kept out of many important conversations on, and the significant work of, school restructuring and reform”; particularly when “teachers who take leadership roles in their schools are successful agents and conduits in promoting cultural change” (Beauchum & Dentith, 2004, p. 277):

Their work as leaders – in and out of their classrooms – seems to push the school culture toward a more inclusive and collaborative one. When the work of teachers is held in the highest regard and is made visible throughout the school, the culture of the school shifts from authoritative, linear, and mechanical, to open, responsive, and thoughtful. (pp. 283-284)

In cases where teachers take on these leadership roles in schools, it has been observed how their work “helps break down some barriers that rigidly lock people into specific roles” (p. 284). Furthermore, teacher leaders who are innovative and collaborative are viewed by others as being capable and competent. This paves the way

for other teachers and administrators to transform their practices in favour of more collaborative and purposeful learning and teaching opportunities. Teachers as leaders can guide innovation and ingenuity, “create novel ways to navigate the multiple roles and tasks of adults in schools, and pose fundamental questions related to beliefs and values of schooling” (p. 284).

Key questions to be asked by teachers in order to fully embrace global arts’ initiatives relate to the fundamental beliefs and perspectives that perpetuate the way in which schooling and learning practices operate. Banks (1993) argues that a “transformative” curriculum depends less on the content of what is taught than on the willingness of teachers to examine their own personal and cultural values and identities, to change the ways they organize classrooms and relate to students, and to actively commit themselves to social change:

- *What is the purpose of education?*
- *What is my role in the education of children?*
- *What does it mean to teach? To learn?*
- *What is curriculum?*
- *What is literacy? and how do children become literate?*
- *What is knowledge? and how do children come to know?*
- *What is implied by “disadvantaged”, “special needs”, or “disabled”?*
- *How does providing “equal educational opportunities” benefit all children?*
- *What role does the “Arts” play in transformational learning?*

For each Children’s Global Arts project, idea, or expression considered, the following questions could be asked by teachers - as leaders and designers:

- *How can I see myself working with this kind of an opportunity with the children that I connect with? What does this mean to me?*
- *What is my role as a facilitator/designer/leader?*
- *How can I ensure that all my students’ voices are heard through this experience?*

*“Teachers just need to be open and interested and they can bring their own areas of interest into the project” (Debbie Linnel)*

## 2. Value: Child Honouring

**Disposition:** Young people are important members of a school and community. They can relate to both beauty and injustice, and they can think and act critically to make positive differences in the world.

*“It’s like Global Arts - to give children a voice and they are honoured” (Gita John)*

Drawing on the philosophy that celebrates and honours the voices of children (highlighted in Chapter 2), Children’s Global Arts is most significantly about acknowledging, legitimizing, and supporting young people in the building of relationships and understandings in order to make a difference in the world. As Kathy Sanford suggests, it’s about capturing children’s voices rather than imposing adults’ views about the world. “It’s about asking kids how *they see the world* and communicating between children and children”. Teachers may provide the support and the medium to move these communications back and forth, “but it’s really from child-to-child” (DVD log).

... and one of the things that we believe, we believe it as university people, we believe it as school teachers and school principals, and we believe it as firefighters, is that if more of *your voices*, and your dreams, were heard, then it would make a difference to the life in this world we live in. (Budd Hall)

With child honouring principles in mind, teachers and facilitators of Children’s Global Arts initiatives can ask themselves key questions such as:

- *What role do I play in this process of child honouring?*
- *How can I avoid “right” and “wrong” in global arts themes and conversations?*
- *What should I ask students to do, and why? How should I frame the Global Arts themes, and how might this framing influence children’s images and ideas?*
- *What conditions did I impose? To what degree of freedom were children allowed?*
- *Whose voices are heard in the images? Whose voices have remained silent?*
- *What can we learn from children’s artwork?*
- *How can we best share (and act on) these voices and messages about the world?*



**Figure 137:** Young artists speaking about their work at the Learning and the World We Want conference, Victoria, 2003.

### 3. Value: Art Literacy

**Disposition:** Art provides an essential medium for children worldwide to communicate ideas about themselves and about the world.

*Art is a way of communicating with children  
who speak a different language  
and sharing our thoughts and feelings with others*

Inter-cultural art exchanges move student perceptions of art beyond a Friday afternoon craft, and into a powerful form of literacy - a voice that carries a message of care, communication, and connection between children worldwide. The process of creating and analyzing different art images can lead to discussions on what art is and how it is used: *Is it art as a decorative painting, or does it serve a functional purpose like a pot carrying water?* It can lead to discussions on perceptions of beauty or hardship, and how they differ within our own community, and throughout cultures and communities around the world; it can also reveal the power of art for bringing people together for change and the hope of humanity. As art is a visual method of care and communication, messages conveyed can have tremendous cathartic and didactic potential.

Student teachers at the University of Victoria have much to contribute to this



**Figure 139:** “Warning: Garbage causes pollution and affects the habitat” (child artist, Tecumseh Elementary School, Victoria)

subject. One student in particular asks an important question: “If adults are working to build a future for children, *how will they know what kind of future children want unless they ask*”? In her mind, “if children are given the freedom and tools to create art, its potential for healing and learning has global significance”. Another student suggests how the *integration* of art is important because “art can say so much about a culture, community or person, and, it can tell a story about their history, traditions and values; by bringing these things to life, students may have a better understanding and compassion for the world and its needs”.



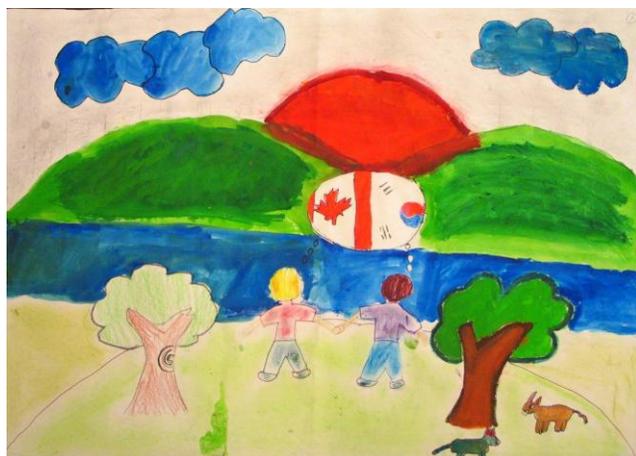
**Figure 138:** Student artist from Nigeria.

#### 4. Value: Primacy of Care and Connection

**Disposition:** Children have a fundamental need and desire to build real connections and caring relationships with people and other living things.

*Transformational understandings through art... Through the act of human connection itself.*

The powerful relationships that are developed on a personal level through *real people* and *real artwork* (not photocopies, videos, or textbook images), allow children from diverse backgrounds and circumstances to understand another person's perspective, and put a face to a culture, a community, and a way of life. These relationships and understandings remind children of how similar they are to one another, and instill a desire and a motivation to empathize, and to care for all realms of life.



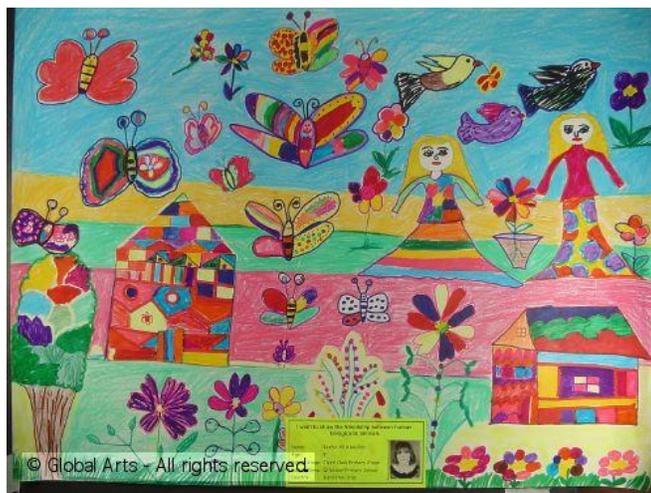
**Figure 140:** “Environment and Friendship - My picture is about having a good clean environment, and how Koreans and Canadians come to be best friends” (Victoria child artist)

The World I Want

The world I want is where nobody is homeless, hungry or sad, where everybody is happy and wealthy. There would be absolutely no crime. Children would be able to go to school no matter whether they are a boy or a girl, no matter if they are rich or poor. Children would play on the playground and be able to be a child with no work to do. The world I want is for nobody to need to hide who they are, or pretend to be someone else. There would be no pollution or disruption to the environment and that everybody would have friends and family to look up to. For once there would be peace and love on earth with no war or battles. I wish that food and items would not be too expensive. I wish that everybody would be accepted regardless of what color they are, what religion they are or what country they are from. That is the world I want.

By Amanda

**Figure 141:** Grade 5, Erin Woods Elementary School, Calgary



**Figure 142:** “I want to show the friendship between human beings and animals” (Kazhin Ali Abhullah, age 9, Iraq, 2005)

### 5. Value: Intuitive Discourse

**Disposition:** Experiences that stir emotions and move children from their heads to their hearts are influential in provoking transformational learning.

*Our schools, our colleges, our universities, the whole culture, the whole pattern of civilization, teach our heads. We have lost contact with the inner guide. Everyone is born with that inner guide, but it is not allowed to work, to function. It is almost paralyzed, but it can be revived.*  
(Osho, 2001, p. 167)



Figure 143: Kabul, Afghanistan artist, 2005

As highlighted in various stories throughout this dissertation, it is important to incorporate the ancient wisdom of intuition in Global Arts practices. As Osho suggests, we “can hear ancient music in the pines because it is eternal music, it is never lost... but a shift, a total change, a change of gestalt, is needed” (p. 147) in order to regain the capacity to hear.

As Gita John advises, engaging in a global arts experience cannot be a one-off exchange that engages only the mind of a child - children need to go *deeper*. Gita suggests that any deliberation or creation of art should be preceded by at least ½ hour filled with activities that move children out of their normal, rational-thinking box to allow them to connect with themselves more fully, and to express what they actually feel and dream about the world. Activities such as nature walks, visualizations, free-drawing/writing, journaling, etc. may provide a starting place for promoting deeper levels of creativity. The organization “Power of Hope” can provide further arts-based



Figure 144: Kabul, Afghanistan artist, 2005

techniques that help children move from a “head space” to a “creative space”, increasing their emotional literacy and their capability for self-expression and social change  
([www.powerofhope.org](http://www.powerofhope.org)).

*Teaching children to express themselves through a creative outlet is teaching them an important tool for personal growth.... It may also provide students with a way of communicating their attitudes, feelings, and beliefs to others.*  
(UVic student teacher)



iii) *Creative and Cultural Freedom*

... to awaken to the creative state of mind is not all that easy. On the contrary, it is one of the most difficult things that could possibly be attempted. Nevertheless... I feel that it is for each of us individually and society as a whole the most important thing to be done in the circumstances in which humanity now finds itself. (Bohm, 1998, p. 24)

Providing an unrestricted and uninhibited environment allows more authentic representation of what children think and feel about the world

they live in and the world they want. Encouraging culturally appropriate art mediums (rather than notions of “Canadian” art) allows for greater meaning and understanding across cultures.

When considering the creative and cultural freedom that is optimal for any Global Arts experience, the Spanish words *la querencia* spoken by Barry Lopez (1992) come to mind as “a beautiful place in which we know exactly who we are... a place from which one’s strength of character is drawn... the place from which we speak our deepest beliefs. La querencia stems from the verb *querer*, meaning ‘to desire’ or ‘to accept a challenge’. In Spain, *querencia* refers to the spot in a bullring where an injured bull goes to gather himself; the place where he finds refuge after his painful encounters with the picadors and the banderilleros. With the notion of *querencia* in mind, Lopez and others bring meaning to the trials and tribulations of creating the optimal Global Arts space:

*querencia* applies to our challenge in the modern world, that our search for a querencia is both a response to threat and a desire to find out who we are... and this sense of place must include, at the very least, knowledge of what is inviolate about the relationship between a people and the places they occupy... (Lopez, p. 40)

The physical environment should reflect the nature of any global arts initiative, allowing for the necessary room and the resources for carrying out child-directed plans and activities. Once the physical environment has been prepared, the role of the facilitator is to “step out”, allowing room for the creative spaces to emerge and evolve.



Figure 146: Teenage artist, Victoria Lifelong Learning Festival, 2006

iv) *Uninterrupted Flow of Activity*

It should not be underestimated the significance of Global Arts as a process that requires *slow and acknowledged attention* to ideas - in creating, viewing, & deliberating art work; and also ongoing patience and cultural sensitivity in the delivery and receiving of art exchanges.

Rather than piece-mealing artwork exchange experiences into 40-50 minute blocks of time, it is recommended that the structure of time be worked in such a way that children have long stretches of time that enable them to enter into the flow of creating, viewing, and thinking about the world in introspective and thoughtful ways. With reference to Csikszentmihalyi's work on "flow" (cited in Farmer, 1999, n.d.), when students are allotted uninterrupted blocks of time to create, they are better able to reach an optimal state of inner clarity, meaning, and fulfillment.

Equally important is the patience that is required when engaged in artwork exchanges with children in diverse parts of the world. As Tim Hopper explains, the time it takes for artwork to be sent and received could take a year or 18 months. Although it appears to be a very slow process, the connections that are established over time, create strong bonds and strong memories that prove highly significant as participants move forward with each project.

As the following dialogue with Mairi Chester (a grade 3 student awaiting a response from Kabul Afghanistan) demonstrates, teachers may also need to consider that the child-to-child relationships that develop through artwork, are *real* human connections that are best sustained over time:

Do you wonder if not hearing back from the children that you drew pictures for meant that something might have happened to them?

*Yeah! I was kind of getting worried...*

Is it important for you to have something come back to you to let you know that they have received it?

*Yeah... because if they don't send something back the kids might be wondering what happened to them... when we don't hear from the, or can't contact people in war-torn countries, it would make me cry (Mairi Chester)*

v) *Liberating Assessment and Evaluation*

Of added importance when creating democratic and safe spaces for a children's global arts experience is the unmistakable understanding that there are *no right or wrong answers* to ideas, perceptions, or illustrations of a child's world, and that there are *no formal grades, evaluation, or assessment* that ultimately judge or critique children's work. The transformative affects that are provoked in a child's thoughts, feelings, and actions through the creation, deliberation, and exchange of artwork become the greatest indicators of meaning and success.

vi) *Generative Inquiry*

It was very engaging for them to discuss what that meant - *What would your world be like if you could define it?* (Elaine McVie)

Building on Theresa Lewis' insights, the significance of *generative* and *inquiry-based* learning stems from the understanding that "we are cognizant of what the mandated curriculum is intending, but we have interpreted it in such a way that there could be some *really* interesting, genuine, and authentic learning opportunities for children". When opening up safe spaces for generative and reflective inquiry it is important to not only give voice to the silenced, but also to "ask questions in a way that allows one to understand where the power differentials are and who is privileged and who is not... for the ways things are done" (Theresa). In other words, we don't just accept things as given - we ask other kinds of questions; *deep, universal* questions, that as human beings we are trying to figure out:



Figure 147: What does it mean to be a responsible caring citizen in a global society?

...any good teacher could make it work because kids bring energy to it because it twigs them into "why are we here"?; "what's going to be my life"?; and "why am I doing this"? It asks those questions without them ever being asked. (Tim Hopper)

Reflecting on some of the questions raised by students and teachers throughout various global arts experiences, one can see their value in promoting deeper levels of conversation and dialogue with oneself and also in relation to others:

There's 110,000 in *that* community, and 110,000 in *our* community - can you imagine if we had *one clinic* for our 110,000 people with *no doctors* - *how would you treat yourself if you got sick?*"

In Mumbi and Manga there is no electricity, no television, no computer, no play stations, there is no communication, so there is no telephone - "*What would you do with your time?*"....

- What does the world in which *I or We* live *look* like? *Feel* like?
- How will I (we) share this world with others? What will I do? What will I use?
- Who are the kids that are living in these other places?; What is *their* life like?
- Gee, I don't think of anybody hurting me when I leave my house to get to school, what would that be like?
- Ahh... what if the world we wanted is actually the world we have?... what would that mean?
- How would *I* feel in that situation?; ... what would that be like for *you*?
- How are we *similar*? What makes us *different*?
- What could we learn from others?
- What did we learn about ourselves?

That is where the "disposition" and designer pieces come in because you ask different kinds of questions when you are setting something up as a genuine inquiry - you don't presume that you know. (Theresa Lewis)

#### vii) *Equal Educational Opportunities*

At the heart of any global art's initiative is a call to respect, honour, and promote equal opportunities for children (of all ages) to participate freely in the cultural and artistic life of their school, village, or community; to enjoy the arts in a way that liberates their own voice; and to provide the safe space(s), diverse mediums, and the time required to fully express themselves. By allowing children the full range of creative and cultural expression we include all children as equal and valuable members of a learning

environment, and allow for the full development of human potential. Embracing the perspective that all children are “special” and “less capable” *in their own ways*, we also remove the labels of “learning disabled” and “special needs”; and begin to see how we are *more similar than we are different*.

We each have a song that we sing throughout our lives everywhere we go in all we do! We sing the song in different ways at different times; yet, in essence, the song is the same... The search for personal purpose is to become familiar with your own voice, and what you express when you sing. (Marks, 1990, p.36)

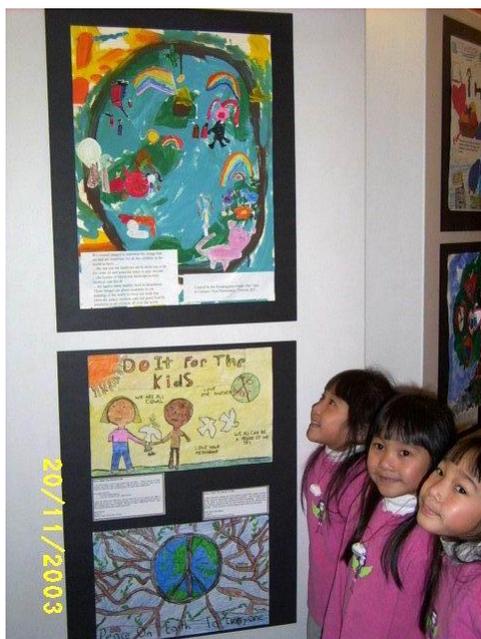


Figure 148: Learning and the World We Want conference, 2003



Figure 149: Child artist from Kabul, Afghanistan, 2005

## 7. Value: Inclusion

**Disposition:** Global Arts is a collaborative and inclusive process. Networking between schools, home, and community is an important component of any global art's initiative.

*Because the world that the arts illuminate is a shared world, because the realities to which the arts give rise emerge through acts of communication, [Global Arts] encounters we are enabling students to seek are never wholly autonomous or private. (Greene, 1995, p. 150)*



**Figure 150:** Child artist from Gordon Head Elementary School, Victoria, 2003

The learning situation that appears to be most provocative of thoughtfulness and critical consciousness is one in which teachers, facilitators, and/or administrators become culturally responsive through their role of community coordination and collaboration; the task of bringing together people from different groups, to share, honour, and support art exchanges among children around the world. Building collaborative relationships on an equal playing field (i.e. administrators with teachers; teachers with students; school with home and community; children-with-children; etc.), helps to break down formal barriers, enabling transformational opportunities to transpire.

The *home* is a key link for this project, ensuring that parents and other family members are not only informed throughout the process, but also viewed as collaborative partners, able to contribute support, reinforcement, and valuable resources. Providing parents (or guardians) with information and ideas relevant in any given global arts initiative also helps dialogue and ideas to move fluidly between the home and the school:

Teachers sent home a form for the parents to sign so we were aware of what was going on which was really helpful because sometimes with school projects we remain unaware and so you can't offer that follow-up at home because you don't really know what's going on....

Some statements around the kind of language and phrasing that were used to describe what war is and what war was at that time in Afghanistan would have been helpful... (Karen Chester)

As demonstrated extensively throughout this research, members working within the *community, service organizations, and social movements* can also provide important art exchange links both locally and globally, and oftentimes the support required to help carry out global arts initiatives.

Pursuing community-based education through schools, or identifying an agency through which learners can engage in transformative active citizenry, can be a challenging endeavour for any teacher or school community. In fact, the “self-interest of well-endowed and publicly supported institutions – the employers or funders of education – frequently conflict with the interests of community-based organizations representing low income, disenfranchised groups” (Heaney & Horton, p. 94). As Smith (2005) writes, “the paradigmatics of Western consciousness are completely self-enclosed, blind and deaf to all voices outside of their own logic and self-understandings (cited in Sanford & Hopper, 2006, p. 9).

Despite the difficulties, the stories that are alive in this research confirm that open spaces in hegemonic institutions *can be* established that provide “an alliance with social activists and [an] identification with the aims of social empowerment based on critical reflection and transformative action” (Freire, 2002, p. 94). The Children’s Global Arts initiative based out of the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria has opened up numerous spaces for building alliance with schools and social movements in support of connecting children across the globe through artwork. Various partnerships include: *B.C. Ministry of Education; BCTF; VIDEA; CIDA; Troubadour Foundation; Hands Across Borders; Grassroots Holistic Healing; Power of Hope; Kurdistan Save the Children; Education Without Borders; Teachers for a Better Belize; Women For Women in Afghanistan; Langford and Kabul Firefighters; Vietnam Friendship Village; World Partnership Walk; City of Victoria; and Saanich Rotary club*. These collaborative connections reveal the substantial effects that community organizations have in supporting transformational, lifelong learning opportunities, and they legitimize the essential roles that children, art, culture, and citizenship play in education. It is recommended that teachers and facilitators of a global arts’ initiative establish community networks that are relevant and applicable to their own school, project, and surroundings. Oftentimes students, parents, and members of a school community provide an opportune place to start.

## 8. Value: Collaborative Reciprocity

**Disposition:** Egocentric views of power and privilege are avoided when childrens' art is viewed as an exchange of knowledge, information, and ideas about the world.

*Many of the alienated or marginalized are made to feel distrustful of their own voices, their own ways of making sense, yet they are not provided alternatives that allow them to tell their stories or shape their narratives or ground new learning in what they already know. The favored ones, in contrast, seldom question the language of dominance or efficiency or efficacy in which they were reared. (Greene, 1995, p. 110)*



**Figure 151:** “Different cultures or countries all need to cooperate in areas like eliminating war and racism” (Victoria artist. 2003)

As part of these creative and cultural exchanges among children and nations of the world, children learn about the lives and dreams of one another through a spirit of *mutual understandings, reciprocity, and solidarity*. Without imposing judgment filtered through media, propaganda, or egocentric values, children are encouraged to shape one’s own story about the world, and open oneself up to other stories, *equally rich* in wisdom and creative and cultural expression. Learning about oneself in relation to others provokes an understanding that one’s actions can affect others in the world; and ultimately creates the foundation for the prevention and elimination of ignorance, stereotypes, prejudice, hatred, and alienation worldwide.

When students are exposed to other people’s works of art it may provide students with different insights and encourage an exploration of other beliefs, ideas, traditions, dreams and situations that may not be familiar to them. But beyond providing other perspectives and provoking thought, arts’ imagery may create awareness and compassion. (UVic student teacher)

Taking the following child's drawing and comments in mind for example, a dialogue could transpire that invites one to reflect upon the meaning of words and images, and how they convey particular views and assumptions about the world.



Figure 152: “I want the world to have more peace than we have. I think if we all try hard enough, we could make a difference...” Victoria child artist

“I tried to show in my picture that if we all make the effort and give something than we could make a difference...”

...I want the world to be free and I want to show that if a rich person can make a difference than so can we. This picture shows a rich person giving the poor person a pair of shoes and a pair of mittens. We can all make a difference if we try. Let's all try and be a friend and respect each other”

Without artist criticism, questions such as the following could be raised to avoid the slippery slope of “power and privilege”: *What is implied by “rich person” and “poor person”?*; *How is “rich” and “poor” defined?*; *Are all rich people “white and happy”?*; *Are all “dark” people sad and poor?*; *In what ways could someone without food or clothes (i.e. mittens) be rich?*, etc.

Similarly, the image and understandings of the grade 6 boy who drew a picture of “a girl beside the Afghanistan flag because she is not wearing a burqa and she is free” could be dialogued further to ensure that stereotypes regarding Afghani, Muslim, or Islaam women and their attire would be avoided (i.e. recognizing that for many Muslim women, the wearing of a traditional hijab or burqa may be liberating based on modesty and Islaam freedom of choice).



Figure 153: Response to Afghanistan artwork and novel, “The Breadwinner”

As Greene (1995) suggests, this critique of privilege, or “social critique” entails an ongoing effort to overcome false consciousness by rejecting an absolute and static view of reality and its resulting subject-object separation:

At the same time, it involves the creation of new interpretative orders as human beings come together not only to “name” but to change or transform their inter-subjective worlds. And for all this to occur, the act of critiquing requires an authentic self-reflectiveness, a thoughtfulness that informs knowing in the many contexts of everyday life. (p. 60)

Kathy Sanford bridges the notions of *reciprocity* and *art literacy* by pointing out how, crucial to the element of art literacy, is the ability to learn about one another through creative and cultural language and communication, and in so doing create a more informed and enriched life for ourselves and for each other. As Kathy explains, this isn’t just about “going out and helping somebody else and giving something that we have access of, to somebody else”; it is about “how we are educating *ourselves* and how we can be understanding for *our own health*, for *our own enriched lives*, as well as reaching out to other people and having them understand what our lives are like” (DVD log).

By introducing other languages and other ways of communicating through a global arts experience, participants “all of a sudden realize that they aren’t the center of the world. That there may be other languages”....

And I think that is really important to look at culturally because language contains so much meaning of what we believe and what we value and how we see the world. And to see it through different languages convey things in different ways. (Sanford, DVD log)

## 9. Value: Active Citizenship

**Disposition:** Children are innately interested and capable in making positive differences in their schools, homes, and communities. Acts of social and environmental citizenship need to go beyond fundraising in order to fulfill the fundamental needs of care, communication, and purpose.



**Figure 154:** Children in a tsunami-hit village in India receive the “WE CARE” banner from children in Victoria, Canada

*One of the things that we have learnt about this experience is that everybody has a voice and everybody has the possibility of making a difference even for something that seems as abstract as world peace or a better planet to live on. We learned that children just speaking one to another in a classroom may come up with a project idea that may have impact right around the world. (Budd Hall, DVD log)*

Children’s Global Arts initiatives can move ideas and dreams into action by supporting young citizens of the global community in self- directed action projects, empowering them to meet and work together to fulfill their essential role in visioning and creating the world they want, and working towards the creation of peaceful and sustainable societies. When children are inspired to take action related to areas of interest and concern, and share “a part of themselves to make a difference” (Verna Collett), then they begin to recognize their value and worth in society. These experiences become part of who they are and further transform the way children view themselves and their place in the world:

When students are given the opportunities to learn about action, learn through action, and learn from action, then the experiences become part of them, and they begin to recognize their value and worth in society. (Hammond, 1997)

### *Social Responsibility*

Like kindness, the goals and ends of *social responsibility* are learned through *participating* in experiences that invite and compel one to be socially responsible. As this research affirms, children in particular, can be easily moved to walk over the line from “me” to “we”; in fact they are eager and innately prone to do so. Children’s Global Arts help provide the opportunity and the purpose to not only express children’s realities and visions of the world through art, but it also opens the door for acting on these visions through projects that actually make a difference in the world. Oftentimes students learn about basic human rights and responsibilities firsthand through exchanges of artwork that reveal issues related to gender equality, children’s rights, justice, and democracy; this awareness can provide the impetus for action.

If, for example, a class as a whole (individually or in small groups) came to understand (through various forms of art expression) the *effects of chocolate production on child labour* worldwide. They might then decide, as their goal, to increase awareness regarding this concern. This could lead to research on the issue of chocolate production and the seeking of alternatives (i.e. fair trade chocolate). In order to bring their goal to reality they might decide to: 1) write a letter to local stores who sell non-fair trade chocolate; 2) speak at assemblies in neighbouring schools about this issue and offer alternatives; 3) create a play about “Fair Trade Chocolate” and perform at local schools; and/or 4) hold educational workshops in their community about the issue, etc.

Once a viable option for action has been agreed upon, students could be encouraged to prepare an *action plan*. In order to follow through with a Fair Trade Chocolate play for example, a plan might include: a) find an appropriate book to base a play on, b) learn the play, c) make/gather costumes, d) contact local schools and set up performance times, e) advertise performance in newsletters, papers, and/or f) present action plans to parents and/or community members to inform and seek support and assistance, etc. With the help of teacher facilitators, student can then be assisted in putting their plans into action (i.e. social and active responsibility).

## *Stewardship*

It was interesting to note how many children drew features of the environment. The environment is something that is sacred and special to all cultures and there are many artists and cultures that use themes of the environment in their artwork. (UVic student teacher)

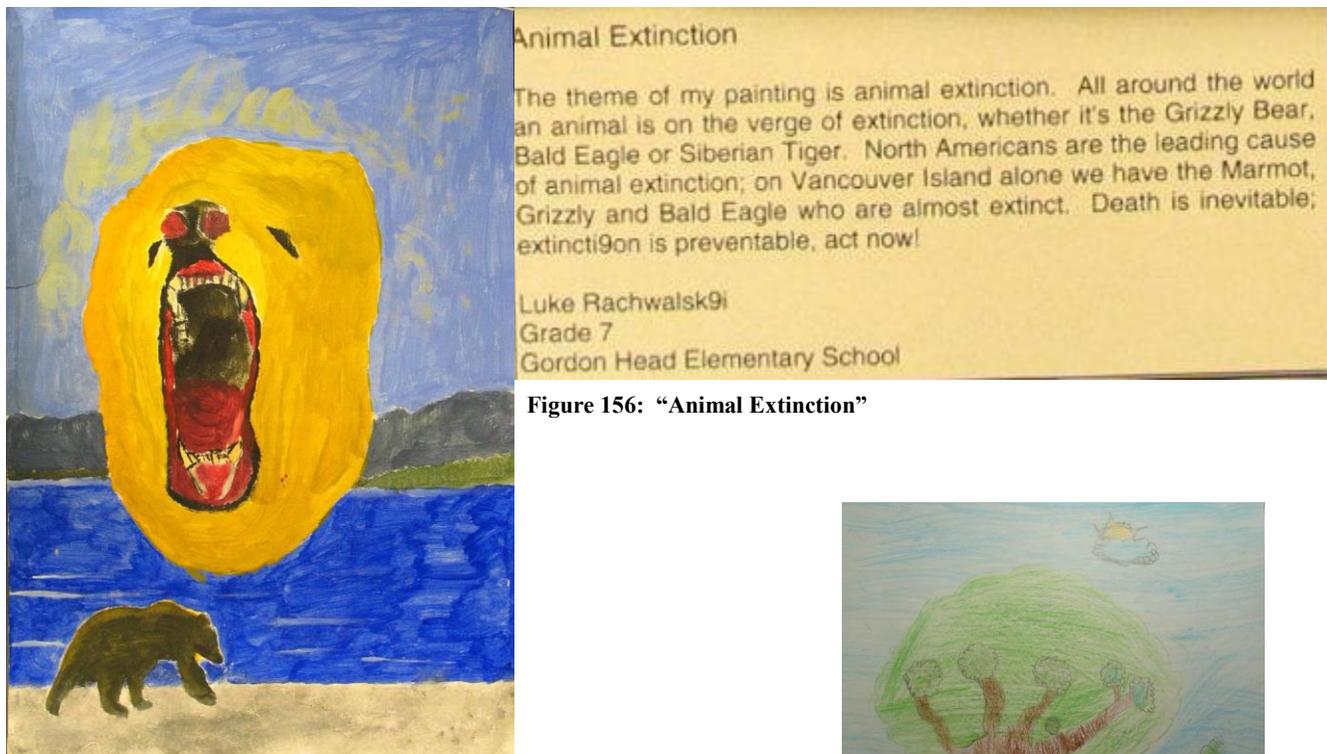
Most of the children's artwork generated worldwide contain a universal reference to our natural environment. Working actively with this theme can foster respect and appreciation for diversity and the interconnectedness of life, and contribute to the preservation, protection, and enjoyment of wildlife and our natural surroundings worldwide. A UVic student teacher suggests a few ways in which this can be achieved here in Canada: The study of local, world renowned wildlife artists such as *Fenwick Lansdowne* and *Robert Bateman*, may persuade students to value the importance of protecting their habitats.

Studying local artists such as *Ted Harrison* and *Emily Carr* who draw different environmental landscapes within Canada (landscapes of ice and snow, and forests, respectively), and comparing their works with artists around the world brings geography and geology to life. She suggests how this comparison could also lead into discussions concerning how people value different landscapes and habitats, and what we can do to protect them. Furthermore, comparing child artists' depictions of wildlife around the world may introduce new animals and their habitats (UVic student teacher, response paper).

Using children's artwork as starting points, one could be prompted to consider ways in which the environment could be protected, and what is required to follow through with ideas (i.e. active stewardship); or to ponder how small (and interconnected) humans are in relation to the world and what this ultimately means in the grand scheme of things (see Figures 156-158 respectively).



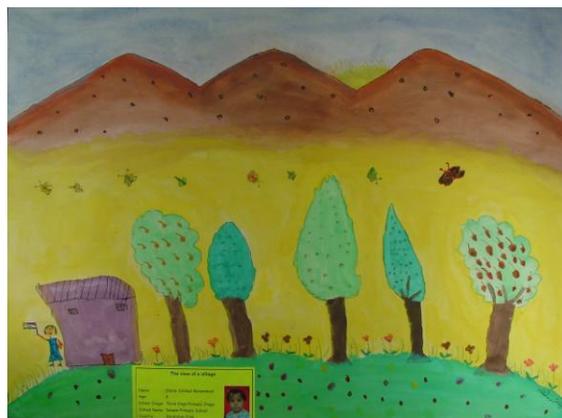
**Figure 155: “The world I want has a healthy community trying to protect the environment” (Sundance Elementary School, Victoria, age 10)**



**Figure 156: "Animal Extinction"**



**Figure 157: Child artist from Pichulemu Chile**



**Figure 158: "The View of a Village"**  
Shene Dilshad Mohammed, age 9, Iraq, 2005

I do not yet know how I will help and I am frightened of the things I will see, but I will help. Programs such as 'Global Arts' are creating a better world for children, as well as creating awareness of the atrocities that are occurring throughout the world. All children deserve all that we can give them; a world where that cannot happen is a world that must be changed. It is an almost impossible mission but we, as educators and social activists, must do all that we can to help children throughout the world [make a difference]. (UVic student response, 2004)

## 10. Value: Commonality

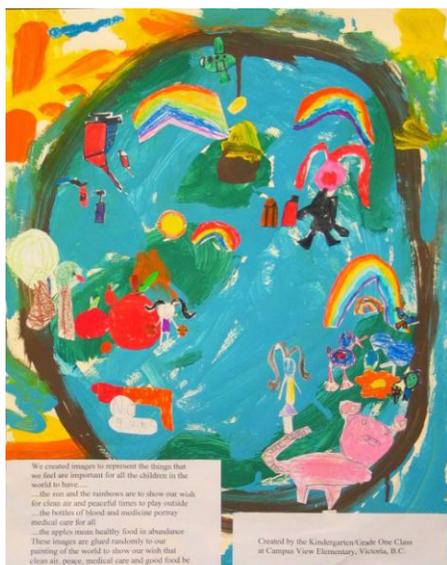
**Disposition:** When children focus on what is common or similar between themselves and other children (both locally and globally), then friendships can be inspired that transcend barriers of discrimination or difference.

*My painting is showing the world that in the dark we are all the same. It doesn't matter what religion, colour, or race we are. We are all human beings and together as one, we can reach for the last light in our dark world and save it together. Peace can be achieved, but we have to reach for it.* (Elaine Nevares, King David High School, Vancouver, B.C.)



**Figure 159:** "Peace can be achieved but we have to reach for it"

Through global art exchanges, children can discover firsthand the similarities among one another. This recognition of commonality can go a long way in eliminating racism, hatred, stereotypes, and ignorance. Building on this notion of commonality, the ultimate disposition that one could hope to promote and embrace through a Children's Global Art's experience is an innate, clear, and lived understanding that we - as humans, as animals, as earth, and as sky - are all connected. As demonstrated by the drawings and words of the following students, this clarity of heart and mind can indeed be attainable, even among our youngest citizens:



We created images to represent the things that we feel are important for all the children in the world to have...  
 ...the sun and the rainbows are to show our wish for clean air and peaceful times to play outside...  
 ...the bottles of blood and medicine portray medical care for all...  
 ...the apples mean healthy food in abundance  
 These images are glued randomly to our painting of the world to show our wish that clean air, peace, medical care and good food be available to all children all over the world.

Created by the Kindergarten/Grade One Class at Campus View Elementary, Victoria, B.C.

**Figure 160:** What children in Kindergarten and grade one want all the children in the world to have....

*...the sun and the rainbows are to show our wish for clean air and peaceful times to play outside...*

*...the bottles of blood and medicine portray medical care for all...the apples mean healthy food in abundance....*

*These images are glued randomly to our painting of the world to show our wish that clean air, peace, medical care and good food be available to all children all over the world.*

(K/1, Campus View School, Victoria, B.C.)

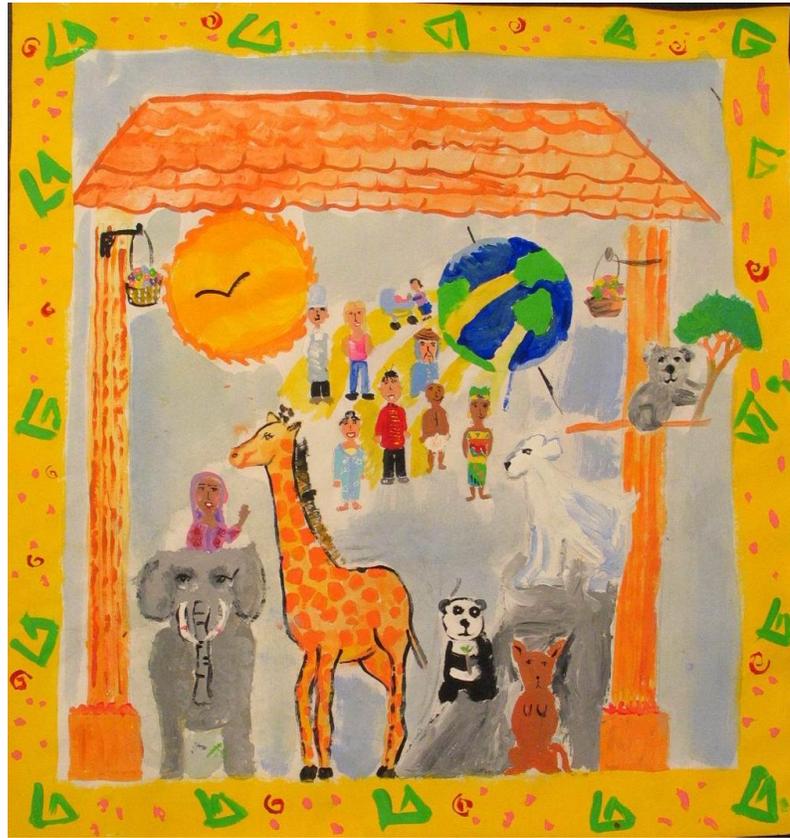


Figure 161: "We are all one"

*The theme of my poster is we all live in the same house. We share the same home, both people and animals. When you think about it, we are the animals, they are us. We are all one. If someone gets hurt, we all get hurt. If someone is content, we are all content. We are all individuals, but at the same time, we are all connected. We must keep our house clean, safe, and we must preserve our natural beauties. We are all one. (Grade 7, Gordon Head School, Victoria, B.C.)*

## 11. Value: Primacy of Perspective

**Disposition:** The way children perceive the world informs how they relate in the world, and how they respond to the world. Moving perceptions of the world beyond a space of fear, darkness, and isolation, help to uplift hearts and minds, and inspire a sense of beauty and possibility.



**Figure 162: Child artist from Kabul, Afghanistan**

*One picture that stood out in my mind was a boy who is hanging in the air between a pen and a gun. This child is reaching for a pen and turned away from the gun. I feel that the picture shows the need for education and a free voice. I feel that everyone would benefit from seeing these pictures. Everyone has a voice but many are not heard. This project works to change this! (UVic student, response paper).*

Children are inheriting a perception of the world as a dismal and scary place. Bombarded by front page headlines that broadcast the devastating effects of war and terrorism, or video games that portray these realities as a playful game, children learn to perceive the world through filters of depression or desensitization; habits of mind that offer little hope for our trouble world.

Schools tend to provide perceptions of the world through the lens of a textbook, guided curriculum, or a set of prescribed mandates. These can also inform a child's view of the world through oftentimes stereotypical or biased representations of facts and figures.

Inviting children to understand the world through firsthand exchanges of children's artwork opens up new and genuine perceptions about the world beyond media, textbook, and/or adult representations. Even those images that vividly portray war and other acts of injustice, tend to offer a child-like sense of beauty, hope, and resilience – realities and visions of the world that move children through distress and/or tainted ignorance, into a space of clarity, care, and compassion. When one becomes part of this new conversation about the world – as voiced through children's artwork – then new understandings emerge that uplift one's spirit, presence, and conviction within the world.

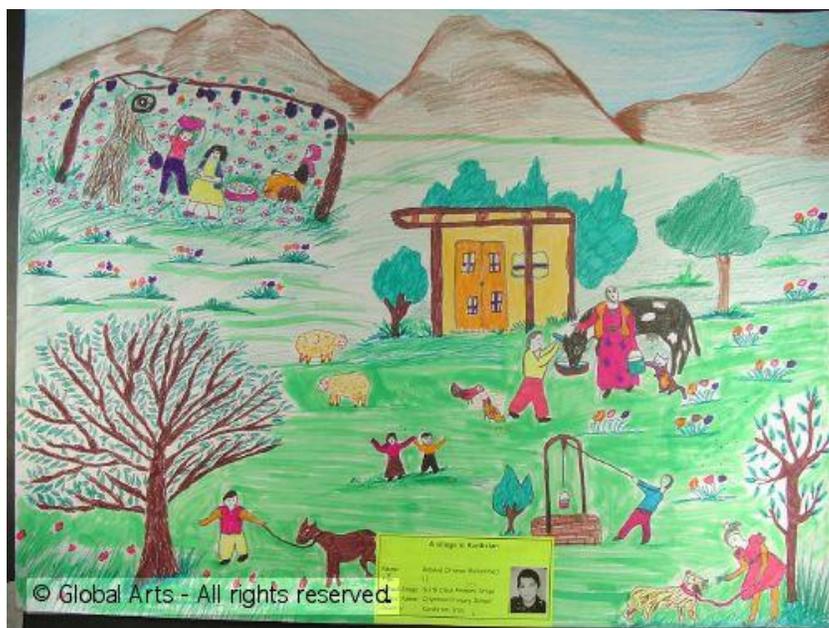


Figure 163: “A village in Kurdistan”  
(Child artist from Kurdistan, Iraq, age 11, 2005)



Figure 164: Child artist from  
Deenabandhu, India (E. Manju, 2006)



Figure 165: Child artist from Kabul, Afghanistan, 2005

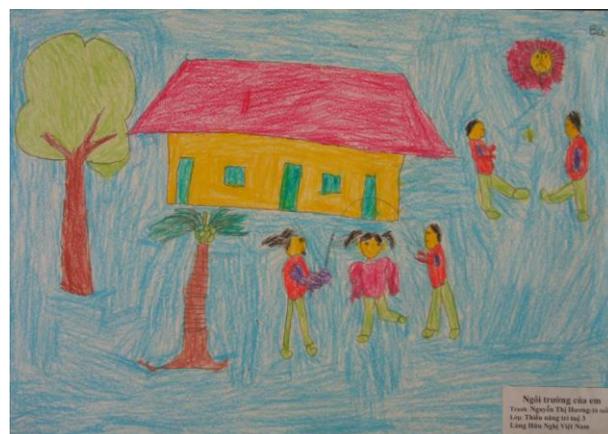


Figure 166: Child artist from Vietnam Friendship Village,  
2006

*In closing...*

Transformative education through Childrens' Global Arts consists of eliminating the dichotomy between *the world we live in* and *the world we want* by drawing the best out of ourselves in relation to all others. On many levels, Children's Global Arts is a living and breathing experience in various schools, villages, and communities around the world. By weaving creative and cultural ways of viewing the world into learning and education, this transformative initiative is impacting lives at a physical, emotional, and spiritual level. And perhaps this conceptualization of schools as an agent for change will not only increase awareness of our social and environmental situation, but also continue to enhance our motivation and commitment to alter its path of destruction for the better. *For what is the use of education without providing opportunities that benefit all who inhabit this earth? What serves the purpose of academic discussion without the inclination for thoughtful action?*

The up and coming children in our school system are our plan for the future, so if we can motivate students to make a difference now, than our world in ten years will be more along the lines of what we are striving for and dream of. (UVic student teacher)

This chapter concludes the principle findings and implications for education as set forth throughout this dissertation. The following, closing chapter provides a final reflection of this research journey in relation to the many "Tales of Transformation through Children's Global Arts".

**PART IV:**  
**CONCLUSION**

## Chapter 12

### CHILDREN'S GLOBAL ARTS: A RIGHT AND A FREEDOM

#### *Repositioning Ourselves...*

Chapter two explains how the majority of research initiatives that focus on transformational learning take place outside of public education, share limited practical implications, lack a relationship to active citizenship, and focus primarily on adults with little consideration of the younger members of society. With reference to Taylor's (1998) observations, although *the theory* of transformational learning has been widely researched, *the practice* of transformative learning - particularly in a classroom setting - has been minimally investigated and poorly understood.

The present research has enriched our understandings of transformational learning, arts-based research, and child honouring philosophies; shifted our approaches to educational pedagogy and international development; and perhaps most importantly, deepened the significance of developing a critical worldview from adulthood to childhood. Although there is still much more to be learned about the dynamic nature of transformative learning, the "tales of transformation" set forth in this research anthology provoke us to recognize that there is an innate and creative drive among all of us - including young children - to understand and to make meaning of life experiences and the world in which we all live.

Having repositioned ourselves throughout this research to look at the world through the eyes of children, what we have essentially learned from such a perspective, is that children are very capable of constructing an honest and critical view of the world, capturing the essence of what is needed to shift this world around – even as young as 5 years old<sup>22</sup>:

*Id wish that there was monsters that ate kidnappers  
that the war never existed, because I don't want anyone to die  
that logging wasn't even a word and no animal had to lose their home  
that everybody in the world never had to drink dirty water  
that every kid AND grownup went to bed full  
Id wish that everyone would feel safe like me.*

- Grayson Alexander, age 5 –

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<sup>22</sup> In honouring the authentic voice of the writer, the following poem has not been grammatically modified.

The findings generated from this research compel us to consider how, in some ways, children are *more* capable (than adults) of making sense of the world; they have less inhibitions to overcome, less baggage to filter through, and less layers on their glasses that prevent them from seeing the world clearly and honestly. As children are freed from a “culture of silence” (Freire, 2002) through global arts experiences, they no longer conform or fall silent to the fabricated logic of their surroundings; they begin to question, deliberate, and confront new meanings of their world with a resilient sense of care, communication, and connection.



Figure 167: Children’s responses from Victoria, Canada.

I feel like children are able to express the world around them more freely than adults are able to. Children’s messages are simple and uncorrupted. They take things at face value and don’t have reservations about who may be seeing their work or who would be affected. (UVic student teacher)

#### Children’s Global Arts: Fulfilling Universal Rights, Freedoms, & Responsibilities

The stories and events revealed throughout this dissertation move Children’s Global Arts far beyond just a “good idea”, providing opportunities to fulfill *basic human rights*<sup>23</sup> allotted universally to every child. Children have the right to be actors in their own development and to express their views on matters affecting their lives. They have a right to seek, and impart information and ideas from a diversity of cultural, national, and international art forms, and the right to freedom of thought, opinion, and expression, including the freedom to hold opinions without interference. Children also have the right to participate freely in the Arts, and to be provided with an education that promotes understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups. To these ends, we – as educators and caregivers – have a distinct responsibility to ensure that these rights of children are fulfilled and upheld.

<sup>23</sup> References to human rights throughout this section are credited to United Nations’ documents provided through the Department of Canadian Heritage, Human Rights Program (Universal Declaration of Human Rights & Convention of the Rights of the Child).

A primary function of education is the “development of respect for human rights and freedoms” (Articles 26 & 29)<sup>24</sup>; yet the right to free expression, art, and active citizenship appear to be overlooked in our curriculum; we have overlooked the *right* of the child to participate freely in cultural and artistic life, and the *right* to become active participants in their communities. As educators, we have also overlooked our role in education to promote understanding and friendship among all nations.

Children’s Global Arts acknowledges that *all* children – regardless of academic skills and potential - have the right to enjoy a full and decent life, and to learn about and care for the lives of others. On the basis of equal educational opportunity, participation in a global arts initiative is aimed at enriching a child’s personality, talents, and abilities to his/her fullest potential, and acknowledging their role as contributing members in a free and liberating society.

Initiatives such as Children’s Global Arts respect the right of a child to freedom of expression using an art medium of choice, and the right to access information about the world through a diversity of cultural, national, and international art forms. As observed throughout this dissertation, the way children come to know about their surroundings has powerful implications for the way they act in the world. Providing one of humanity’s most powerful communication tools, art both challenges and confirms the ways of the world. Children’s art provides a record of our times – a true story that opens a window into society, and another child’s way of life.

Art provides the story; the story provides the voice, the voice provokes the conversation and the inquiry. Understandings of the world we live in and the world we want are constructed through art form. Art makes those who feel invisible, visible, and gives voice to those who are restrained by silence. Erasing borders that separate and divide, art is both a reflection of ourselves and a direct link to something bigger.

Children as young as five years old can become transformed through the creation and sharing of art. Gifts of poetry, music, drawings, film, games, quilts, banners, and various other forms of creative and cultural expression convey messages about the world that can change attitudes, mindsets, and behaviours. These acts of care and kindness can actually *make someone feel better*, and open spaces beyond fear, confusion, isolation, and injustice.

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<sup>24</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights & Convention of the Rights of the Child, respectively.

The power of art compels us to understand a world beyond the boundaries of words, logic, and reason, touching our hearts across cultural boundaries and moving us into a realm of intuition and alternate ways of knowing. Exchanging ideas about the world through art transcends barriers of language and fulfills the right to cultural and international understandings. As Budd Hall has predicted (see page 30), within this period of transformation all we have come to know about knowledge, art, and literacy may be changed. Suddenly, “the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy”<sup>25</sup> takes on new meaning when literacy is understood as a form of *communication*; a *conversation*; an *exchange of knowledge and information*.

Communicating knowledge about the world through an exchange of art not only has the potential to fulfill fundamental human rights, but can also illuminate rights which are being denied to children worldwide – including children close to home. Through children’s artwork we have seen expressions of unhealthy and unsafe living conditions, a lack of protection and care in times of armed conflict, unjust working conditions, sexual and gang abuse, alienation, and the denial of free expression and equal access to free education. Recognizing that in all countries there are children living in difficult conditions, the Children’s Global Arts initiative provides a link between the school and the global community (through agencies such as Ministries of Education, Hands Across Borders, Kurdistan Save the Children, Langford Fire Dept. etc.), highlighting the importance of international co-operation and collaboration in collecting and disseminating information, and improving the quality of life for children worldwide.

In the spirit of understanding, equality, and justice among all peoples, this research reflects the understanding that art, free expression, and social responsibility are both natural and essential to the full development of our human potential. All children - without distinction of race, colour, age, gender, language, or religion – should have access to these fundamental rights and freedoms. The fulfillment and the protection of these rights should be a primary consideration in education, and further reflected in all segments of society working in the best interests of children.

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<sup>25</sup> Article 29 – Convention of the Rights of the Child

As a catalyst in the struggle for humanity and a medium to express beauty and joy, these elements of a child’s education are essential for the development of human potential and for communicating care and connection in our troubled world. It is therefore necessary that we not only acknowledge the rights of children in areas related to art and education, but value and treasure their artistic contributions in the attainment of a peaceful and sustainable coexistence.

*A Closing Narrative:*

*Six years ago I began this journey of pursuing my Ph.D degree. Emerging from a culture of silence, I was compelled to question the logic of my surroundings and the systems that prevail “in the best interests of children”. And since the filters through which I have come to perceive the world have been primarily through the hearts and minds of children – as communicated through their artwork and their stories - I feel that my perceptions of the world have become clearer, offering a glimpse of promise and opportunity for all who have come to share in this initiative.*

*At times I still wonder if my journey through transformation has been a blessing or a curse. Having traveled the world a thousand times through the viewing of children’s artwork, re-immersion into a Canadian culture can still be a lonely, confusing and, at times, dark undertaking.*

*I have experienced moments of sadness and helplessness.....*



**Figure 168:** “The world is a deaf machine...without sense or reason...sometimes you wait...and wait...and wait...and wait...and wait... but nothing ever happens”.

*And spaces for hope and possibility.....*



**Figure 169: "Hope"**  
Art inspired in Bob Dalton's art course, UVic.



**Figure 170: "Possibility"**  
Art inspired in Bob Dalton's art course, UVic.

*It is interesting to observe how my own lens for understanding the world has altered; I read the newspaper with increasing irritation, hesitation, and suspicion, longing for a window into every corner of the world through a child's eye.*

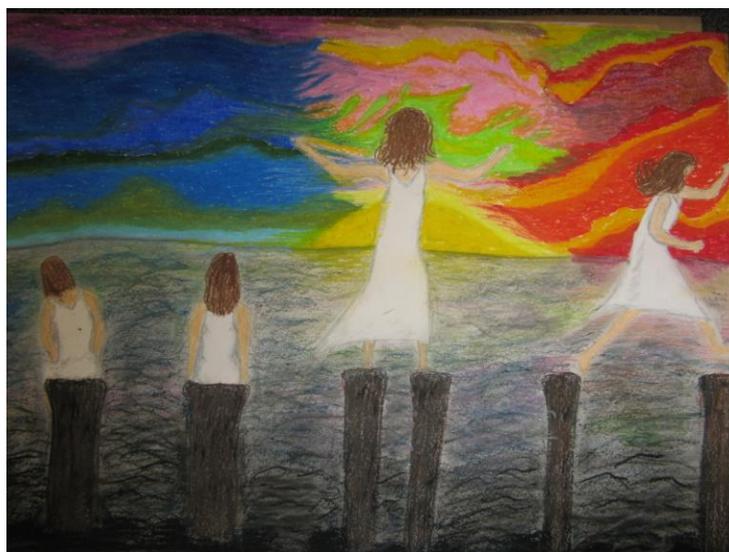
*When President George Bush advises that we need to send more troops to Iraq in order to bring peace, I question him. When a Grade 1 child suggests that sending artwork to children in Afghanistan will make a positive difference, I believe him. When I see children in India who have been hit by a tsunami, smiling zealously in front of a "We Care" banner sent from children in Canada, I trust that we are one step closer to sharing in a common good. And when I learn how the images of children worldwide can alter perceptions of those living in "privileged" societies, I know we are really onto something powerful! These are brilliantly simple solutions for peace and understanding that make sense, child-to-child.*

*Should we go so far as to suggest that exchanging artwork instead of military intervention will solve the world's problems? This is still unclear. Art images that show Afghanistan children holding hands with a Canadian officer, rather than being shot by a Taliban extremist, are powerfully hard to forget.*

*Perhaps as we inspire the creation of more artwork from children around the world, we will come to know the answers to some of life's biggest questions. In the "world that I want", every child would have the opportunity to share their realities and visions of the world; unadulterated, in a creative and cultural medium of their choice. These images would then become the touchstone for understanding - for human survival. What I have come to learn through this dissertation is that we are not going to solve the problems we have created with the same view of the world that created them. It is time for a new creative solution, and this solution may need to come from children. Perhaps we just need to use our eyes to listen.*

*Most importantly, I have come to realize that our deepest fears and ignorance are not grounded in our inability to see the world clearly, or to make a difference. If children have the creative power to shift the way they perceive the world, and their role within it, then so can I – so can we all – once we tap into the child that lives deep inside of us. And through this emancipation from fear, ignorance, and inhibition, we can bridge the gap between "the world we live in" and the "world we want", and find liberation and freedom.*

*The World We Live in*  
 196 2019 16 1914



**Figure 171: "Freedom"**  
 Art inspired by Bob Dalton's art course, UVic.

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## Appendix 1

### CHILDREN'S GLOBAL ARTS FOUNDATION SOCIETY ACT CONSTITUTION

Our Mission:

*Based on two themes,  
“the world we live in” and “the world we want”  
we invite children from around the world  
to create and exchange cultural art forms  
in pursuit of a more  
peaceful, just, and compassionate world*



The proposed purposes of the Children's Global Arts Foundation are:

**(a) Communication, Care, and Connection “Child to Child”**

(i) To provide opportunities for young people in Canada to establish personal and relational identities with other children in Canada and around the world through exchanges of creative and cultural forms of expression and communication.

(ii) To promote national and international cooperation and collaboration among young people, in particular with a view to contributing to understanding “the world we live in”, and a visioning of “the world we want”.

(iii) To prepare and liberate young people for responsible and active life in a free society, in the spirit of mutual understanding, reciprocity, solidarity, peace, equality, and friendship among all peoples and within and among all nations.

In particular, the prevention and elimination of ignorance, discrimination, prejudice, and hatred throughout the world.

(iv) To foster respect and appreciation with young people in Canada and the interconnectedness of the natural environment, with a view to contributing to the preservation, protection, and enjoyment of all living things.

(v) To honour and support young citizens of the global community in self-directed action projects, enabling them to meet and work together to fulfill their essential role in visioning and creating the world they want, and working towards the creation of peaceful and sustainable societies.

(vi) To provide support for adults to facilitate the purposes and goals of the Children's Global Arts Foundation.

(vii) To collaborate and network with other local and global organizations in a spirit of reciprocity to promote the Children's Global Arts Foundation.

**(b) Child Honouring and the Promotion of Creative and Cultural Freedom**

- (i) To provide a creative and communicative outlet for young voices that otherwise go unheard, to express and deliberate views of “the world we live in”, and visions for “the world we want” without fear of repression or retribution.
- (ii) To honour a child’s right to freedom of opinion and expression without imposition; including freedom to seek, receive, impart, and/or respond to information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other medium of the child’s choice.
- (iii) To respect, honour, and promote equal opportunities for children to participate freely in the cultural and artistic life of their community, to enjoy the arts in a way that liberates their own voice, and to provide the safe space, diverse mediums, and the time required to fully express themselves.
- (iv) To promote healing and recovery of a child victim of any form of armed conflict, neglect, exploitation, or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Such recovery shall take place in a creative and artistic environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.
- (v) To foster the mindful, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being of young children so that they can freely embrace their creative and artistic potential, and acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to contribute responsibly to society.

**(c) Establishment of a Children’s Global Arts Education Center that fulfills the following functions and responsibilities:**

- (i) To provide for the safekeeping and exhibiting of children’s artwork from Canada and around the world that conveys messages about the world we live in and the world we want.
- (ii) To provide community members the opportunity of viewing, sharing, learning about, and/or incorporating global arts exchanges or initiatives, in their practice (i.e. school groups, universities, health care professionals, street workers, etc.).
- (iii) To provide the resources, space, and support to facilitate transformative learning opportunities in the areas of: Children’s Global Arts, Earth Arts, Child Honouring, and Human Rights and Freedoms.
- (iv) To provide the resources, space, and support to young people in Canada and around the world to meet and present at *Global Arts Summits*, and work together in initiating *Youth Action Projects* (YAP), for the building of the World We Want.

*Note: The above set of goals and principles have in part been modified from the following sources: Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Articles 19, 26(2), 27(1); Convention of the Rights of the Child - Articles 13(1), 28(3), 29(1d/e), 31(2), 39; A Covenant for Honoring Children - By Raffi; The Earth Charter: Values and Principles for a Sustainable Future; and British Columbia Ministry of Education School Act (412).*

**Appendix 2**  
**“Friends” of the Children’s Global Arts Foundation**  
**Total to Date (July 2007): 198**

UVic

**Faculty**

Ted Riecken  
 Tim Hopper  
 Kathy Sanford  
 Budd Hall  
 Bob Dalto:  
 Darlene Clover  
 Janet Riecken  
 Alison Preece  
 Carmen Rodriguez  
 Catherine McLeod  
 Catherine McGregor  
 Lisa Mitchell  
 Carole Ford

**Graduate Students**

Nadine Cruickshanks  
 Joe karmel  
 Tish Scott  
 Laura Nimmon  
 Natasha Mallal  
 Katie Scoones  
 Karen Hurley  
 Natasha Blanchet-Cohen  
 Catherine Etmanski  
 Leanna Madill  
 Ana-Elisa Armstrong de Almeida  
 Paige Fisher  
 Deanna Peluso  
 Anna Nielson  
 Pippa Dean-Veeran  
 Ashley Akins

**Teacher Education Program**

Roselyn Verwoor  
 Christie Johnson  
 Sarah Cape  
 Jillian Scarrow  
 Christina Morgan

Caroline Murray  
 Morgane Roux  
 Katie Spencelayh  
 Suzanne Normandin  
 Kendall Kulak  
 Michelle Spencer  
 Mike Derby (Secondary)

Children/Youth/Teenage

Bryanda Smith  
 Haley Amson  
 Jeffrey Pitcher  
 Mark Vonesch  
 Clare McNamee-Annett  
 Elinor McNamee-Annett  
 Alan Cundall

Greater Victoria School Community

Susan Underwood  
 Kris(ten) Munoz  
 Heather Coey  
 Karen Chester  
 Wedney Gedney  
 Elaine McVie  
 Tarj Mann  
 Brent Kelly  
 Nella Nelson  
 Lisa Taylor  
 Fernand Magnin  
 Henrietta Langram-DesBrisay  
 Krista Tracy  
 Verna Collett  
 Charlotte Holtan (Hillcrest Elem)  
 Diane Boyce (Oaklands Elem)  
 Lisa Owen (Willow School)  
 Melanie Wakelin (Margaret Jenkins)  
 Jackie Kosh (Victoria West Elem)  
 Leanne Ramsfield (Victoria West Elem)  
 Nerine Sequeira  
 Margaret Wiens

Greater Victoria Community

Lynn Thornton (VIDEA)  
 Elizabeth Wallace (VIDEA)  
 Gita John (Power of Hope)  
 Naz Rayani (Pharmacist)  
 Gloria Hansen (Gettin Higher Choir)  
 Ida Giordano (Intern. Consultant)  
 Caterina Geur (Royal Roads)  
 Cindy Moyer (Metchosin/Langford)  
 Geoff Spriggs (Langford Fire Dept.)  
 Debbie Smollett (Royal Roads)  
 Art Holbrook (filmmaker)  
 Naz Virju-Babul (Agha Khan)  
 Lisa Lipsett (Salt Spring Island)  
 Mike Scott: (Global Arts DVD)  
 Paul Scrivener(Arts Council)  
 Jack Greenwell (GVTA)  
 Connie Nimmon (Acupuncture)  
 Danella Parks (Vancity-community)  
 Nimira Jetha (Global Village)  
 Ara Parker (EcoFest-Royal Roads)  
 Dianne Cross (Sidney Art Council)  
 Will Gordon (Mental Health Assoc.)  
 Diane Thorpe (Saanich- Arts Specialist)  
 Lynda Bradley (Child Abuse)  
 Alex Achtem  
 Teddy Anderson (Victoria hoop-dancer)  
 Cathy Carolsfeld (Sequaria in schools)  
 Rae Griffin (photography/HABS)  
 Megan Schuring (Geoff Spriggs friend)  
 Christine Morrison (Victoria/Japan)

Government/City of Victoria

Helen Hughes (city of Victoria)  
 Pamela Madoff (Gorge/Vic West...)  
 Denise Savoie (Victoria - MP)  
 Mary-Anne Alto/Karen Sawatsky

Regional (British Columbia)

Lois Harvey (Comox)  
 Navnit Dosanjh (Surrey Peace Club)  
 Joan Ezra (Burnaby Cascade Heights)  
 James Medynski (Glimmer Films)  
 Louise Dewdney (Loving People Org)  
 Susan Ruzic (War Toys For Peace)  
 Joy Butler (Ladner, BC)

Carroll Airey (Houston, B.C.)  
 Michelle Davies (Kelowna, B.C.)  
 Mary Ellen Campbell (Abbotsford, B.C.)  
 Tina Anderson (Richmond, B.C.)  
 Sandy Drummond (BCTF, Vancouver)  
 Michael Loo (International Cooperation)  
 Ghislaine Varin (Vancouver)  
 Louise Gonsalvez  
 Joan Merrifeild (Gabriola Island)  
 Shannon Lanaway  
 Donald Wilson (Peace Education)  
 Greg Cormier (West Vancouver, B.C.)  
 Lisa Scalapino (Campbell River)  
 Sheila Jiwan  
 Darlene Tully (Cowichan Lake)  
 Jamie Covey (Health -Duncan)  
 Colin Gorrie (Children's Festival)  
 Keith Orchiston (Kelowna-Zambia)  
 Lori O'Rorke (ESL Malaspina)  
 Jane Cameron (Selkirk Elem-ESL)  
 Sandra Santarossa (Cleveland Elemen)  
 Adrienne McAlpine  
 Marlene Westerlaund  
 Karen Macartuy  
 Karen Foster  
 Michelle Li  
 Diane Simpson  
 Nicholas Stanger  
 Jessica Hamilton  
 Rachelle Turenne  
 Dave Whitfield  
 Leah Papillo  
 Celia Young (Vancouver)  
 Jim Curtin (Cumberland, BC)  
 Clay McLeod: (Kelowna)  
 Jane Cundall (Shawnigan Lake)  
 Lisa Van Es (Duncan)  
 Sabrina Demedeiros (Nanaimo)  
 Katie Dixon (Nanaimo)  
 Mary Colmes (Pacific Heights - Surrey)  
 Joanna Larson (Prince Rupert sd)  
 Amanda Bartle (teacher)  
 Carmen Wiseman (New Westminster)  
 Diane Moran (Vancouver artist)

National

Deborah Ellis (Breadwinner.)  
Don Wright (Amnesty International)

**Alberta**

*Calgary-Erin Woods Elementary School*

Karin Coles (Principal)  
Cherly Zelmer (teacher)  
Charlene Yang (teacher)  
Paul Kelba (teacher)  
Jana Sharon (teacher)  
jmsharon@cbe.ab.ca  
Nancy Steeves (teacher)  
Andrew Cowie (teacher)  
Jeff Belcher (teacher)  
Angie Jones (teacher)  
Kim Miner (teacher)  
Lorraine Chelak

*Other Calgary*

Theresa Lewis (Principal)  
Janice Eisenhauer (Women in  
Afghanistan)  
Alice MacGougan (Banting/Sherwood)  
Carrie Rowlandson (Centennial H.S.)  
Nicole Harcos (Gr.3)  
Donna Armstrong (UVic Grad student)

**Saskatchewan**

Tim Molnar

**Ontario**

Scott Pattinson  
Josh Bloch  
Mike Cruickshanks

**Quebec**

Caroline Bouchard

**Nova Scotia**

Dr. Thomas Mark Turay (Professor, St.  
Franxis Xavier University)  
Tiffany Cruickshanks

**New Brunswick**

Peter Gorham (Nackawic)

**Yukon**

Robertson Bales (Yukon/IDEA-Zambia)  
Tracey Wallace (Whitehorse)

**Nunavut**

Gordon Kokak (Kugluktuk, Nunavut)

International**Africa***South Africa*

Cecil and Ruth Hershler (Education  
Without Borders)  
John Caldwell (Kahari refugees)

*Zanzibar*

Pat Alistair (Hands Across Borders)

**United States**

Helene Leneveu (Brooklyn)  
Lisa Suhay (“The Mouse and the Light”)  
Jiva Manske (New Mexico, USA)  
Christine Hill (Wisconsin, USA)  
Mary Wells (Texas, USA)

**New Zealand**

Victoria Scott (Peace Foundation)

**Germany/Vietnam**

Brigitte Miller (Vietnam Friendship  
Village)

**Iraq**

Zhiyan Ahmed (Kurdistan Save the  
Children)  
Mr. Noaman A. Ali  
Zhiyan Ahmed (Kurdistan Save the  
Children)  
Mr. Noaman A. Ali

### Appendix 3

#### CGAF Events & Conferences

Updated: June, 2007

#### Year at a Glance Events

- 1) **September 30, 2006:** Victoria Lifelong Learning Festival Program Launch -  
“Want to Learn some New Tricks”
- 2) **October 2, 2006:** UVic graduate seminar presentation
- 3) **October 20, 2006:** ESL - PSA Conference (Gladstone Secondary, Vancouver)  
“Weaving The Tapestry: Take 2”
- 4) **October 20, 2006:** B.C. Peace & Global Education Conference (Port Moody)
- 5) **October 20, 2006:** Bring Sustainability into Your Schools, Vancouver(GVRD)  
“Visioning the World We Want and Connecting to the  
World We Live In”
- 6) **Month of October, 2006:** Victoria International Art Symposium  
“Art with Conscience” exhibit (Silver Threads)  
**October 27-30, 2006 :** *Market Place Art Exhibit* (Victoria Conference Centre)
- 7) **December 10, 2006:** Art Exhibition: Shawnigan Lake Community Centre  
“Celebrating Creative Communities”
- 8) **January 2007 :** Art Exhibition: Lake Cowichan
- 9) **February 10, 2007:** International Development Conference (Royal Roads)
- 10) **February 15, 2007:** Benefit Concert: UVic - Faculty of Education  
“What Works to Prevent Violence, Terror, and War”
- 11) **February 16, 2007:** Professional Development Workshop  
(School Districts 61-Victoria, 62-Sooke)
- 12) **February 25, 2007:** World Unity Event - Maxwell Bahai International School,  
(Shawnigan Lake, B.C.)
- 13) **April 20-22, 2007:** Early Childhood Education Peace Conference (Spain) ?
- 14) **May 2007:** Vancouver Island International Children’s Festival-Langford
- 15) **June 2007:** CGAF first annual meeting

Proposed Events for the New Year

1) **Fall 2007:** CGAF Conference in Calgary ?

2) **February 21-22, 2008:** UNICEF Canada

*Diversity and Global Education Symposium – Port Alberni*

## Appendix 4

### CGAF Art Exchanges and Initiatives Updated July, 2007

#### Past, Present, & Ongoing

*Kabul, Afghanistan (2003 & 2005 artwork) with Gordon Head Elementary, Victoria; St. Joseph's Elementary, Victoria; and Sundance Elementary School, Victoria,*

*Kurdistan, Iraq (2003 & 2005 artwork) with Reynolds High School, Victoria, B.C. and Erin Woods Elementary, Calgary, Alberta*

*Reynolds High School, Victoria and Shahid Jabbar English Exemplary School Iraq Exchange (Fall 2006)*

*Jambiani School, Zanzibar/Tanzania with Braefoot Elementary School, Victoria. (ongoing since 2005)*

*Deenabandhu, India with Erin Woods Elementary, Calgary, Alberta (ongoing since Spring 2006)*

*Guguletu, Cape Town, South Africa with Frank Hobbs Elementary, Victoria, B.C. and Erin Woods Elementary, Calgary, Alberta*

*Punta Gorda, Belize with Erin Woods Elementary, Calgary (ongoing since Spring 2006)*

*Pichelemu, Chile (artwork) with School Based Prevention & Health Promotion, Duncan*

*Zambia with Victoria, Kelowna, Whitehorse, and Nelson schools (Spring 2006)*

*Erin Woods Elementary School, Calgary and New Delhi, India "We are All Related" Project (Spring - Winter 2006)*

*Cowichan Lake Community Services with Vietnam Friendship Village (Fall 2006)*

*King David High School, Vancouver (Joe Karmel) facilitated a global arts initiative (Fall 2006) as part of a new course entitled "Community, Culture, and Environment"*

CGAF "Art with Heart" is accessible on the on-line section of *OWL Magazine*.

*Rajasthan, India with Tom Baines Jr. High School; Calgary (Nov-Dec 2006)*

*Tecumseh Elementary School, Vancouver with schools in Abu Dhabi*

*Mengo Hospital, Uganda with Cleveland Elementary School, North Vancouver, B.C.*

*Nackawic, New Brunswick has initiated a CGAF project*

**Other Global Arts Contributions To Date:**

Tehran, Iran (artwork 2005)  
 Delta State, Nigeria (artwork 2005)  
 Korea (artwork 2005)  
 Sam Sharrat School, Milton, Ontario (artwork 2005)  
 UVic (ESL artwork 2005)  
 Erin Woods Elementary School (Social Justice Films, Spring 2006) Jillian Scarrow  
 (UVic student teacher, Spring 2006) - global arts in practicum

Present and Future Proposed Interest in Global Arts Projects/Initiatives:

*Strawberry Vale Elementary School, Victoria, B.C.* (2006/2007 school year)

*Monterey Park Elementary School, Calgary* (Theresa Lewis)

*Glendale Elementary School, Calgary* (The One World Drum Co.) with *Bali*

*Savoury Elementary School, Langford* (Katie Spencelagh and Cheryl Beaberitch-grade 1)

*Marigold School, Victoria* (Elaine McVie)

Leslie and Alexandre Wicks are planning an exchange with children from *Mexico* (Alex), *Costa Rica* (Leslie), and *Victoria*

*Dr. Carmen Rodriguez* (UVic) is pursuing CGA research connections with colleagues in *Mexico*

*Sparks Academy in Kabul* (Roshan/Sheila Jiwan) interested in artwork exchange

*Art Holbrook* plans to pursue the creation of a National Film of the Global Arts project

*Christina (Nina) Morgan* is pursuing connections with schools/children in *Uganda* Summer 2007 (as part of her Master's thesis)

*Christina Hill* (Milwaukee, WI) is identifying a Global Arts related - Peace Education thesis question and also interested in involving schools in her area

*Morgane Roux* (UVic) interested in incorporating a Global Arts connection with her travels and interests in *East Africa and Canada*

*Lisa Scalapino* (Project Coordinator for Understanding the Early Years) in *Campbell River* interested in incorporating Global Arts initiatives to help raise awareness and mobilize her schools and community to support healthy development for children 0-6 years. Also interested in the Art Gallery in Campbell River hosting parallel exhibit of children's artwork

*Tiffany Cruickshanks* has initiated a global arts connection at her daughter's school (Prospect Road Elem.) in *Halifax, Nova Scotia*. Board member, Thomas Mark Turay (Assistant Professor-Coady International Institute in Nova Scotia) has offered to assist with an art exchange between this school and areas within Africa.

*Suzanne Normandin* from *Quadra Elementary* (French Immersion) is interested in connecting her students with a French-speaking country/community. Ideas for Paris and Whitehorse, Yukon have been pursued.

Music teacher, *Melissa Jmaef* hopes to engage her high school students (*Oregon, USA*) in a long-term global arts project.

*Anna Nielson* (UVic graduate student) is interested in organizing a "global arts" day in at UVic where students from Vancouver Island are invited to engage in the Global Arts themes through art.

*Jim Curtin* (Jr. High, Social Studies teacher, Cumberland, B.C.) is reading Deborah Ellis's book "Mud City" with his grade 8 students, and is interested in connecting with a school in Afghanistan.

*Kendall Kulak* (Teacher Education program - UVic) is planning to initiate a global arts exchange with her final practicum class in Cranbrook BC (grade 6) and children in Nigeria (as part of her social studies class) or another part of West Africa. Kendall is also wondering if we needed people to get involved with gathering/fundraising art materials for the projects

*Michelle Spencer* (Teacher Education - UVic) is planning to initiate a global arts exchange with her June 2007 practicum in the Philippines. Connections through *Lisa Mitchell* (Dept. of Anthropology) are underway.

*Krista Tracy* is interested in initiating a Global Arts project with her grades 7 & 8 art and humanities classes at Royal Oak Middle School, Victoria, in January 2007.

*Jessica Hamilton*, student teacher at UBC, would like to involve her grade 1/2 practicum class in a global arts project between March and June 2007 (in Coquitlam).

*Alice MacGougan*, teacher at Banting/Sherwood Community School (Junior High School in Calgary) is interested in involving her grade 8 students in a global arts exchange.

Teachers from *Lochside Elementary* and *Willows Elementary* (Greater Victoria) are interested in pursuing global arts exchanges (through *Henrietta Langran Des Brisay*). *Mme Buslem*, French Immersion teacher at Arbutus Middle School (Greater Victoria) is interested in a global arts exchange for her middle school students (facilitator, *Gita John*).

*Carmen Wiseman* (grade 2/3 teacher at Queen Elizabeth Community School in New Westminster, BC) is interested in setting up a Global Arts exchange for a unit on Communities of the Past and Future. Belize or sub-Saharan Africa are of interest.

*Christa* (from Victoria, BC) works in the healing arts and is interested in doing some creative work with kids (in orphanages perhaps) in *Cambodia or Thailand* - places she hopes to visit in April 2007.

*Diane Moran* is a visual artist from Burnaby BC. She has been involved in both local and international Arts projects and will be coordinating an initiative in Cuba. Diane is also interested in supporting Arts projects in the Burnaby, B.C. area.

*Rae Griffin* is pursuing a photography project with Hands Across Borders on Zanzibar Island

Rashida Asad and brother Diljan Asad (*Balachistan, Pakistan*) are pursuing a Global Arts exchange with children in Canada

*Lisa Mitchell* from Dept. of Anthropology (UVic) interested in sharing her children's art project generated by *Filipino* children.

*Tim Molnar* has informed us that the elementary teachers in his science education class (*University of Saskatoon*) are interested in pursuing this project, including a few Aboriginal students.

*Nicole Harcos* (*Calgary*) interested in connecting her grade 3 students with children in either *India, Peru, Tunisia, or Ukraine*.

*John Caldwell* (*Victoria*) interested in engaging refugees situated in *Northern South Africa (Kahari)* in art project.

### **Interest from BCTF Conference, Vancouver, June 2006**

*Sandy Drummond* from BCTF (*Vancouver*) has offered to distribute Global Arts DVD through BCTF Lesson Aids Service

*Carroll Airey* plans to coordinate a global arts exchange with school children in *Houston, B.C.*, with children in *Santa Rosa del Penon, Nicaragua*

*Greg Cormier* from West Vancouver (*school district 45*) plans to pursue a global arts project with grade 11 and grade 12 students

*Tina Anderson* plans to include the global arts initiative in her "Primary Peace Curriculum"

*Ghislaine Varin* from *Vancouver* will correspond with a group of students (French if possible) and pursue classroom projects

*Donald Wilson* will promote Global Arts through *B.C. Teachers Peace and Global Education Association (PAGE)*

### **Interest & Contributions from World Peace Forum, Vancouver, June 2006**

*Dr. Thomas Mark Turay (St Francis Xavier)*, Children's Global Arts Foundation board member has offered to build networks in *Africa and Nova Scotia*

*Helene Leneveu* from *Brooklyn, USA* will be visiting schools in *Central and South America* and she has offered to collect artwork - her specialty and main interest is peace education

*Navnit Dosanjh* from *Surrey School District* is open to become involved in many ways - involving her peace club might be her first initiative

*Joan Ezra* from *Cascade Heights, Burnaby* would like to involve her Kindergarten class

*Louise Dewdney* hoping to engage members from *People Loving People Organization* - an organization who delivers clothing and goods to other countries

*Jiva Manske* from *New Mexico* would like to incorporate Global Arts (peace education) in public art - particularly graffiti and slam poetry - also drama and music

*Victoria Scott* from *Peace Foundation, New Zealand* is interested in getting New Zealand schools involved.... also interested in organizing a children's artwork exhibition in New Zealand

*Caroline Bouchard* from *Montreal Quebec* will promote CGA with art teachers at McGill

*Natasha Mallal* at *UVic* is working on her Master's in Dispute Resolution in the area of "arts for conflict resolution" - she is interested in helping with artwork exchanges in Victoria

*James Medynski* from *Glimmer Films* may use footage from Global Arts DVD for World Peace Forum documentary entitled "Think Peace"

*Don Wright* from *Amnesty International* is interested in collaborating with the CGAF in coordinating a "Human Rights" conference at UBC, UVic, and perhaps other locations

*Deborah Ellis* (children's author of *The Breadwinner, Parvana's Journey*, etc.) may be able to connect us with children in countries such as Malawi (and others)

*Janice Eisehauer* from *Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan - Calgary-based* - is interested in coordinating a children's artwork display in Calgary

*Carah Reed*, teacher at *Santa Ana High School in Southern California, USA*, is interested in an exchange with her Geography class (8-10 students) and children in Iraq or Afghanistan.

### **Interest from Teaching Sustainability in the Classroom Conference - Oct. 20th, 2006**

*Christine Wong* (grade 4/5) and *Marlene Westerlund* (grade 6/7) are pursuing a global arts exchange project with students at *Jessie Wowk Elementary, Richmond School District*; and their sponsor school in *Sri Lanka*

### **Interest from Tapestry 2007 - Professional Development workshop - Feb 16, 2007**

*Cathy Carolsfeld* from *Seaquaria in School Program* is interested in integrating global arts ideas as a way to encourage environmental awareness & stewardship

*Mary Holmes* from *Pacific Heights Elementary School in Surrey, B.C.* will initiate an exchange of children's art between *Seaquaria Schools* and schools and children in *Tresmoias, Brazil*.

*Melanie Wakelin* from *Margaret Jenkins School in Victoria, B.C.* interested in borrowing international art samples as a springboard to lessons related to Children's Global Arts

*Joanna Larson* is interested in arranging an exchange between students in her district (52-Prince Rupert) and either Guatemala, Jamaica, or South Africa

*Diane Boyce* from *Oaklands School* is interested in a Global Arts exchange

*Amanda Bartle* is a classroom teacher and an avid traveler and is interested in exchanging pictures/artwork around the world

## Appendix 5

# Art: The Universal Language of Connection

**GOAL: To make connections with kids in other parts of the world through art.**

**Kids in different parts of the world lead different lives. Some kids live in peace and others at war; some go to school and others have to work; and some have a healthy environment while others breathe polluted air. Although there are many differences, kids everywhere have things in common. Art is one way that kids can connect with each other, using creativity to become friends and teach each other about life. What kind of world do you live in? What kind of world do you want? Kids everywhere have the answers.**

1. The Children's Global Arts Foundation (CGAF) provides kids everywhere with an opportunity to envision, through their artwork and their connections with kids in other countries, the "world we live in" and "the world we want." With this awesome project, Canadian kids have been making art and exchanging it with kids in places from Afghanistan to Tanzania, all in the name of making the world a more peaceful, just, and compassionate place. You can read more at the CGAF website at [www.childrenglobalarts.ca](http://www.childrenglobalarts.ca).
2. Kids in Canadian communities like Victoria, B.C., Milton, Ont., and Calgary, Alta., have exchanged artwork with kids in other countries like Afghanistan, Algeria, Belize, Chile, India, Iran, Iraq, Korea, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania. Some of these exchanges are still going on!
3. Some of the artwork that has been exchanged between kids in Canada and kids in other countries includes pictures, paintings, music, stories, hand-made stick puppets, banners, plays, and traditional board games.
4. What kind of art projects do you like to do? Think about an art project that you could do and then exchange with kids in other parts of the world.
5. The CGAF website has ideas for lots of cool art projects, including clothesline art, dream catchers, and banners. For ideas on how to get projects like these off the ground, check out [www.educ.uvic.ca/globalarts/pages/practicalideas/instructionunits.html](http://www.educ.uvic.ca/globalarts/pages/practicalideas/instructionunits.html)
6. If you want to get involved with the Children's Global Arts Foundation, ask a teacher, parent, or group leader to contact Dr. Tim Hopper at [thopper@uvic.ca](mailto:thopper@uvic.ca) or (250) 472-8385, or Dr. Nadine Cruickshanks at [nadineho@uvic.ca](mailto:nadineho@uvic.ca). Dr. Hopper and Dr. Cruickshanks teach pre-service teachers at the University of Victoria in B.C.

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Author \_\_\_\_\_  
Nadine Hope Cruickshanks

Signed:



