A Sense of Place: Toward a Curriculum of Place for WSÁNEC People

by

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ABSTRACT

This research focussed on the concept of a Sense of Place as a framework in the development of meaningful and relevant curriculum for the WSÁNEC people, a First Nations community on southern Vancouver Island. A qualitative method of investigation was utilized based on a Community Based Participatory Research methodology. The cornerstone of the research revolved around the question, “what is knowledge of most worth?” The research revealed very little of knowledge of most worth prescribed in current curriculum. WSÁNEC people expressed knowledge associated with land and territory as knowledge of most worth as well as significant essentials of it; Elders as carriers of knowledge, the SENĆOTEN language, place-names, WSÁNEC history, ceremony, sense of belonging and identity. As well, the researcher used an autobiographical methodology as a non-First Nations teacher and researcher in a First Nations community in order to establish a framework and recommendations for future development of curriculum.

Supervisor: Dr. Gloria Snively
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I would also like to acknowledge Marie Cooper and the WSÁNEC people for a guiding hand throughout this journey and for trusting me with a WSÁNEC sense of place.
DEDICATION

To my wife Andrea Jane for her love, patience, support and unwavering confidence and belief in what I wanted to do. I thank you so much love. It is your turn now. To my dad and my late mom, I thank you very much for fostering in me a compassionate sense of place. And to my little ones whose sense of place I eagerly look forward to watching grow.
A Sense of Place

How would you respond if asked, describe for me your sense of place? How did it develop?

What is a sense of place but a manifestation of who we are, the culmination of our life’s experience that informs much of what we perceive, think, feel and do? A sense of place just is. Keith Basso in his most inspiring and insightful book, "Wisdom Sits in Places" (1996) prefers to use the phrase “sensing of places” (p. 109) for as human beings, in our most basic nature, we sense and respond to stimulus in our environment. A sense of place, he says, is what is accrued and never stops accruing from lives spent sensing places. It is our experiences in places, both positive and negative, that provides for the development of our sense of place. This is what this thesis explores. Its driving question has been, and continues to be: “how do we guide experiences, particularly through education, that fosters a culturally and ecologically informed sense of place, the development of which instils a strong and lasting grounding in knowing your place?”
Introduction: The Place and the People

It is still beautiful on our Saanich Peninsula. But we must all learn to follow the ways of our ancestors. If we bring back a deep respect for Nature, we can be an example to everyone and prevent our beautiful land from being destroyed. (Elliott, 1990, p.12)

On the southern tip of Vancouver Island, nestled within the Salish Sea and the Saanich Inlet lies the Saanich Peninsula. Off the north and east coast of this Peninsula, lie a dozen large islands and several hundred smaller islets collectively known as the Southern Gulf Islands and the San Juan Islands. This is the place called WSÁNEC and the home territory of the WSÁNEC people. It is a place of abundance, a land rich in marine resources and a rich diversity of plant and animal species. Most significantly, it is a landscape that has sustained the WSÁNEC people and is an extension of the people who have lived in this region for thousands of years.

The people of WSÁNEC, by designation of ethnographers, fall within the Salishan linguistic family and are further divided into the Coast Salish linguistic division and Straits Salish language group. Traditionally the WSÁNEC people know themselves as ‘Saltwater People’ because they fished sockeye salmon with their reef-net technology (Elliott, 1990). They lived in permanent homes during the winter throughout the Saanich Peninsula. Traditionally these “longhouses” would be near the shore in order for easy access to winter fishing grounds and gathering on the beaches for sustenance. During the summer months, temporary camps would be set up all through the San Juan Islands and Southern Gulf Islands. During these times they gathered, fished and hunted for winter food supply. It was within the range of summertime travels and activities that set the boundaries of the WSÁNEC people (Paul, 1995). Today, the WSÁNEC people are divided into four groups or reservations located along the Saanich Peninsula: Tsartlip, Tsawout, Pauquachin, and Tseycum. “These people though, are one people, sharing the same customs and speaking the same language, the SENĆOTEN language” (Paul, 1995, p.3).
The rich environment of WSÁNEC, the Salish Sea and Saanich Inlet directed and supported much of the development of the Saanich peoples' culture and society, a manifestation of their sense of place. The people of Saanich recognized their dependence on this land and as such, their lives and culture were embedded in their relationship with this place. Subsistence activities were planned, patterned and designed to make the most of abundant marine and terrestrial resources which were seasonally diverse and geographically disperse (Simonsen, Davis, & Haggarty, 1995). The teachings of the Saanich peoples speak of the land, the water and the people as equal members of a complex system, an integrated entity connected through cultural traditions.

My lived experience, growing up and working with WSÁNEC people has allowed me a glimpse of this Indigenous worldview, a history deeply connected to this place and the subsequent upheaval of colonialism.¹ What I have experienced is an incredibly kind, caring and welcoming people despite their colonial history. However, the reality of residential schools has left a horrible legacy for many First Nations people and their communities, and these effects still ripple through WSÁNEC and other First Nations communities. Nadasdy (2003) posits it is now quite clear that residential schools were aggressively assimilationist and that many of the Aboriginal children who attended these schools were subjected to “systematic physical, emotional, and sexual abuse” (p. 41). The lingering effects of the residential school experience has played a huge role in the loss of language and severely disrupted many of the relationships First Nations people have with their land. Current educational practice and curriculum, although not with intention, I argue, may further influence the loss of language and connection WSÁNEC people have with their land.

I am ashamed of the role education has often played in influencing this outcome. Nevertheless, a more constructive attitude could be adopted in how can education help shape a future, one that WSÁNEC people can identify as their own. The WSÁNEC people are aware of what their community needs and education is an area where change is very much needed. As formal Westernized educational systems have been, in the past,

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¹ When using the term First Nations I am referring to Indigenous peoples of British Columbia, Indigenous refers to peoples Indigenous to place world-wide, and other terms such as Aboriginal, Indian and Native are other peoples words used in direct reference to interview quotes, text and paper references.
primarily a colonizing agent, there is a need to rebound in a new direction, toward
decolonization. How might WSÁNEC people see a 'new education' counteracting the
loss of their lands and the mounting threat of permanent loss of their languages and
cultures?

I have struggled (and still do) to find my place and to define what my role is as an
educator working with First Nations people. I am a non-Native male teaching science,
biology, geography and chemistry to adult learners at the Saanich Adult Education Centre
(SAEC), part of the Saanich Indian School Board (SISB). I find myself in a privileged
position. I get to work in my home, within the traditional territory of the WSÁNEC
people. I find myself working within a culture, a placed consciousness, whose meaning
has evolved from living in and caring for this place. However, what I have come to
suspect through teaching in the WSÁNEC community and reflected in many an Elders’
comments is an apparent decline in the relationship many younger people have with their
lands. There seems little need for students within current education practices to know
their lands the way they once had to in order for their culture to survive.

As a teacher in this community I have a responsibility to teach students in a
culturally meaningful and relevant way: but what is this; how do I as a non-First Nations
person go about this? I am frustrated with much of the curriculum that is prescribed for
my students, not because of what is found within its content but more so what is not
included. I find very little local or cultural relevancy. And although I have tried to
incorporate some resemblance of such, it becomes problematic due to a number of
factors. Proponents of First Nations and environmental education (Cajete, 1994; Deloria,
2001; Kawagley, 1995; Sanger, 1997; Smith and Williams, 1999; Smith, 2002; Corsiglia
and Snively 1997) argue that schools do very little to promote culture and connection to
local place and even more so, as Sanger (1997) states, “may foster detachment from
[students’] experience of place and community” (p. 4).

Aboriginal academics argue that the future of indigenous education must shift
emphasis on education that is grounded in local culture and not just about culture.
educational philosophy, pedagogy and system our own, making the effort to explicitly
explore ways of knowing and systems of knowledge...based on our own Indigenous
North American insights and most fundamentally metaphysics” (p. vii). Kawagley and Barnhardt (1998) see an answer that is quite simply obvious. They argue that the culture of the education system, as reflected in First Nations schools needs radical change, with the main catalyst being curriculum grounded in the local culture. This can be achieved by documenting, articulating and validating local indigenous knowledge systems and using those to guide development of curriculum that reflects and reinforces those same knowledge systems (Kawagley and Barnhardt, 1998). Nonetheless, their suggestion has yet to be implemented in many First Nations schools. So the question becomes, ‘how do I as a non-First Nations teacher, who agrees whole-heartedly with the logic of this statement, help this?’ What are these indigenous knowledge systems? What are they founded on and grounded within, and how can we use those to guide curriculum development? This is what this thesis aims to find out.

A Rationale for a ‘Sense of Place’

I have always been intrigued by how people relate to their environments, what has become known to me as a sense of place. I also have a deep respect for how Indigenous people identify themselves with their land. Aboriginal academics (Cajete, 1994, 1999, 2000; and Kawagley, 1995, 1998, 1999; and Deloria, 2001; Wildcat, 2001) consistently connect land and territory to an identity with place. “When Indians talk about restoring or preserving their culture, they talk about restoring their lands in the same breath” (Martinez, 1992, as cited in Cajete, 1994, p. 85). I hear First Nations people speak of this identification in profound ways. Gregory Cajete (1994), a Pueblo scholar, puts it this way:

There is an interaction between the peoples inner and outer realities that comes into play as we live in a place for an extended amount of time. Our physical makeup and the nature of our psyche are formed to some extent by the distinct climate, soil, geography, and living things of a place. Over generations of human adaptation to place, certain physical and psychological traits begin to self-select. The development of mountain people as distinct from desert people and as distinct from plains people begins to unfold...Native Americans’ [distinct to these places] reflect physical and psychological characteristics that are directly the result of
their generations of interaction with the geographies and ecologies of their respective regions. (P. 84)

Furthermore, he notes "phrases such as "Land of the Hopi" or "Land of the Iroquois" have a literal dimension of meaning because there was a co-creative relationship between Native people and their lands" (2000, p. 187). Culture evolves from this intimate relationship with place. Smith and Williams (1999), as editors of Ecological Education in Action, further this line of reasoning and state “we are place-based creatures as much as the animals Darwin encountered on the Galapagos Islands, but instead of producing distinctive plumage or beaks or extravagant flowers, we have created different forms of cultural interaction appropriate for varying biotic communities and natural conditions” (p.4).

Environmental educators and writers (Orr, 1994; Delay, 1996; Sanger, 1997; Smith and Williams, 1999; Snively 1997; Smith, 2002) use the construct of a ‘sense of place’ to ground the ideals and goals of their practice. They suggest sense of place education has significant value and potential in achieving local ecological and cultural sustainability (Orr, 1994; Woodhouse and Knapp, 2003). In this way ‘place’ becomes convergent from two different worldviews. So, I wonder if a sense of place, as a construct, might be an appropriate place to begin my research.

As an environmental educator (I use this distinction before any other), my passion lies in providing experiences for students that foster a care of natural places. I care for my home place deeply, and I find I associate my sense of place around my love of this land and my concerns for its ecological health. But what is a sense of place in a more culturally inclusive context. In order to approach this question, I want to quickly explore several definitions and descriptions of this concept.

A sense of place at face value is a vague term partly because it is entirely inclusive of who we are. Basso, (1996) describes a sense of place this way:

As normally experienced, a sense of place quite simply is, as natural and straightforward as our fondness for certain colours and culinary tastes (p. xiii, emphasis in original). As such it is greeted as natural, normal, and, despite the ambivalent feelings it sometimes produces, entirely
unremarkable...sense of place is accepted as a simple fact of life, as a regular aspect of how things are. (P. 144)

Raffan (1992) focuses a sense of place and defines it as “a quality of space that lives in the minds and emotions of people who live there” (p. 21). These definitions indicate a sense of place is both an individual and collective construct and as such partake complexity of both. Basso (1996) states, “unavoidably, senses of place partake of cultures, of shared bodies of knowledge with which persons and whole communities render their place meaningful and endow them with social importance” (p. xiv). He further goes on to note “senses of place, while always informed by bodies of local knowledge, are finally the possessions of particular individuals. People not cultures sense places” (xv-xvi). Sanger (1997) pinpoints a sense of place further, stating it as “an experientially based intimacy with the natural processes, community, and history of ones place” (p. 4). This definition indicates a learned sense of place, learned by direct and applied experience in and about place.

Cajete (2000) equates a traditional Native American sense of place as “living in relationship...that people understood that all entities of nature, plants, animals, stones, trees, mountains, rivers, lakes, and a host of other living entities, embodied relationships that must be honoured” (178). Sense of place when viewed from this perspective suggests it is very much spiritual, and as much an action as it is a concept, very inclusive of Indigenous knowledge, or what has become known, in the literature at least, as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). Although TEK is often viewed as a problematic term for many First Nations people (Nadasdy 2003), McGregor (2003), an aboriginal woman, defines it as a highly localized and social approach to the world:

Aboriginal understandings of TEK tend to focus on relationships between knowledge, people, and all of creation (the “natural” world as well as the spiritual). TEK is viewed as the process (a verb) of participating fully and responsibly in such relationships, rather than specifically on the knowledge gained from such experiences. For aboriginal peoples, TEK is not just about understanding relationships; it is the relationship with creation. TEK is something one does. (P. 2 all emphasis in original)
As a way of engaging in ones surroundings and finding them significant, Indigenous knowledge includes within it, a “deeply internalized sense of place” (Cajete, 1994). This way of viewing our relationships to place suggests the appropriateness of using a sense of place as a framework to investigate the development of a curriculum of place that is culturally and locally meaningful and relevant. After all, as Wildcat (2001) states, “a good place to begin Indian education in [North] America is with the lived experiences of peoples who have resided in places long enough to know and remember what it means to be Native to a place” (p. 39).

**Purpose: Understanding WSÁNEC as a foundation**

How then do we foster experiences through education that promote a culturally and ecologically informed sense of place within individuals? Although the significance of the WSÁNEC peoples’ ecological relationships to their lands have been reduced and altered, the cultural significance of this knowledge is still understood and practiced. I have heard the term “care-takers” used many times in working with the people of this place. “As care-takers, my people helped to maintain the balance of all living things...there is no telling how old the idea is. From the oldest stories I know, my ancestors were aware of this” (Paul, 1995, preface). It is still here and the purpose of this thesis to assist in regenerating these ideas and placing them into curriculum.

The purpose of this research was multidimensional. First, it was to investigate WSÁNEC ways of knowing place, a WSÁNEC sense of place, and to explore the possibilities of creating science (and other) curriculum based on this concept with the WSÁNEC people. Second, as sense of place is a consistent theme in First Nations and environmental education, another purpose was to explore the extent to which a sense of place, as a construct, might contribute conceptually and methodologically in curriculum development for First Nations people. Third, as I am a non-First Nations teacher teaching within the WSÁNEC community, it was hoped that through this research process, an appropriate framework might be established that helps others contribute in the creation of curriculum in collaboration with First Nations communities. Finally, as I care
for my home place very deeply, I hoped to gain a further understanding of my own sense of place.

Research Questions

My research focused specifically on the following questions:

1. What are the foundations of a WSÁNEC way of knowing place, a sense of place?
2. What is knowledge of most worth as deemed by WSÁNEC people?
3. To what extent is 'place' where science (or other) curriculum can emerge from and how can this concept of place be used as the framework for developing a place-based science curriculum for the people of WSÁNEC?
4. How has the research experience influenced my own knowledge of place and its relevance to ecological education?

Participants

The people of WSÁNEC guided this research. From the very spark that ignited this thesis, Elders, School Board members and First Nations teachers, formal or otherwise, shared their ideas and supported its development. Twelve WSÁNEC people were interviewed, representing all four communities, including Elders, community leaders, school board members, teachers and former students from the Saanich Adult Education Centre (SAEC). These participants provided a cross section of age, gender, formal and informal education and knowledge of traditional and contemporary culture.

Methodology

The methodology used in this research revolved around ways a WSÁNEC sense of place might be illuminated. Since curriculum development is an extension of this

2 An Elder is a term given to people who are considered holders of wisdom and usually, but not always elderly.
research, the idea of curriculum development as research, was also used in the overall framework. As such, a fundamental question of curriculum is to determine "what is knowledge of most worth" (Marsh and Willis, 1995, p. V). This question became the cornerstone of this research because of what it illuminated when asked of participants. Not only did it provide convincing evidence of what WSÁNEC people felt should be in curriculum, it also provided what I came to identify as central aspects of a WSÁNEC sense of place.

As each place or community is unique, so too must the research framework. Research within a First Nations community requires that certain protocols be followed in order to maintain the respect of the people within the community (Eshkakogan, 2003); this is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. With the intention of openness and flexibility, the methodology from which the research was built, unfolded as I talked to Elders and community members about my ideas; the research theory evolved from the process of communication and mutual learning. With significant help from an Elder who is currently on the Saanich Indian School Board (SISB), a local advisory committee was set up. This group was integral in the development of the research design, interview protocols and the gathering of potential participants.

Participatory research is built on the premise that experiential knowledge is valid, that people best know their situations and can best solve their own problems (Simpson, 1998). As the researcher, I was a committed participant and learner throughout the entire process. As such I expected the research, its development and procedure, would unfold as it went along. Central to participatory research is the role of strengthening the awareness of the people and their own abilities (Hall, 1981). Based on the principles of participatory action research, the process of building research methodology around community input and design resembled what is known as Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) (Fletcher, 2003). The most important aspect of CBPR was that it fundamentally made clear the uniqueness of the WSÁNEC community. In this way, the research process was determined by the community and for the community. From there, a qualitative research design was employed based on conversations with WSÁNEC people. The literature suggested this as being most conducive to a holistic

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3 Curriculum development as a research process is discussed in Marsh and Willis, 1995.
worldview and oral tradition of First Nations people because it added fluidity and flexibility to the research process and utilized the art of traditional storytelling (Struthers, 2001).

As I teach in the community and am friends with many members, it was felt that a CBPR methodology would provide a more holistic and richer understanding regarding the importance of place to the people of WSÁNEC. The research was conducted in two phases. First a feast took place, as suggested by the local advisory committee, which resulted in a gathering of many Elders and concerned community members. A feast was chosen for the first phase of the research because they encourage the gathering of Elders and community members and are often used for the communication of information on a large scale. The intent of the feast was to generate interest as well as informing the community of the potential research agenda. At that point, people were told the purpose of the research and provided a chance to ask questions. Seven people from this original gathering participated in the second phase of the research. This consisted of a semi-structured personal interview and which provided the data for this thesis. Chapter three includes a more elaborate discussion of the methodology used in this research.

As well, I felt several tensions in beginning this research, which resulted in the incorporation of an autobiographical methodology prior to embarking on the actual research. Because of this, it was important that I look into myself, to uncover potential biases and assumptions. Settelmaier and Taylor (2002) suggest a researcher engage in critical self-reflection before conducting research in another culture. They suggest answering four questions:

1. Who is the researcher doing the study?
2. What is the research about?
3. Why do I feel this research is important?
4. How will I perform the research?

In going through this process, I found a path I felt comfortable in following as a researcher. This process is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.
Limitations and Bias

There are several biases inherent in this research project. Primarily, as the teacher, primary researcher and participant observer all in one, this exposes the research and potential findings to my own bias. Secondly, the idea of a place-based curriculum (although not with that name) has been growing in my mind from a lifetime of growth and love of outdoor, experiential and environmental education. My previous experiences, as a camp leader and wilderness guide, have predisposed my assumptions of the success of this type of holistic and experiential mode of learning. My inclination towards this type of curriculum personally stems from a bias that a transformation toward locally developed place-based education is absolutely necessary; as teachers, we need to be more aware of how our sense of place develops. However, the data used in this research was derived from personal communication with WSÁNEC people. As such, I used their words to guide potential development of curriculum. I checked with participants to make sure they agreed what I reported and that it accurately reflected their comments. This process helped decrease bias and increase validity.

The limitations associated with this project should also be noted. As has been my experience in working with First Nations along the coast of British Columbia, each community is as distinct as the ecology of their places they call home. Therefore, the limitations of this study will be to the Saanich Peninsula and the First Nations people of WSÁNEC.

Significance of the Study

Curriculum development under any subject heading is nothing new to the people of WSÁNEC. After the call for local control of Indian education was initiated, a document titled Saanich Native Curriculum was created in 1976. The philosophy of this document was based on the values of community control, community involvement and self-determination. The main purpose of this curriculum document was to reaffirm the identity, values and culture of the WSÁNEC people and to establish total Indian content courses and the creation of more effective educational materials (Saanich Indian School
Board, 1976). A constant theme identified throughout all grade levels was a focus on developing awareness and comprehension of the environment consistent with Native Indian values. Furthermore, the two highest content areas believed to be important by the parents interviewed were Saanich Native history/geography at 100% and science/arithmetic at 98%, indeed central components of a place-based curriculum.

The intent of this research was to illuminate a WSÁNEC sense of place and to use these findings to ground curriculum in local representations of place. Smith (2002) states, “knowing the local well enables people to become more skilful and confident about their capacity to shape their own lives in ways that will benefit themselves and their children and grandchildren” (p. 10). The significance of this research lies in identifying ways to culturally and ecologically inform the development of a sense of place, and what this thesis aims to find out. As well, it is hoped that other teachers in a similar situation to mine might find a framework to follow for future community based curriculum development in their own place.
Chapter 2: A Review of Sense of Place Literature

Anthropologists have paid scant attention to one of the most basic dimensions of human experience, that close companion of heart and mind, often subdued, poorly understood, instinctively felt, yet potentially overwhelming, that is known as sense of place (Basso, 1996, p. 106). For where places are involved, attendant modes of dwelling are never far behind, and in this dimly lit region of the anthropological world, the ethnography of lived topographies, much remains to be learned. (Basso, 1996, p.111)

This literature review begins with a brief look at the background work on sense of place, particularly in the field of geography. It then moves towards a more inclusive and holistic definition of a sense of place as having social, ideological and ecological dimensions. By linking sense of place to ethnography and cultural ecology the review focuses on what a sense of place means to First Nations people, specifically links toward land, culture and community and how colonization has affected peoples connection to place. This chapter concludes with how education can be linked to sense of place and how the implications of such can help regenerate a strong and lasting sense of place for First Nations people.

Sense of Place and Geography

Sense of place is still a relatively new field of study. Its roots are in the various fields of geography, (regional, behavioural and humanistic) and more recently has been used as a construct in several fields from cultural anthropology, cultural ecology and environmental education. And, as each new study contributes to understanding the complex relationships humans have with their places, it is hoped that we will gain a more holistic appreciation of what our places might provide.

In his master's, thesis Hay, (1986) draws his understanding of a sense of place from a Western perspective, particularly geography and suggests that environmental determinism and possibilism were primary influences on studies regarding sense of place. The idea of environmental determinism posits that a regions climate and topography shapes the society who takes up residence in those regions; habitat will determine, to a
large extent, peoples' behaviour. Possibilists, on the other hand, believed that a people's habitat may influence behaviour but it does not determine behaviour (Tatham, 1957, as cited in Hay, 1986). Determinism and possibilism are co-dependent in that both, to some extent, influence the other and in turn are significant to the connections people have with their environments. Although the environment will shape to some degree how a person or culture behaves, people still have an element of control by shaping their environments to fit their desires and or needs. Determinism and possibilism are also integral in the development of cultural ecology, which will be discussed in following sections.

Region is one of the main themes of geography taught in schools today. Indeed it is one of the main descriptors geographers use to determine a place. Regional geography studies regions and their distinctive qualities. A qualification of this study is the recognition of a region, its naming and its boundaries.

Sense of place also has ties to behavioural geography. This tenant of geography studies how people perceive their world and evaluate it and counters the views of determinism, suggesting an individual is a complex being whose perception of the environment may not correspond with objective reality (Mayhew, 1997). How a person perceives their environment - environmental perception - is important because it is dependent on a number of affective factors that will be expanded on later. Behaviourism posits that humans are rational decision-makers; we base our judgements on our environment as we perceive them and not necessarily as they are. The nature of such perception becomes affective and subjective. How we perceive a place is thus strongly influenced by emotion and our preferences for certain types of places, the value of such depends upon the perceptions of the decision-maker and his or her ability to respond to that perception. How people perceive their environment, in behavioural terms, determines to a large extent how they will act (Hay, 1986).

Humanistic Geography: Toward an Understanding of Sense of Place

Humanistic geography can be defined as a view of human geography centred on human perception, capability, creativity, experience, and values (Mayhew, 1997). As humanistic implies, the focus is on human experience and is concerned with human
centred interests as opposed to a purely physical world. This geographical approach allows for a focus on place and the experiences of place by people through phenomenological and existential arguments (Butz and Eyles, 1997).

Raffan (1993) suggests that a sense of place, to some extent, constitutes an existential definition of self. Existentialism, he suggests, sees individuals as striving to build up a self, which is not given, either by nature or by culture. In direct contradiction from behavioural geographers, existentialists believe that human beings are not rational decision makers but the subjects of their experiences (Hay, 1986). People’s environments are seen through the eyes of the beholder and the way they perceive their environments will differ drastically based on their experiences with nature.

Phenomenology, and its acceptance as a legitimate research tool, greatly enhanced our abilities to understand sense of place from the context of different societies and cultures. Phenomenology is a philosophical inquiry into intellectual processes of humans and is characterized by the vigorous exclusion of any preconceptions about existence or its causes, and searches for the reasons why people feel the way they do (Hay, 1986). The aim of people using this method of enquiry is understanding, the coming to see more deeply and more respectfully the essential nature of human existence and the world in which it unfolds. It seeks a deeper understanding of the meaning behind intention and not the reasons or the causes. The focus is on the observed present, but the findings are contextualized within a cultural, social and historical framework (Burgess, 1985).

Humanistic geographers look to research how people transform “mere space into an intensely human place” (Tuan, 1977). Physical geography defines place as a particular point on the earth's surface; an identifiable location for a situation imbued with human values (Mayhew, 1997). In humanistic geography, place is a centre filled with meaning by human beings. Tuan (1977) asserts that sense of place infers people’s connections they have with the land, their perceptions of the relationships between themselves and their place, and is a concept that encompasses symbolic and emotional aspects. “Space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value” (Tuan, 1977, p.6). Place can be distinguished from space in the sense that peoples’ involvement in their place gives meaning to the space or region in a context that otherwise mere space is void of. In this context, space becomes place because of the
people and their relationships to that place. Relph (1976) argues that place is qualitatively different from that of space. Space is part of any immediate encounter with an environment regardless of intent or feeling, which is not so with place. Places are constructed from our memories and feelings through repeated encounters with our places. “Place is where one is known and knows others” (Butz and Eyles, 1997, p.2). Sense of place involves sense of being and belonging. People develop feelings toward their place; how people develop these feelings and what implications these feelings have on their perceptions of their environment is key to understanding what a sense of place is.

There are several definitions of a sense of place as discussed in Chapter One and what we can conclude is that it is both an individual and collective construct; it is born from the mind of the one sensing a place, but as Butz and Eyles (1997) note, we are always already culturally and socially constituted. We communicate with people, share ideas, knowledge and opinions. A sense of place contains personal and communal significance tied to culture, language and tradition. With this in mind, a sense of place becomes “a kind of imaginative experience, a species of involvement with the natural and social environment, a way of appropriating portions of the earth” (Basso, 1996, p. 143). With these definitions as a starting point, a sense of place, or a Basso (1996) prefers, sensing of place, becomes “a form of cultural activity” (p. 143); a sense of place is a mode of cultural action.

Although a holistic concept, cultural anthropologists construct categories in which to describe a sense of place. Butz and Eyles (1997) in their paper “Reconceptualising senses of place: social relations, ideology and ecology,” reduce a sense of place into three general categories. Although this approach can never truly encompass the entire holistic qualities of a sense of place, their categorization allows for an investigation into and the developmental components of a sense of place. The authors conclude that a sense of place is rooted in the ecology of place and evolves within and through social and ideological processes. Although our own sense of place is an individual construct based on our experiences in places, our symbolic constitutions and social interaction within those places significantly influences the development of our sense of place. In this next section, I will explore a sense of place through a discussion of each of these component parts, the social, ideological and ecological.
Social and Ideological Components of Sense of Place

To conceptualise sense of place as having social and ideological components, I will explore the concept of community. Eisenhauer, Krannich and Blahna (2000) suggest community is, “a set of cultural and social relations where people have shared modes of thought and expression in specifically defined locations” (p.423). Community is thus a group of people with similar interests, who by having a common attachment to place exert their sense of place through social interaction with one another (Maser, 1998). The community also interacts with the larger society, both in creating change and reacting to change.

The social component of a sense of place lies in culture and is conceptualised through cultural transmission of a belief system, the ideological component, inherent in that culture. Butz and Eyles (1997) suggest the ideological component can be viewed as “matrices of symbols” (p.4) that have particular meaning to people of a place. They go on to state:

Ideological structure constitutes community as an expression of collective sentiment and as a device for the protection and promotion of sectional interests. Matrices of symbols pertaining to places can engender a sense of belonging and identity; individuals identify with a place, and feel they belong to it, because they share social values and sentiments with others in that place. The place comes to represent a set of shared values. (p. 4)

Because culture shapes the inception and reception of belief systems, it is through culture that a sense of place is constructed and perpetuated. Eisenhauer et al. (2000), argue that to understand how people come to define their natural environment, one must emphasise that such knowledge is socially constructed. In other words, people impart meaning on places in ways that reflect their social and cultural experiences. “The natural environment is transformed into culturally meaningful phenomena and is then viewed from the perspective of these cultural definitions” (Eisenhauer et al., 2000, p. 422). The process of transforming spaces into places is influenced by the culture of the people in those places. The shared meanings that create culture provides the framework for the
construction of that shared sense of place. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that because peoples’ understandings and perceptions of their environment are rooted in culture and social interaction, sense of place is influenced and reflected by local communities (Eisenhauer et al., 2000).

Butz and Eyles (1997) use Habermans (1984) distinction between instrumental and communicative action in explaining social and ideological connections in a sense of place. Instrumental action refers to the way people practically interact with their environment, commute to work, recreate, and meet with people, etcetera. It refers to the technical and practical ways in which people use their environment. Communicative action, on the other hand, describes how people communicate with one another, to understand and negotiate common meaning or common sense. It is through communicative action that social communities “negotiate both the rules for decision making, and specific decisions themselves” (Butz and Eyles, 1997, p. 5). Implicit in the relationship between instrumental and communicative action is the understanding that both complement each other, instrumental action relies on continuous and evolving interpretation of communicative action, the development of a life-world. The concept of life-world, the specific set of assumptions and social practices that mediate how an individual or group relates to wider society (Giroux, 1981), is important to the development and evolution of sense of place. The knowledge, beliefs, expectations and biases into which we experience our place, both condition and are conditioned by our life-world.

The relationship between communicative action, instrumental action and life-world help explain the ways that place, community and sense of place are related. Whether formally or informally, conversations between people in a community must occur in some place. With this in mind, it is evident that where this interaction occurs in a community will influence what is decided or argued or whatever. Places provide the sites for this ever-evolving interaction of people communicating in social contexts. The significance of these sites of interaction and communication will in some way add significance to them and in turn provide meaning to those places (Butz and Eyles, 1997).

Butz and Eyles (1997) conclude that sense of place studies must consider a more ecological foundation for a more complete understanding of sense of place. In arguing
As has been suggested earlier, social interaction, place and sense of place are “mutually constitutive” (p.6). In a community, the above are all connected and implicated in one another. Also, senses of place “are never purely individual or collective” (p.6). As our individual life worlds are constantly being negotiated, reconditioned and rationalised through communicative action, they are nevertheless products of our collective society and thus are never entirely individual. A sense of place is never entirely collective because each person brings with them personal experiences and biases and have probably been exposed to numerous social groups that may have overlapped with others, but not identical to any other. Finally, an individual’s sense of place is “unlikely to be stable or unitary” (p.6). As stated above, life worlds are continuously evolving through individual and social experience and therefore will probably change as the individual grows. Senses of place are not unitary because individuals participate in several social groups and take several subject positions, depending on the situation, subsequently taking different, overlapping and often contradictory attitudes toward a place (Butz and Eyles, 1997).

**Ecological Components of Sense of Place**

Thus far I have discussed the ideological and social dimensions of sense of place and how they relate to community and culture. This literature review to this point has focused on sense of place studies as being humanist driven. Humans are shaped by culture and construct meaning on places (symbols) based on past experience and societal norms (worldview). We are all culturally constructed by our worldview and vice versa. However, this humanistic approach to sense of place, in my mind, has profound limitations. Basing sense of place studies on its humanistic roots neglects the foundations from which many societies, particularly Indigenous societies, base their sense of place, our ecological relationship to land. Place is physically grounded space, we see it, feel it, taste it, hear it and remember it. To have a sense of place assumes a direct relationship with place (Basso, 1996). Therefore a more complete and holistic concept of a sense of place must include an ecological component.
Ecology, in its most broad definition is the study of the interactions between organisms and their environments (Ingold, 1992). This broad definition is inclusive of human relationships with their environments, and with objects animate and inanimate within those environments, and is used in this thesis to represent these connections. Cajete (2000) notes that Indigenous knowledge is akin to an understanding of ecology, that First Nations philosophies, cultural ways of life, customs, language, all aspects of their cultural being, in one way or another are ultimately tied to relationships they have established and applied with regard to their place.

Butz and Eyles (1997) question:

If senses of place are attitudes toward place, or cultural representations of place, it follows that an effort to conceptualize individuals’ senses of ecologically grounded aspects of place can benefit from some attention to one of the central questions of cultural ecology: what is the relationship between culture and ecological setting? (p. 7)

Gibson’s theory of direct perception posits that human beings perceive their environment, and objects within it, in terms of a set of affordances. These “affordances (potential uses of an object, organism or place) of an environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill” (Gibson, 1979, p.127).

Ingold (1992), referring to this, writes, “it is possible for persons to acquire direct knowledge of their environment [and that] the knowledge gained through such perception is entirely practical, it is the knowledge about what the object affords” (p. 46). Still, the potential uses an object provides us is not complete without acknowledging what we bring into that perception, our own knowledge that relates to potential affordances. The reciprocal of affordances, Ingold states, are the effectivities (potential skills) that signify the capabilities or sets of skills that a person holds when perceiving objects within an environment. Thus, Ingold proposes, “the range of affordances of an object [or place], will be constrained by the effectivities of the subject, and conversely, the effectivities of the subject will be constrained by the affordances of the objects encountered” (p.46). Important in Ingold’s argument is that knowledge of the environment is practical and that it is possible for a person to acquire direct knowledge of their environments in their practical activities. How people come to view their environments and construct their
senses of place has to do both in what they see their environments can provide for them and what their capabilities are within those environments.

However, as Butz and Eyles note, in contradiction to Ingold’s argument, “we are always already socially and culturally constituted” (p.9) and because of this, these constitutions shape both the affordances and the effectivities we bring into environmental encounters. This leaves room for affordances and effectivities to exist in a symbolic realm as well. Whether spiritual or practical, the affordances a person perceives his or her environment as permitting are constructed from “culturally inscribed and socially positioned” (Butz and Eyles, 1997, p.9) qualities and from the actual physical attributes of that environment. Effectivities are learned from direct experience in those environments, and are dependent on cultural frames of reference. In this way, ecological senses of place,

are not attributes of ecology alone, but rather products of human encounter with an ecological setting. In that way, ecological senses of place are best understood as contingent outcomes of the relationship between effectivities and affordances, and as such may be sharply demarcated or blurred depending on social context; or perhaps as disclosures of what exists between the characteristics of human communities and the ecological environment they occupy. (Butz and Eyles, 1997, p. 9-10)

An Indigenous Sense of Place

The importance of Butz and Eyles’ (1997) paper, and its relevance to an Indigenous sense of place, is in their explicit inclusion of an ecologically grounded component. The ecological component defines and distinguishes an Indigenous sense of place as people being intimately connected to the land and its inhabitants through both practical and symbolic relationships. Although we all have our own set of affordances (potential uses) and effectivities (potential skills) we bring to an environmental encounter, many of those are limited to recreational and or subsistence activities. An ecologically grounded sense of place is strongly felt in Indigenous societies, partly because of practical associations with land but more so because of what Relph (1976) describes as “places of profound centres of human existence” (p.39). Basso (1996), suggests ethnographers and cultural ecologists need to view Indigenous societies in ways
that are more "cultural in the fullest sense, a broader and more flexible approach to the study of man-land relationships in which the symbolic properties of environmental phenomena receive the same kind of attention that has traditionally been given to their material counterparts" (p.67-68). An exploration into an Indigenous sense of place precludes that we must associate the symbolic and spiritual with the practical.

It can be maintained that significant in First Nations’ sense of place is the complexity and intensity of meanings attached to places. Implicit in most Indigenous societies is the knowledge of the importance of relationship and connection to their places and environments. Cajete (2000) states a deep sense of place is the metaphysical principle First Nation’s people have with their environments. Wildcat, (2001) describes Indigenous metaphysics as humans understanding themselves to be but one small part of an immense complex living system (much like the Gaia hypothesis) and offers a "holistic worldview in the most profound sense, where attention to relations and processes is much more important, at least initially, than attention to the parts of our experience" (p. 12). He goes on to state that this metaphysical principle implies that “our continued existence as part of the biology of the planet is inextricably bound up with the existence and welfare of the other living beings and places of the earth: beings and places, understood as persons possessing power, not objects (p12-13). Deloria, (2001) in “Power and Place: Indian Education in America”, the principle in which I apply a sense of place in an educational context in chapter five and six, states:

The Indian world can be said to consist of two basic experiential dimensions that, when taken together, provide a sufficient means of making sense of the world. These two concepts were place and power, the latter perhaps better defined as spiritual power or life force. Familiarity with the personality of objects and entities of the natural world enabled Indians to discern immediately where each living being had its proper place and what kinds of experiences that place allowed, encouraged, and suggested. And knowing places enabled people to relate to the living entities inhabiting it. (P. 2-3)

Thus sense of place becomes, at least in a traditional Indigenous sense, more about a process of relationship rather than just a description of a peoples relationship to place, that all entities of nature, animate and inanimate, "embodied relationships that must be
honoured” (Cajete, 2000, p.178). A sense of place in this respect is a completely holistic concept and if viewed as such we may begin to realise more meaningful practical and symbolic associations with land. In this way, as Basso (1996) so beautifully captures:

Symbolically constituted, socially transmitted, and individually applied, such [views of environments] place flexible constraints on how the physical environments can (and should) be known, how its occupants can (and should) be found to act, and how the doings of both can (and should) be discerned to affect each other. (P.72)

But is this sense of place a true representation of what exists now in many contemporary Indigenous societies, particularly ones who have been severely impacted by colonialism?

Loss of Sense of Place

Relph, (1976) in his pioneering work on sense of place insists that it would not be realistic to investigate the phenomena of place without investigating the corresponding phenomena of placelessness, “an insensitivity to the significance of place” (p. ii). Likewise, in investigating the development and meaning of sense of place, one must also include a loss of sense of place, the factors that perpetuate it and what the significance of such a loss means to placed people.

A sense of place is an attachment to a particular location or environment that becomes an irreplaceable centre of significance, in comparison with which all other associations with places have only little significance (Relph, 1976). People who have experienced an extreme form of loss of place, forced relocation, war or disease, illicit emotional responses that can be considered grief, including a sense of painful loss, continued longing, a sense of helplessness, and a tendency to idealize the lost place (Fried, 1963, in Relph, 1976). Consider now, the context of a First Nations person, what that loss potentially means. Every aspect of how people identify themselves may be multiplied by thousands of generations. A whole evolution of a culture that have by the nature of their existence, become part of the land and the land a part of them:
The connection of First Nations people and their environments became so deep that their separation by forced relocation in the last century constituted literally, the loss of part of a generation’s soul. Indian people had been joined in their lands with such intensity that many of those that were forced to live on reservations suffered a form of ‘soul death.' The major consequence was the loss of a sense of home [place] and the expression of profound homesickness with all its accompanying psychological and physical maladies. The connection of Indian people to their land was a symbol of the connection to the spirit of life itself. The loss of such a foundational symbol led to a tremendous loss of meaning and identity. (Cajete, 1994, 85)

Field Studies Associated with Sense of Place

Although much has been written on what a sense of place has traditionally meant to Indigenous societies, little research has focused on Indigenous cultures and their current sense of place. Butz (1993, in Butz and Eyles, 1997) ethnographic field studies in Shimshal, an indigenous pastoral community in the Pakistan high Karakoram, found that residents of Shimshals’ sense of place was deeply embedded in an ecological context. He found that the community’s sense of place was also contingent on people’s affordances and effectivities, as well as being interconnected with social and ideological components of history and culture.

Cajete, (1994, 1999, 2000) and Kawagley and Barnhardt (1997, 1998, 1999) have written on First Nations attachment to places, the former primarily on Southwestern peoples and the latter on Inuit and Alaskan First Nations. What is significant, and a major consideration in my thesis, is the peoples social and physical setting and proximity to urban centres. Cajete (1994, 1999, 2000) in his writings on education and science of Indigenous peoples of the southwest primarily focuses on rural Indians; Kawagley (1995) and Kawagley and Barnhardt (1997, 1998, 1999) focus on Alaska First Nations and Inuit peoples, very removed from large urban centres. Although all Indigenous peoples have been profoundly affected by colonialism, these people are still very much connected to their land and their traditional way of life. Urban or even sub-urban First Nations have been exposed much more to the juggernaut of a Western society and worldview.

Little research has focused on tribal peoples of the Pacific Northwest and their connections to place. In the case of WSÁNEC Peoples on the Saanich Peninsula, a sub-
urban landscape, their sense of place is significantly removed from a more traditional one that would have existed as little as two generations ago. That is not to say that urban or sub-urban First Nations are not connected to their traditional land or culture, but it must be noted that in these settings, land has been changed and altered to suit a more Western life-world. Combine this with the atrocities of the residential school system, forced relocation onto reserves, unjust government policies and resource allocation, it is reasonable to assume that the sense of place of the WSÁNEC people has been altered.

An important question then, is how has this loss or change of sense of place affected WSÁNEC peoples? It has been my experience in teaching WSÁNEC people, that few traditional ecologically grounded ways are still practiced by students and their sense of place has little grounding in an ecology of place. Another question then becomes whether or not it is the place of education to try and reestablish ties to land and then how do we go about this?

**Educational Implications of Sense of Place**

Whether under the heading environmental, ecological, or outdoor education, the focus on the development of a sense of place is relatively new. And, as the goals and philosophy of each of the above disciplines evolved and became established, somewhat independently, we find that there are links between them. The main purpose of outdoor education is to provide meaningful and contextual experiences, in natural environments. Practically, it has evolved to include camping experiences and experiential modes of learning that are based in the outdoors. Environmental education, in its broadest sense, can be described as instruction whose purpose is to develop citizens to live in a place without destroying it (Woodhouse and Knapp, 2000). Smith and Williams (1999) state “the practice of ecological education requires viewing human beings as one part of the natural world and human cultures as an outgrowth of interactions between species and particular places” (p.3). Embedded in each of these sub-educational fields and implicit in their philosophy and practice is the concept of place.

What has stemmed from each of these fields is a new field of education called place-based education. Based in constructivist learning theory and experiential
education, a place-based educational philosophy is founded on achieving local ecological and cultural sustainability (Woodhouse and Knapp, 2000). Implicit in this field is understanding your sense of place, fostering a sense of responsibility to your place and knowing your place in terms of its ecological uniqueness, the bioregion. Woodhouse and Knapp (2000) describe the essential characteristics of place-based education as emerging from the particular attributes of place. The content is specific to the local geography, ecology, sociology, politics and other dynamics of that place. “This fundamental characteristic establishes the foundation of the concept” (p. 3). This inherently multidisciplinary approach must be experiential in practice as the element of action “is essential if ecological and cultural sustainability are to result” (p.3).

The ecological lens through which education of place is based insists that people must have knowledge of ecological patterns, systems of causation, and the long-term effects of human actions on those patterns (Orr, 1994). Education about sense of place leads toward identifying and conceptualizing ecological patterns to become ecologically literate. To become ecologically literate fundamentally means creating a learning community whose principles of teaching are connected to, and a reflection of, the principles of ecology (Capra, 1996). Providing field trips to local areas while teaching from the principles of ecology allows for direct connections to understanding ecology as it relates to a sense of place. This furthermore allows for the development of an awareness of the stresses humans have on environments, and that current resource management practices are unsustainable. Students can incorporate the applications of practical science skills in direct study of those environments. As students are exposed to the outdoors, it opens the path towards an understanding of ecological principles and fosters in them a sense of affiliation towards their environment (Orr, 1994).

Ultimately, and central to the concept of sense of place, this type of curriculum connects place with self and community (Smith, 2002). Developing a sense of place further defines your identity, to a significant extent, by the natural features and your perceptions of the place where you live. However, there is a distinct difference between living on the land and dwelling in it, understanding its systems, its potential, and its limits; those who develop intimacy with a place over time tend to accept responsibility for it. Knowing a place can inspire and empower one to take action to preserve it or take
part in its restoration. Defining and realizing a sense of place is integral to developing an environmental conscious society (Orr, 1994). Educating people toward ecological literacy guides people toward the development of an environmental ethic. Aldo Leopold (1949), considered by many to be the grandfather of environmental education, suggests the love of land is an extension of ethics. “We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in (1949, page 214).

An education based on a sense of place seeks to intensify peoples’ affection of nature and of their place. There is a link between aspects of place-based education and of that aspired by proponents of First Nation’s education. Cajete (2000) states, “traditionally, harmonizing the natural with human community was an ongoing process in Indigenous education” (p.93). Understanding ecological processes as they relate to systems, chaos and complexity are also linked to Indigenous knowledge systems and traditional forms of education. As Kawagley and Barnhardt (1998) state:

Indigenous societies, as a matter of survival, have long sought to understand the irregularities in the world around them, recognizing that nature is underlain with many unseen patterns of order...[and that] through long observation they have become specialists in understanding the interconnectedness and holism of all things in the universe. (P.4-5)

There is growing appreciation of the contributions that Indigenous ways of knowing can make to our understanding of ecology, biology, human behaviour, educational practices and philosophy (Barnhardt and Kawagley, 1998). An eco-education of place, that mirrors the levels of integration once achieved by Indigenous peoples, would draw from the past and present knowledge and understanding of peoples Indigenous to place (Cajete, 2000). If place-based education’s goal is to achieve local ecological and cultural sustainability, then it has potential to do so by learning from the qualities of a First Nation’s idea of place. By incorporating and reinforcing sense of place qualities in education for First Nation’s people (including local Indigenous metaphysics), we move toward healing losses of meaningful relationships within their territory. As Cajete (2000) states:
Inner kinship with the Earth is an ancient and natural extension of the human psyche and its severance can lead to a deep split in the consciousness of the individual and the group, in addition to social and psychological problems that can be healed only through re-establishing meaningful ties. Reconnecting with nature and its inherent meaning is an essential healing and transformational process for Indian [and non-Indian] people. (P.188)

Summary

Throughout this literature review, the concept of a sense of place has been discussed as it relates to fields of geography, community, culture, ecology and education. From the early concepts of environmental determinism and possibilism, came the co-dependent idea of how an environment affects people and how people can shape their environments. Regional and behavioural geographers studied the concept of region and the activities and actions of people in those regions. Humanistic geographers added affective aspects of ways people relate to and attach meaning to their places. Through phenomenological methods, cultural ecologists have been able to study cultures worldwide and have determined that a sense of place has social, ideological and ecological components. It has also been posited that Indigenous societies have a much more ecologically grounded sense of place due to long residence and cultural evolution within their places.

The review of previous field studies related to Indigenous peoples, particularly First Nations of North America, uncovers very little research on sense of place as it relates to urban and sub-urban First Nations. As such, there is a need for an increased understanding of a First Nations sense of place, and its loss, toward the re-establishment of curriculum that promotes meaningful ties to place. Education has a vital role to play if we are to alter the Western worldview that continues to put pressure on our natural environments and Indigenous populations, our biological and cultural diversity. Education centred on the ecology of local places, an eco-education of place, must become the focal point in all education, particularly education for First Nations people.

Sense of place is entirely and completely a holistic concept. All aspects of our life world affect the development and continuance of our sense of place. Our sense of place involves individual and collective sentiment towards our natural places and is
always evolving. Therefore, education has a huge role to play. The First Nations people of the Saanich Peninsula undoubtedly have a unique sense of place that has evolved from an intimate relationship to this place. What can be argued is to what extent it has been altered because of urbanization and a dominating colonial worldview. A question begins to rise above the rest. What are the foundations of a WSÁNEC sense of place compared to today? And, how can answers to this question be used to regenerate meaningful and relevant curriculum?
Chapter 3: Methodology

Before beginning any research, especially research into another culture, there is a need as researcher, to look into oneself, to consider biases and beliefs and to critically reflect on these issues. Several questions have surfaced over this journey, most of which revolve around personal tensions. Primarily: is it even my place to do this? However, in choosing to conduct this research, these tensions have significantly influenced the direction of my research questions, the culminating research methodology and the interview questions used to illuminate answers. My growth as researcher has become a significant component in this thesis and therefore I include an autobiographical research methodology. I also delve into Aboriginal research issues, as they have helped guide me toward the path I have followed. And as curriculum is a major extension of this research, I also pose the idea of curriculum development as research. I conclude this chapter with the evolution of my research framework using community based action research and the convergence of the questions I used to guide my conversations with WSÁNEC people.

Research is a way of questioning and approaching aspects of our world and research methodology is the tool for investigating and contributing to that understanding. With this in mind, it becomes increasingly evident that research contributes greatly to our perceptions of reality and plays a significant factor in creating and perpetuating a cultures worldview (Battiste, 1998; Struthers, 2001). However, as my intent is to look into another culture’s understanding of their place, significant questions arise as to the appropriateness of using any existing methodological framework. Many different research methods exist in the literature. However, as Fleras sites:

Unlike research methods, which refer to specific techniques for data collection, a research methodology entails an underlying logic or rationale for processing research information, depending to a large extent on what the investigator wants to know, what the investigator believes is knowable, and what that world can yield in terms of knowing. (P. 120)

As Fleras (2004) points out, research is informed by and framed around a methodology, which involves, to a significant extent, information processing from the point of view of the researcher. What is it I want to know about a WSÁNEC sense of place and why?
Furthermore, how will I interpret the results? As I am not a First Nations person, I feel it important to express that in writing this thesis, I can never speak from a First Nations point of view, I can only speak from my own. I will never be able to truly represent WSÁNEC notions of their place, but I can report on what WSÁNEC people have revealed to me, and attempt as far as possible to respectfully speak of my own beliefs based on what I have learned. I am continually being transformed as a result of my experiences with the people of this place, but the only lived and evolved experience I can describe in my writing is my own.

The idea of developing curriculum based on a sense of place has become part of me. Much of this is driven by my past experience and passions as a learner and educator in nature. In order to remain objective, at least initially, I question to what extent is what (I think) I know to be, in all its presumptions, what motivates me? Throughout this process, I have been forced to question all that it is (I think) I know about a sense of place and its implications in teaching First Nations people. In reflecting on my assumptions, I have come to the intimidating thought of questioning my own agenda. Am I trying to justify my strong beliefs in an educational framework based on my life experience, my worldview, and calling it research because I have talked to Elders and the community in which I teach? In my journal, I refer to this as looking into a pond; it is easy to see my own reflection if that is what I am looking for. In beginning this ‘research,’ my methodology was turning into looking for the questions that answered what I had already determined. Though that was not my intent, I would have felt justified in finding them. Only by looking past my reflection, into the murky depths of the pond would I be doing real research. As a researcher, this is truly a test of my honesty.

A Note on Autobiographical Research

Throughout this thesis it has been my intention to include much of my journal writings as a method of self-study. It is my hope they will enrich the process and experience of my journey. I feel they may also aid in a deeper understanding of the research process. Because I am the one interpreting peoples’ stories, in doing so, I am telling my own story in the culmination of the research findings. Bullough and Pinnegar,
Settelmaier and Taylor, (2002) note that self-study points to a simple truth, that to study a practice, such as research, is simultaneously to study self: a study of self in relation to Other. They furthermore suggest this allows for assumptions about research, which make it possible to integrate and accept the productive development of one’s self; they remind us “who a researcher is, is central to what the researcher does” (p. 13).

Settelmaier and Taylor, (2002) explain that autobiographical research leads to an enhanced awareness of one’s personal knowledge as it relates to practice. As a teacher and a researcher, autobiographical research provides a basis for understanding one’s bias and assumptions. Dealing with one’s biases before interpreting and representing others becomes an important question of research ethics. “The crisis of representation has taught us to look critically at attempts to speak authentically of other people’s experiences” (Settelmaier and Taylor, 2002, p. 2). It is my intention to let the reader know I am deeply involved in this research, and as such, who I am is central in how I will go about conducting this research and interpreting potential findings.

When does autobiography become research? Bullough and Pinnegar, (2001) state, “when biography and history are joined, when the issue confronted by the self is shown to have relationship to and bearing on the context and ethos of time, then self-study moves to research.” (p. 15). They also go on to note that a balance must be found between the ‘self as researcher’ and ‘the practice of research’; it is “tension between self and the arena of practice, between self in relation to practice and the others who share the practice setting” (p. 15). I am sure there are other teachers in a similar position to mine and it is hoped that by sharing this experience, others will find meaning and perhaps a framework for doing similar research in their own setting. And furthermore, it is not my intention to confirm or settle anything but my own growth as a researcher, teacher and learner. In this sense, part of the research aim, as Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) note, is to “provoke, challenge and illuminate” (p. 20) ideas for further curriculum and personal development.

Settelmaier and Taylor, (2002) suggest using four questions in order to engage in “critical self reflection” (p.4):

1) Who is the researcher doing the study?
2) What is the research about?
3) Why do I feel this research is important?
4) How will I perform the research?

Throughout the rest of this chapter, I will answer these questions as they relate to the development of the researcher and the methodology that was used in this research.

Who is the Researcher Doing the Study?

What is it about the concept of a sense of place that I find so meaningful? Why is it I feel the development of a sense of place offers so much in terms of education that is relevant to people? I have always been intrigued by how people relate to place, how they sense a place. Before beginning my research journey, I knew I wanted to write about the ways in which Indigenous peoples know their place, used their place and respected their place. To me, this concept of a relationship between a people and their home place was real. It intensely signified why I loved to be away from 'civilized' places, to be in wilder, less civilized places. Perhaps it was this romanticized notion that brought me to the place in time where I would get to explore a sense of place in a more meaningful and relevant context. I wanted to learn all I could in order to further explore this notion. This concept of a sense of place became a lens through which to explore what perhaps might be meaningful and relevant curriculum for the people where I live and teach. I wanted to immerse myself in this place, my home and into the culture that evolved from this land, an extension of which is a naturally placed consciousness.

To begin, I make it explicit that first and foremost I consider myself an environmental educator. I place this qualifier before my other teaching areas of Biology and Geography. My students know from the outset I am a ‘tree-hugger,’ and I warn them beforehand that I often stand on a soapbox when I talk about environmental issues. I am, however, aware of the fine line I walk between preaching and informing. It’s a skill one learns in being an effective environmentalist, one I am still trying to fine tune. I really do enjoy my teaching areas, no doubt partly because environmental education fits so nicely within them. Ultimately, and on a personal note, I love being outdoors and practicing
living within an environment on extended out-trips. My passions are kayaking, canoeing, fishing and hiking, anything that allows for living within nature. Moreover, it is the feeling that comes from immersed outdoor experiences with people, truly living off the land, finding sustenance, creating shelter and making fire. The need to know your place at a deeper level is most meaningful in these situations. This is what I have come to understand as a significant element of my sense of place. Therein lies the direction I have wanted my research to move towards. What lives in the minds of people who are deeply connected to the land in which they live. How does one come to know it, and more so, how does one learn to teach it?

Perhaps most significant in guiding me to where I am today has been my experience as an outdoor educator in various capacities, first as a camp counsellor and then as a wilderness guide. These are most fond and powerful memories and it is the affection associated with those experiences, and the people involved in them, which make the recollections so significant in my development as an environmental educator. Some of the people I met as a camp counsellor brought a whole new view of the world. They were concerned about our impact on our environments but they were also hopeful. They were passionate in what they did and anything but conventional in terms of how they educated. A most central foundation from which my pedagogy evolved, and which I aspired to, was the Rediscovery model developed by Thom Henley (1989). Although the cultural authenticity I learned from that model is questionable to some extent, I cannot argue with the results, the transformative process that occurs in people immersed in a cultural and environmental context; people were changed because of these experiences. I was, and still am. I have also witnessed this with other people. They set in motion my desire to live with the earth and teach in ways that were more environmentally, culturally and spiritually sensitive.

I am not a religious person and never have been, however I would call myself spiritual in the sense that I am deeply concerned for our collective natural connections to Earth, or should I say lack there of. I also have a meaningful appreciation for science, particularly within the realm of biology. Biophilia, what Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson (1984) expresses is our inherent connections that human beings subconsciously seek with the rest of life, is something I have come to closely associate with my evolving
spiritual questions. I love reading about science and strongly believe what it has to offer our society. Science is a creative way of approaching our world and is a powerful tool for investigating natural phenomena. However, the arrogance of some scientists, and the abuse of technological advancements suggests to me a considerable lack in ethics associated with science. In particular, I am intrigued with where science and spirituality might potentially intersect. It is the scientists who negotiate these very seemingly dichotomous views of the world that fascinate me. This has become one of the most driving tensions as my role of a science teacher within an Indigenous community context. How does one negotiate the teaching of science that is not only sensitive to a First Nations worldview but more so actively contribute to their metaphysical understanding of the world within their cultural context?

Yet my love of biology and science did not come from learning within a science curriculum. The science education I received had very little relevance or direct application to my place in nature. Nor did it develop my affiliations toward life. It was direct experience within nature, with family and friends that fostered and encouraged my attachments and desire to care for places. The tension here exists between science and various science curricula that are prescribed by government. Blades (2002), calls this the simulacra of science education. Unfortunately many students learn to construct an idea of science that is entirely based on facts and little to do with process or practice. He further contends that what dies along the way is the fundamental connection to those life forms that are the objects of its study:

The child does not touch, for example, a willow tree and the healing power of its bark. No one marvels at the struggle of dandelions pushing through concrete or studies the ancient use of herbs: That’s not science. (Blades, 2002, p.72, emphasis in original)

What students learn as science is the regurgitation of information that has no relevance to their lived experience or why this knowledge might be important to know in everyday life. Nor does it demonstrate the activity of real scientists, or ‘cultural scientists’ as it is practiced in the real laboratory of nature. This form of science education does little to
join knowledge with affection or allow students the ability to connect what they learn to the ecology of the place they live.

David Orr (1994) puts this tension of education into a larger perspective. He argues that Western education has contributed greatly to the destruction of local cultures virtually everywhere. "Education has become a great homogenizing force undermining local knowledge, Indigenous languages, and the self-confidence of placed people" (p. 129). Prakash and Esteva in their book *Escaping Education* (1998) add that Western Educational systems, under the guise of education for all, are developed to disseminate Western ideas and practice. Furthermore, they claim "Western education trains children to leave their homes and communities, to outmode their parents in order to seek a career that emphasizes money, not cultural inheritance, and have nothing to do with place, commons or community" (p.3). I question the relevancy in much of what is mandated by current curricula and as an environmental educator I embrace the challenge of helping direct the search for local relevance.

**What is the Research About?**

A question all educators must ask themselves, as Orr, (1994) poignantly suggests, for what destination do we educate our children and our citizens that is beneficial to the communities and cultures and the environments in which they live? For any Indigenous community, this is a most significant question because formal Westernized educational systems have in the past been colonizing agents; there is a need to rebound in a new direction that is not colonial and centred around what they feel needs to be learned. How might Indigenous people see a new education counteracting the loss of their lands and the mounting threat of permanent loss of their languages and cultures? Put in local and personal terms, how do First Nations people of WSÁNEC see education, particularly science education and curriculum shaping their communities and culture in the near future?

As has been expressed, there is also very much a personal component to this research. I want to know my home, my place in a deeper more meaningful way. This thesis is also about my own understanding of a peoples’ connection to place, the
development of a researcher and the inevitable growth that one experiences when searching within himself during collaborative research in another culture. It is also about the accumulation of a lived experience in teaching and learning with children and adults and their relationships with their environment. It is about conversations with respected and knowledgeable people and my interpretations of what might compose a learnable sense of place. It is about furthering my connections to my home place in another context. Basso (1996) calls this the “ethnography of lived topographies” (p. 111); the studying of peoples’ attachment to places. It is “the sensing of places together, that [First Nations] views of the physical world become accessible to strangers” (p. 109). Is this what I am hoping for, trying to make accessible a deeper connection to this place, a WSÁNEC sense of place, and incorporating those understandings in my own? Yes, the desire to write this thesis is to a large extent about my journey into another depth of understanding place. But as I am appropriating this knowledge for myself it comes with the important qualification that I teach in the community. Whatever I learn here, I intend to share with my students. However, it hasn’t come easy and not without much apprehension.

As a non-First Nations teacher of First Nation’s students, I have always hesitated to speak of sacred words and stories. I feel I run the risk of demeaning the message. Basso (1996) states that place-names and stories “summon forth an enormous range of mental and emotional associations” (p. 76). I feel it when I read them. However, I question how these words or stories are transformed when coming out of my mouth. How do I as a non-First Nations person try to convey these messages in any meaningful sense to First Nations students? It is my understanding that the idea or concept of place, for placed people, can only be expressed in the language that evolved from the people of that place. For oral histories to be written, attempted to be expressed in another language, in another cultural modification, may not be worthy or deemed respectful enough of what that reference means or expresses, at least for that people. For the people of WSÁNEC to, in a sense, lend me an oral reference of a sacred place or story is indeed potentially intimidating. My greatest challenge is to be aware of the risks that are at stake when these sacred words or stories are told and the implications of their sharing. What I do
with what I learn is something I feel very privileged to hold and what I leave to the Elders to speak.

I have also learned that much of what WSÁNEC people hold as knowledge is spiritual and sacred. The Longhouse society is very important to WSÁNEC people but it is also a very secret society.\(^4\) I have worked in this community for five years and still know very little about their Longhouse practices. As such, I also hesitate to ask about, and attempt to express in my writing, WSÁNEC spirituality. And although I am very much aware that it may not be appropriate, or even possible, to separate the spiritual from other aspects of life, in beginning this research it was not my intention to explicitly discuss the spiritual aspects of a WSÁNEC sense of place. However as the research continued, I found it increasingly difficult to maintain the complexity and depth of a WSÁNEC sense of place without it being inclusive of a spiritual realm. Therefore, in this thesis, I acknowledge the significance of spiritual aspects of a sense of place but touch on this lightly. This is discussed further in Chapter Five and Six.

Looking into a sense of place will reflect the ideas, theories and notions of traditional thought and knowledge. As Newhouse (2004) notes there is a problem to overcome when we talk about traditional knowledge. He says there is difficulty in transmitting that knowledge to another that is satisfactory to the holders of that knowledge. “Not only do we need to find a way to ask questions about knowledge - i.e. to have a meta-discussion about the knowledge - we also have to develop some way of conveying the knowledge in all its complexity” (p.149). He goes on to say:

> When we begin to talk about traditional knowledge, we also have to be mindful of the context within which we are asking the question, and step back a bit to ask ourselves a related question: why do we want to ask this question? What are our motives for wanting to learn about traditional knowledge? How we come to something will determine its reaction. (p. 149)

As a non-First Nations person, I am sensitive with how some people might interpret my wanting to do this research. Therefore it was my intent to be open and honest in how I

\(^4\) Longhouse Society is inclusive of WSÁNEC peoples’ winter ceremonies.
see this research heading. Whatever becomes of this research belongs to the WSÁNEC people. I take this very seriously.

Traditional knowledge is more than a collection of observations placed into theories that allow us knowledge of how things work. As Newhouse (2004) notes, “the spiritual reminds us of a universe that is alive everywhere, that we are intimately connected to all living things and that we have a set of relationships that need to be maintained in order to live well in the universe” (p. 150). As a biology teacher I see these relationships between organisms and their environment as the foundation of ecology and therefore ecological in nature. Nonetheless, the spiritual aspect is what makes this knowledge unique and that add meaning toward our relationship to places, as noted in Chapter Two. Furthermore, he talks of another view of traditional knowledge as a “coming to know” which in this sense indicates a process, and therefore an ability to learn this knowledge. “Thus when a person comes into a relationship with certain knowledge, he or she is not only transformed by it, but must assume responsibility for it” (p. 151). I have already been transformed through my experiences with First Nations people and I do take responsibility for what is said to me; I hold that knowledge and convey it in my teaching. I strongly believe traditional knowledge has a place in the larger Western society, particularly in education that is environmentally centred for any people and a reason this research is important.

**Curriculum Development as Research**

When I started this project my main goal was to create meaningful and relevant curriculum for the First Nations people of WSÁNEC based on the idea of a sense of place. I chose to do this for two main reasons. First, because I believe that central in most Aboriginal ideas of knowledge is the idea of place (Kawagly and Barnhardt 1998; Cajete, 1994, 1999, 2000; Basso, 1996; Deloria, 2001). That is, much knowledge and spirituality is reflected on the notions of territory and that cultural ways of knowing are imbedded in place. Secondly, an understanding of our sense of place is integral in ecologically grounding education. As an environmental educator, place is a theme that is
written on extensively (Orr, 1994; Delay, 1996; Smith, 1999, 2002) and the idea or
concept of place is of primary importance in both frameworks.

The idea of curriculum has its foundations in the grassroots of Western
civilization and as such has been heavily influenced by the philosophies of Plato and
Aristotle (Marsh and Willis, 1995). I realize the epistemological conflicts involved in
using the idea of curriculum, a Western construct, and placing it in a First Nations
context. However, as there are endless definitions of curriculum and acknowledging that
they are all heavily influenced by Western ways of knowing, my task became looking
into alternate ideas that could be used as my framework for a WSÁNEC idea of
on curriculum, state that the most basic questions about curriculum revolve around “what
the curriculum should be, who should engage in planning and implementing it, how
should it proceed and what its influences should be on the students” (p. 11).

In addressing the first question, what the curriculum should be, brings about a
deeper question, that of “what knowledge is of most worth” (Marsh and Willis, 1995,
p.V)? Although it is not my intent to create a hierarchy of First Nations knowledge, this
questioned has stuck with me throughout the research process because we also need to
ask, from whose point of view? Who is the curriculum for? What do they deem as
knowledge of most worth? The epistemological and ontological nature of this question is
of primary importance in my thesis. Tyler, (1949 as cited in Marsh and Willis, 1995),
identifies three sources of knowledge as focal points around which all comprehensive
conceptions of curriculum might be formed: those of the individual, society and subject
matter. I feel each of these focal points need to be amplified and set within the context of
the WSÁNEC community. An individual could be a student, teacher, administrator,
school board member or an Elder, each of which would have an opinion on what a
curriculum should be, but we also need to consider why they hold that opinion. As well,
which society are we considering; a WSÁNEC society, a collective First Nations society
or the larger society, the region in which the school is situated? The idea of subject
matter and the specialists who maintain that knowledge also have an important role in
this discussion. However, one must question in the first place the idea of
compartmentalizing knowledge into subject areas when it is increasingly evident that
First Nations knowledge systems are more holistic in nature (Cajete, 1994; Kawagley, 1995; Deloria, 2001). As well, as I have discussed, subject areas are constructed by Western ideas of knowledge. The moment I start trying to incorporate traditional knowledge into a Western framework, I am stepping into an epistemological quagmire. However, what would subject areas be, if any, in a WSÁNEC context? It also must be noted that the subject areas as they are now are so full of content that any other discussion of what might go into them becomes mute. The discussion of ‘where will it fit’ is in Chapter Five.

The next question, who should be engaged in planning the curriculum, became the essence of the research. In the context of a First Nations community the answer became increasingly obvious that the players in this case were the Elders, school board members, teachers and the students themselves. How the curriculum should proceed is dependant on several factors, foremost of which is what the curriculum should be in the first place and must involve the school board and its administration. Also funding and scheduling are significant factors. Finally, the question of the influence a curriculum should have on students becomes most significant, as ultimately they are the ones who will live it. There is no question an implicit goal of any curriculum that stems from place, involves fostering connection to place. However, as Marsh and Willis (1995) make explicit, there is a distinct and real difference between the planned curriculum, the enacted curriculum and the experienced curriculum also discussed in Chapter five.

**Why I Feel this Research is Important**

Marie Cooper, an Elder and former administrator of the Saanich Indian School Board was deeply concerned when she heard I was hoping to do this research. She has also been the one who has most strongly supported and encouraged its development. Our relationship has become very important to me because she has been a guiding hand, helping me establish a path I feel comfortable in following and that leads toward what she feels is most important for any curriculum development: community control, community involvement and self-determination. Marie has a lifetime of experience in education and she maintains a very culturally grounded view. She has spent many years
teaching in different places and been exposed to many cultures. Since she returned home, she has worked in administration, been principle of the LAU,WEL,NEW Tribal school and director of the Saanich Indian School board. She cares deeply for her community. She believes strongly in a need for education for the children of her community that retains their identity, values and culture. She says to me in our first meeting, “we will not reject what gives our life meaning and dignity Tye” (personal communication, February 27, 2004).

I believe Marie feels curriculum that reinforces connections to land is important because she sees this as a grounding through which children and adult learners can use to find their way through life. One of the very first conversations we had in getting to know each other, and in finding an appropriate way to go about beginning this research, a research methodology, she said something that has been growing in my mind since:

This kind of curriculum needs to be from the community, with Elders, where the children see their own people involved. In this way it becomes alive. If it is done this way, our children are bound to grasp onto it. (Personal communication, February 27, 2004)

Any curriculum that stems from this research must be lived, lived in a most meaningful way, if it is to continue.

At times, I fall into the trap of wishing for the past, which, in reality, is wishing for something that can never be. The changes I have witnessed in my short life-time on the Saanich Peninsula and Gulf Islands reflect huge population growth, which has resulted in a decrease in rural areas and other wilder places from my youth. I remember fishing in the Saanich Inlet. The rule on the boat with my brother the captain was: you can’t open a pop until we have a fish in the boat. It does not apply anymore; the number of fish in the Saanich Inlet are a fraction of what they used to be. Frequently I hike to quiet and away places to where I have an expansive view. Most of my journal writings occur on a perch on a mountain or on the beach. I ask myself what this place might have looked like before suburban sprawl, before the clear-cuts, before colonization? I shake my head. What I need to be thinking about is the now.
In my justification of doing this research, I find the intersection, the place of WSÁNEC. This is what WSÁNEC people care for and so do I. It is this cross beam of support that I cling to when I wonder about the importance of this research and my place in it. The people I talk with, the Elders I hear speak, and the First Nations scholars I have read indicate land is where their culture stems from. In looking for traditional WSÁNEC ways of knowing their place, their sense of place, I wonder how this knowledge might fit within existing curricula, if it can, in some way be meaningful and culturally relevant to the students I teach. What is the value of potential findings of my research questions? Is there any relevancy in today's world, their world? I am reminded in reading Arlene Stairs words (2004), what becomes of this will in no way be the traditional WSÁNEC way, but perhaps a WSÁNEC way of educating, respectful of WSÁNEC people, with a different framework and in a different bentwood box.

Also important within this research lies my transformation and growth as a teacher. As I teach in this community and hope to continue as long as I am welcome, there is a distinct possibility, and therefore a responsibility of teaching the future teachers of this community. With this in mind, my role as researcher and teacher takes on increased significance. One of the most rewarding experiences as a teacher is when former students express their desire to also become a teacher. What I teach my students now, beyond the curriculum is every much as important. I want to teach about place, the importance of place. What I hope to learn from this research is how.

"We have always had an appreciation of nature", Marie says to me:

We used to appreciate the things we gathered, but I worry that we have lost a lot of that. If you look into our communities, you can see some of the things that have happened, that show a lack of respect for the environment we live in. (Personal communication, August 24, 2004)

One of the things I do as a teacher is organize beach clean-ups. Very few people enjoy picking up garbage, myself excluded (I enjoy looking at the pile afterwards and thinking, wow, look at all that garbage now not on the beach). I hesitate to write about this because it is a contentious issue. My concern is that garbage is a symptom of something deeper, a symptom of a lack of respect. It becomes a self-perpetuating, self-defeating
downward spiral. In seeing garbage everywhere, what does another bit of garbage matter? It is so easy to throw something on the ground when it doesn’t make a difference; it is another thing entirely to pick something up when it does make a difference. Therein lies the issue, an attitude that reflects a deeper connection to land in a collective sense. How do you teach in a direction that leads to a change in collective attitude, towards a compassion for place, a deeper, more ecologically grounded sense of place?

**How will I go about doing this research?**

Long and LaFrance (2004), as guest editors in a dialogue on Aboriginal research issues, suggest from a First Nations view point that the primary research issue with Aboriginal people is about control over the research agenda, control in the development and the application of any research findings at the community level. From an Aboriginal perspective, their assertion is that “having control over the study of their traditions, teachings, and everyday community life will once again enable Aboriginal people to “own” the development of their communities’ knowledge base” (p. 3). Through this process, it is said, “they will be able to de-colonize themselves and be freed from past and current oppression” (p. 3). They go on to note that a secondary benefit of Aboriginal people controlling research in their communities would be the “sharing of knowledge in a way that promotes understanding, friendship and respect” (p. 3). If the goals of Aboriginal research from their viewpoint are about control, it becomes the responsibility of the researcher, any researcher, to find out who has control. In this case control rests with the school board council. The chief of the Saanich Tribes described it to me as OCA: ownership, control and accessibility.

I had difficulty even beginning to find an appropriate research methodology partly because I anticipated much of it would unfold as I went along, (I talked to people well before I even began looking into any methodology), but also because of the apparent but real tension that exists in Aboriginal research. Peter Cole’s (2004) work, *trick(ster)s of Aboriginal research: or how to use ethical review strategies to perpetuate cultural genocide*, demonstrates this tension. I have listened very closely when I have been
privileged to hear him speak. Although very poetic, he calls it like it is, and never directly or with purposeful intent, I think, it stings. But I believe this to be a challenge. What I have learned is reflected in one of Peter Kulchyski’s (2000) principles of Native Studies that research into another culture “may be seen at the outset as an ethical attitude” (p. 14). He goes on to state, “Native Studies is an intellectual or scholarly practice that questions and presupposes the questioning of an ethical attitude” (p.14 as cited in Innes, 2004). Research, and science for that matter, needs ethical reflection. Reading this was very comforting because as quoted earlier, “we can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in” (1949, page 214). I truly care for the people, their culture and the place in which I teach and therefore I feel I can do this research. Because I teach in this community, I have a responsibility to teach in ways that are culturally meaningful and relevant.

Evolution of a Research Methodology

Struthers (2001) states that what is naturally known or constitutes proof in one culture may not be understood or considered relevant in another culture and as a consequence, she argues, there are different ways of researching. So the question then becomes, how does one engage in a research process that is respectful and that reflects the cultural worldview of the participants? Fleras (2004) contends:

Indigenous peoples have a distinctive way of looking at the world, thinking about it, relating to it, and experiencing it, with the result that Indigenous peoples’ epistemologies can no longer stand behind or outside mainstream methodologies, but in front or beside as the situation demands. An alternative research paradigm is proposed instead, whose methodology (including assumptions to guide data collection and analysis) is inclusive of indigenous peoples’ knowledge and ways of knowing as a post-colonial framework for “researching together differently.” (p. 118)

Fleras (2004), in his research with Maori peoples, notes there are methods and methodologies that are appropriate in research as long as there is inclusion of the participating cultures’ worldview in the design of the research project, access to results and in direct benefits that come from the research. He furthermore suggests two research paradigms that he calls a sensitive and or centred model. For example, research can be
culture-sensitive and university-centred as long as it is committed to collaboration and consultation with the people who are being researched but conducted using a more mainstream methodology. Or, he suggests, a culture-sensitive, culture-driven model that integrates post-modern, critical, and qualitative aspects to create a distinctive cultural methodology. However, until there is such a thing as WSÁNEC centred research, I need to find my own path with the guidance of Elders and people of WSÁNEC. In conducting research within the community, I can only do so that is sensitive to their culture.

The literature expresses the idea of place as being central in Indigenous education (Cajete, 2000; Kawagley, 1999). And as each place or community is unique, so too must the research framework. The literature also expresses a qualitative research design as being most conducive to a holistic worldview and oral tradition because it adds fluidity and flexibility to the research process and utilizes the art of traditional storytelling (Struthers, 2001). With the intention of openness and flexibility, I felt that the methodology from which I would build my research would unfold as I talked to Elders and community members about my ideas. And having taught in Saanich for several years and knowing many people, this certainly proved to be the case.

The process of building research methodology around community input and design resembles what is known as Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR). Fletcher (2003) states that CBPR is based on the tenets of Participatory Action Research and that as a philosophy, CBPR is inclusive of different ways of seeing our world and emphasizes the importance of context to knowledge, that cultural, political and environmental factors all influence the way we perceive our world. He further states that CBPR incorporates multiple perspectives: “It recognizes local knowledge systems as valid on their own epistemological foundations and views them as contributing to a larger understanding of the world and the place of humans in it” (p. 32). In using the CBPR methodology, the research framework is built from the community up and not from an existing research framework down. Also as I teach in the community and am friends with many members, I felt the CBPR methodology provided a more holistic and richer understanding regarding the importance of place to the people of WSÁNEC.

The research took place in two phases. Before the research began, a feast took place, as suggested by the local advisory committee, in hopes of gathering many Elders
and concerned community members who share environmental concerns regarding WSÁNEC. In previous research involving the WSÁNEC people (Simonsen, Davis, & Haggarty, 1995), it was found that a group interview format was extremely effective as Elders found it helpful to have others with similar life experiences and knowledge of places. The intent of the feast was to generate interest as well as informing the community of the potential research agenda. At this point, they were told the purpose of the research and a provided a chance to ask questions. Seven people from this original gathering participated in the research.

A semi-structured personal interview with Elders, community members, teachers and former students comprised the second phase. Interviews were solicited in an open, minimally structured manner. It was my intent to tape-record and transcribe interviews as I researched. In this way I hoped to check with subsequent interviewees for understanding of concepts and teachings as they arise. After transcribing the interviews I would send a copy to the interviewee for further comment or for questions I might have to further my understanding. I also wanted to provide a chance for them to read what I had written in order to further check for validity. However, as expected, things never go as planned.

‘Nodal’ moments in my research

There were several “nodal moments” (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001, p. 3) in the course of this research that influenced the direction and affected ways in which it was conducted. It is said that learning is a life-long process, we learn as we go. This is the way I have learned in becoming a teacher and in being with First Nations people: listen first and ask questions later. This is the reason, an Elder once joked, why we have two ears but only one mouth. Marie Cooper said to me that in order to become a good teacher, we must always be learning and accepting of what all people have to offer (personal communication, August 4, 2004). I try to teach this way in my classroom; we are a collection of learners. For five years I have taught First Nations people. However, I feel I have learned just as much from them as they have learned from me.
Many protocols associated with interviewing Elders and other community members I learned through being involved in cultural activities and by observing how people interact with one another. I learned that gifts are exchanged as a way of witnessing events and as a way of giving thanks and respect. Because of this, I went into each interview with a jar of jam my wife made with the berries and fruit we grew on our property. In this way I was giving something in exchange for what I was receiving. Although it was a small gift, it was important to me because I was giving something I grew from my home, something of my own sense of place.

As the interviews progressed, many of my questions and methods of recording conversations evolved. Initially, my plan was simple: read the consent form, ask questions, record and transcribe each conversation. I also planned to provide a copy of the transcripts to each individual to confirm thoughts or to ask further questions. However, in reality, things progressed in ways I could not have predicted, and most thankfully my research and techniques improved dramatically as I learned from each conversation.

I tried to make each preamble consistent yet personally meaningful. The participants knew, from varying degrees, who I was. Each preamble began with who I was, my brief history and why I was doing this. Notes were written down the day before making sure the same important questions were asked to each individual, yet making personal references to what I had heard them say or do in the past. It was hoped in this way the moment would seem more like a conversation and not an interview. Somewhat expected, the introduction of the consent form was awkward. Some were suspicious and asked quite bluntly what I was getting out of this research. Others were somewhat hesitant to write their name on the piece of paper. Many had had this asked of them before and understood the need for the consent form. In the end however, all were willing to answer my questions.

Perhaps the single most significant and uncomfortable event came when asking Vern Jack Jr., Tseycum and Saanich Indian School Board member, whether or not I could record the conversation. I anticipated this being the most awkward moment in the whole process. Vern said to me, "I am young. I will leave it to the older people for their words to be recorded (personal communication, October 14, 2004). I asked if it was OK that I
write notes. He said that would be fine. Vern was a powerful speaker. Each word was carefully chosen and placed in a way that carried much significance to him. What I found was that I really had to listen and actively participate in the conversation in order to find, as much as I could, his meaning. After leaving the interview, frustrated at not being able to hear the conversation again, I stopped for a coffee and wrote all I could remember. What was most astounding, after writing for over two hours, was what I did remember, what I did receive from the conversation.

This event changed the course of my research from that point forward. Fortunately, I had only completed two interviews previously (and had already been tired and frustrated at transcribing them). Upon reflection, I found I received more from the conversation because I had to actively listen to the speaker, listen for their intent and incorporate their stories and knowledge into my own. I realised afterwards, that in this way, I was participating in oral history. I could not be passive. I could not listen to the conversation again and even if I could, it would not carry the same feeling. Some of the context would be lost. Nonetheless, there is always a risk of remembering the conversation differently, or interpreting my memory of it incorrectly. However, I felt this process was much more meaningful for the both of us. The responsibility to remember is most important in being the listener. I was witnessing his story and it became my responsibility to remember as much as I could in order to pass it on most respectfully.

In this I took much pride. I carefully re-read my notes immediately after, revisiting each conversation, reflecting and writing all I could remember. In pencil or another coloured pen I would review my brief notes several times filling in further notes within the context of the conversation. I was also aware that to make valid what I was writing, I would need to check with each individual whose response I was writing about. Validity was checked with all interviews, and in some cases, I asked people over the phone or in person to expand on a phrase or topic to ensure it was right.

Not only did my protocol change, my questions evolved as well. As the development of curriculum is an important extension of this thesis, I felt it critical to ask about the concept of curriculum. This was spawned early in my research by a brief conversation with Skip Sam, a Tsartlip Elder. When approached to talk about meaningful and relevant curriculum for his people, he quite honestly asked for a
definition of curriculum. I reflected for a brief moment on what the concept means. It was something I took for granted in knowing, or so I thought. The definition I chose was, ‘the things we teach in a subject area.’ Although I was aware of the idea of education, and the curriculum it espouses, could be viewed as a colonial tool, it was that moment that I questioned, again, what I was doing. Was this the default position I was taking in this research? I had to ask myself the question: was using the Western concept of curriculum development as my framework simply preserving colonial ideas of education? I was asking questions of what meaningful and relevant science curriculum might entail without first questioning the larger idea of curriculum. In doing so I was funneling the potential ideas of WSÁNEC curriculum into a Western box, and by calling it a science curriculum, I was limiting potential insights because of my interview questions.

As commented on earlier, curriculum can be viewed as the dissemination of a knowledge base determined by a subject area. It is not my intent to criticize what is in the knowledge base of Western forms of curriculum. However, it is my intent to question what is not included from the viewpoint of other cultures. This became the cornerstone of my research: looking at curriculum from a WSÁNEC point of view of what ‘knowledge is of most worth’ and what it might reveal of a sense of place when asked of WSÁNEC people. Would any answers, I suspected I might find, be anywhere within curriculum prescribed by government? Furthermore, would a sense of place and its importance to the WSÁNEC people be found in the answers to this question? Would I find concrete ideas and knowledge that could be practiced and or approached through science? It quickly became clearer that this question of ‘most worth’ might provide insight into all of my research questions.

I wanted to understand a WSÁNEC sense of place because of what it might reveal in providing a framework from which to develop place-based curriculum. However, asking, “describe your sense of place?” was too vague a question. During early conversations, I read a brief definition but felt I might be leading peoples’ answers in a direction that suited me and not necessarily toward a WSÁNEC sense of place. Ironically the vagueness of the question of a sense of place became the largest stumbling block of my research. In framing my research around the question of ‘knowledge of most worth’, I captured what was perceived as having the most value to the people of
WSÁNEC. I also found people were more comfortable and surer in their answers. Most importantly, the depth and confidence of their responses provided a rich and detailed account of what I was realizing was their sense of place.

**Convergence of Interview Questions**

My research into meaningful and relevant place-based curriculum revolved around four questions:

1. What knowledge is of most worth to WSÁNEC people?
2. What could we do in this curriculum that reinforces this knowledge?
3. For what destiny do we educate the people of WSÁNEC?
4. What is the role of a non-First Nation’s science teacher in your community?

In asking ‘what knowledge is of most worth’, I wanted a glimpse into the past, to the traditions I hear so predominantly in conversations with Elders. I hear so often in prayer to look to the ancestors for guidance, to me that always meant looking to the past for guidance in the present and for the future. What this question also illuminated was knowledge of the importance of place. In any culture we look to Elders for their knowledge for they in turn asked their own Elders. The second question was a practical one. I was looking for concrete ideas to practice, that had cultural meaning and relevancy and also instances where science could be incorporated. The third question, for what destiny do we educate our children, I borrowed from David Orr, (1994), in order to find what community members wanted in their future. “The children are our future” I heard in different forms. Plus I wanted to write with a sense of hope, for without it, we become paralyzed with a sense of hopelessness, or worse, we become indifferent.

Using the first three questions, I hoped to establish a means by which the conversation would evolve from the past but also reflect on the future. What a curriculum might provide students with now, exhibits the present. Knowledge from the past moves through the now and points toward the future, and in several cases, the future came around full circle back to knowledge of most worth. In this way, much like an
infinity symbol, both past knowledge and future destiny are being influenced by the present. The last question was a personal one on which I reflect in chapter six. I wanted to define my own sense of place within the WSÁNEC community.
Chapter 4: A WSÁNEC Conversation

Our way of communicating was through our oral history. We are taught to listen and to carry on that oral knowledge. It takes effort to learn and think. It is important to participate in the teachings. You cannot be careless. That is why we give gifts, to bear witness. (Mavis hands me a rock she used to tell me a story). You as a listener have a responsibility to remember. You accept responsibility to remember because it is the storytellers learned experience, their story, their knowledge. (Mavis Henry, personal communication, January 12, 2005)

HÍSWKE SIA’M

As I talked with WSÁNEC people, the answers that were shared evolved into a WSÁNEC conversation. Twelve WSÁNEC people were interviewed, representing all four communities, including Elders, community leaders and school board members, teachers and former students from the Saanich Adult Education Centre (SAEC). Each interview lasted between one to two hours. Referred to earlier, the majority of my conversations were not taped and therefore the only references I have are from my notes and the reflection and writing afterward. In this sense, the conversation is my own and I take this very seriously. The words are theirs but they come from my own memory and interpreted from my understandings of the knowledge and opinions they shared with me. They have all read the conversation and have validated my interpretation of their words.

What is ‘Knowledge of Most Worth’ to WSÁNEC people?

John Elliott Sr., fluent SENĆOTEN speaker and teacher and coordinator of the SENĆOTEN language program at LAU,WEL,NEW tribal school expressed:

We need to maintain those things that the old people talked about, to take care of the land. Respect it now and for the future. Our culture is all related to our land and our territory and within it all our teachings. We need to know who we are, what makes us WSÁNEC. We need to know

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5 All people interviewed expressed that their names be used within the text of this thesis.
ourselves as WSÁNEC people and to value that knowledge. (Personal communication, February 8, 2005)

Mavis Henry, Tsawout educator, social worker and academic said to me:

We need to sustain our knowledge of the land, how we used it, that it provides gifts, and why they are considered gifts. We need to remember to respect these gifts by using them, if not then we risk losing that knowledge. It is so important to express our ties to land. Our ties to land signify our history, our sense of belonging and our responsibility to protect it. We need to use our land and sustain our knowledge as a people. We have a responsibility to remember that. (Personal communication, January 12, 2005)

Marie Cooper, Tsartlip Elder and former principle and director of the Saanich Indian School Board:

We need to begin again to understand the holistic place of our people. Our connections to our land are not just physical. It is all encompassing. Our language, place-names, our heart, our soul, our spirit, our livelihood, our way of living and being is tied up in our land. It has taken me a long time to understand fully, the impact the knowledge of our land and territory means to the holistic place of our people. (Personal communication, February 9, 2005)

John Elliott Sr.’s comment “those things that the old people talked about” suggests an ancient knowledge system based on respecting land as well as the Elders who carry that knowledge. But he also brings it forward stating that the values and teachings of this knowledge are valid now, and for the future. His message also maintains strongly, the importance of identity of WSÁNEC people. Mavis Henry’s comments reflect an importance of sustaining the knowledge that the land provides gifts, gifts to be respected and used or they may be lost. She stresses the importance of “expressing ties to land” that reinforces that knowledge. She also reaffirms John’s statement of the significance of identity adding a sense of belonging and of a unique WSÁNEC history. Marie’s comments tie these themes all together touching on the holistic place this knowledge holds adding, “our connections to our lands are not just physical.” Her words suggest an important spiritual place for her people tied to land.
I choose these three snippets of conversation because they demonstrate how the knowledge WSÁNEC people associate with their land, all stem from the physical groundings of their traditional territory, what I am calling, using Butz and Eyles (1997) terms, an ecologically grounded sense of place. I use the phrase ‘knowledge associated with land’ throughout this thesis because it is the collective knowledge that stems from an ecological grounding in place, that is direct engagement of relationship and communication with aspects of place. I suggest WSÁNEC constructions of place and land reach deeply into other cultural spheres; this knowledge is interrelated and mutually dependant (Cajete, 1994; Kawagley, 1998; Deloria, 2001). This knowledge exists as a web of connections, where one should not be isolated from the other without compromising the holistic perspective that pervades WSÁNEC knowledge systems. “It has taken me a long time to understand fully, the impact our knowledge of our land and territory means to the holistic place of our people” Marie Cooper emphatically expresses to me (personal communication, February 9, 2005). Several themes emerged from my conversations with people that directly relate to the knowledge associated with land, the knowledge of most worth, as deemed by WSÁNEC people: Elders as carriers of knowledge, SENĆOTEN language and place-names, WSÁNEC history, teachings, ceremony, values, stories, sense of belonging and identity are all grounded in, and have co-evolved from place, the place of WSÁNEC.

A WSÁNEC Sense of Place

A WSÁNEC sense of place is a holistic concept, and is unique due to the collective and traditional sentiment tied to history and an intimate relationship with their territory. A sense of place within this context is further extended within a family or clans and articulated by language. As John Elliott Sr. explains:

Our sense of place lies in knowing our ancient connections to land. Our family names, NEHIMET goes way back to creation. Those ancient names, have been past down from the first man, and provides for people their connection to a place, a place where they belong to. CELANEN, the teachings of the places where you come from, means you are born into
that part of life that says you belong to that place. (Personal communication, February 8, 2005)

Earl Claxton Jr., Tsawout member and guest speaker at the Saanich Adult Education Centre (SAEC) adds:

I remember my dad saying it’s your CELANEN, that means it is part of your life that you are allowed to go and fish in that spot. That shows respect for the place and the family who holds that place. (Personal communication, September 22, 2004)

Furthermore, the SENCOTEN language adds a unique quality to WSÁNEC peoples sense of place because within language are references which carry culturally significant meaning. "The voice of the land is in the language of the WSÁNEC people" (Claxton Sr. and Elliott Sr, 1994). For the people of WSÁNEC, knowledge is embedded in and expressed through their SENCOTEN language. As John Elliott says, “our value systems and beliefs are carried through our language” (personal communication, February 8, 2005). For example, CELANEN is a very inclusive term that houses within it many connotations that connect family, history, belonging and teaching with place; it is a concept that is born from place generally, but has specific meanings to specific locations for specific families. Kevin Paul (1995), WSÁNEC poet, academic and keen learner of the SENCOTEN language suggests the SENCOTEN language creates participants and because often one SENCOTEN word expresses several ideas, a listener must participate actively in what an Elder is saying. It therefore becomes a responsibility for the listener to interpret the message.

Because of this quality of their language, WSÁNEC people feel one of the most important educational needs is to reinforce language to a significant extent within their schools. Skip Sam, an Elder from Tsartlip, and guest speaker at the SAEC says:

Language is one of the biggest differences between young and old. The place of the longhouse is very important to us. Most of the young ones do not know the language and they can’t understand the teachings without the language. (Personal communication, November 25, 2004)
Skip also brings up another aspect of WSÁNEC culture that was a recurrent theme in my conversations with people. Elders are the carriers of knowledge believed to be of most worth; they are the carriers of the language, which is the context for the values, beliefs and teachings. Skip adds, “it wasn’t until I had children of my own that I began to realise the importance of our teachings, it is our Elders who are our teachers” (personal communication, November 25, 2004). Elders are also the carriers of family history. Within a WSÁNEC sense of place lie a family history and its connections to land. Glen Jim, Tseycum community member and educator says:

I remember as a kid listening to the Elders. I carry that and try to emulate that. The Elders carry the knowledge of your history, your families. It is about respecting people, how you carry yourself based on your family, what you have learned from the Elders. (Personal communication, February 23, 2005)

Vern Jack Jr. adds the knowledge carried in family history can provide a sense of identity, “Our young ones can learn who they are from the knowledge of their family” (personal communication, October 14, 2004).

Tied together by language and the significance of territory exist place names. Marie Cooper states:

I remember Uncle Dave Elliott used to always talk about our SENĆOŦEN place-names. They were extremely important he would say because if you don’t even know where you come from, how can you even begin to know who you are? (Personal communication, August 24, 2004)

The concept of place-names was also considered knowledge of most worth by WSÁNEC people and was referred to in most conversations. As Vern Jack Jr. and Earl Claxton Jr. respectively note:

We need to maintain a strong sense of our territory, our place-names. We need to remember what is in a name. Within our place-names are the connections our people had to these places. Why they were there, it describes them. (Personal communication, October 14, 2004)
We know the extent of our territory because of our place-names. I remember my dad saying we know where our territory is because of our place-names. So that is very important in identifying our homeland because each of those places contains an important meaning or a teaching. It is not just the name of a place. It is more than that. (Personal communication, September 22, 2004)

The concept of SENĆOŦEN place-names elicits a relationship between language, place and knowledge of land. “Saanich place-names contain my peoples history, values and ideologies” (Paul, 1995, p. 6). Knowledge of these places brings forth much more than places on a map. They also provide a system of shared understanding that reflect not only the location, but also how people may know a place and understand a place in terms of how one can use it, as well as how one should use a place (Basso, 1996). In this way when an Elder refers to a place using its SENĆOŦEN place-name, they acknowledge the practical and spiritual uses and or a valuable teaching that may be associated with that place. For example, SNITCEL, Kevin Paul states, translates as:

the place of Blue Grouse. It was understood by my people that the Blue Grouse would only occupy a place if the land was very rich. SNITCEL, the land around Tod Inlet, was an important fishing and hunting site, since it is the only area within my people’s winter movements that offered protection from the southwest wind, the most vicious wind in WSÁNEC. (P. 16)

Inclusive in this reference are the teachings, of danger, of richness, and respect that reflect a WSÁNEC way of viewing the environment.

A WSÁNEC way of viewing the environment is inclusive of a unique sense of place. One way to look into this conversation about the importance of knowledge associated with land is by linking the practical and spiritual ecological connections that ground a WSÁNEC knowledge framework. The practical connections WSÁNEC people have to their lands was a very common theme and is the most obvious. Moreover, it was perhaps the most critical connection. The land and knowledge about it provided plants and animals for food, clothing, shelter, medicines and technologies. This knowledge reflects a deep relationship that exists because of a practical and spiritual dependency in knowing their environment in specific ways. Kevin Paul states “in the minds of my
people, the practical and spiritual are never truly separated. Spirituality is the language of practicality” (personal communication, October 6, 2004). This ecological knowledge subsists in direct practical applications, for example, “I remember the Elders living on seafood, crabs, oysters, octopus and herring, picking huckleberries, making apple sauce and soap berries” (Mae Sam, personal communication, November 25, 2004). They also include deeper ecological understandings of place that deal with seasons, cycles and other biogeographical phenomena that relate to subsistence activities. For example Marie Cooper states, “It's about how we as a people developed our ways around 'mother earth,' the seasons and the cycles” (personal communication, August 24, 2004). As John Elliott Sr. states, “we knew our land very intimately. We knew the value and the knowledge of the seasons. We knew when and where to go for gathering purposes” (personal communication, February 8, 2005).

Just as significant in this ecological grounding is that this knowledge also provides the spiritual teachings that guide people toward understanding their interactions with places and its resources. This idea moves beyond simply using the land or its inhabitants. It becomes a sacred place, to be utilised but most importantly, respected. This knowledge furthermore, reflects an ethic of caring for land and for all things inclusive in that land. “It is important for our spiritual well-being that we feel a closeness to our lands, and in how we use our lands” Earl Claxton Jr. says (personal communication, September 22, 2004). John Elliott Sr. calls this “Saanich thinking” adding:

Our Indian spirituality was based on the land. I always say that the land was our Bible. Not too long ago some students and I went up to gather cedar roots. It was as if you could feel the land saying thanks. Someone is using us respectfully. It is not just about ripping up a root. It is our ancestors, our connection to that place, that tree. It’s about respect. It’s about saying thanks and giving an offering. All was used. Nothing was wasted. You should feel bad if you waste something. We gave it to the ants, the birds and you don’t feel bad. (Personal communication, February 8, 2005)

There is also a strong sense of caring for land as they would a family member. Earl Claxton Jr. notes, “I think an important concept is that we do not own the land, but
we are here to look after the land and to protect it” (personal communication, September 22, 2004). Elliott Sr. and Claxton Sr. (1994) emphasize, “many of the SENCOTEN place-names refer to the land as though it were parts of a human being” (p. 42), which suggests a respect of the land signifies a respect of yourself and your ancestors. John Elliott Sr. states:

We need to protect our land. That is what the Ancestors said. We need to keep the land clean, our streams clean. We need to be giving back to our land. (John Elliot Sr., personal communication, February 8, 2005)

Identity and sense of belonging were also consistent themes in my conversations with WSÁNEC people. As commented on earlier, a sense of place is much more than physical connections to land. A sense of belonging deepens when you know your place and when you feel you belong, when you identify yourself within your place. “Our identity is our territory” John Elliot emphasises. “It is important to know our place, within it, to walk firm in life” (personal communication, February 8, 2005). Mavis Henry explains, “Our ties to land signify our history, our sense of belonging and our responsibility to protect it” (personal communication, January 12, 2005). As Mavis touched on, WSÁNEC history was considered knowledge of most worth as well. Darcy Sampson Jr. states, “it is important for people to know their roots, their culture, where they come from” (personal communication, January 6, 2005). WSÁNEC history, as Darcy’s quote suggests, is a strong precursor to the development of a sense of belonging and identity.

Reclaiming a Sense of Place

For the WSÁNEC people, the knowledge associated with their land is considered of most worth. Ties to land are inextricably linked to all things practical and spiritual. It is embedded in and expressed through their SENCOTEN language. So essential was knowledge associated with land to their existence that it is entrenched in all aspects of their culture; their language, place-names, teachings, values and family history are all evident in their relationships to their land and territory, their place. From land has
evolved their spiritual and physical well being, their sense of belonging and identity, their sense of place. This is a traditional WSÁNEC sense of place.

However, several comments were also made in the context of a sense of place that suggest a concern that the young people do not know their place in the same way that Elders and other community members expressed. Something has happened that has resulted in a WSÁNEC sense of place not carrying the importance it once did. This is captured in Marie Cooper's statement:

Our young ones, I feel some of them are struggling with their relationship to the Elders. I fear sometimes that they think they have nothing to grasp on to. And whether they realise this or not, they do. They have the teachings of their families as a grounding. The Elders in their families, many of them have grown up with a strong cultural background. And I don’t mean going back into the past, but as a grounding. What I mean by grounded, is grounded within the teachings that have been handed down within their families. We need to remember the ways of our people and how to be with our people, to have a strong identification with our people. (Personal communication, August 24, 2004)

Glen Jim adds to this asking:

What is the history of your family? What are the teachings, the values, the virtues of what the Elders have taught us? Are you living up to that? Some of our children, they know it, they just don’t practice it. (Personal communication, February 23, 2005)

This perhaps may have subsequent effects that connect to an appreciation of the knowledge associated with land. As Marie Cooper suggests:

We have always had an appreciation of nature. But I think we have lost a lot of it. Many of the references we have to nature are very much there. It is just that they are not being put into a place to remind ourselves what it is we believe about mother nature. (Personal communication, August 24, 2004)

Earl adds to this:
We have let some of those meanings go. We haven't been looking after our land. That respect. That is what we need to get back. (Personal communication, September 22, 2004)

Josephine Henry expresses:

I don’t think we have the same respect and consciousness as before. We need to confront my generation to not be apathetic, to care for our environment and its resources and the knowledge of our culture. (Personal communication, November 29, 2004)

The reasons for this apparent loss of the knowledge associated with land are many. However, what was mentioned most frequently was linked to past and current educational practices. Mavis Henry succinctly puts it this way. “Our students are not seeing the importance of our education as a result of public education” (personal communication, January 12, 2005). She adds:

We need to preserve and reinforce our identity as a unique people, to respect that pre-existing knowledge and confidence as Saanich people. Our history has never been addressed in education. Our place, our self-confidence and identity is not taught, only assimilation, to let go of our identity. It is important that we counter this and move towards decolonization. (Personal communication, January 12, 2005)

Josephine Henry and Kelly Paul, two former students add to this stating respectively: “how can you know who you are without knowing where you come from. I hear that all the time” (personal communication, November 29, 2004).

The past makes you who you are today so we need to value what our past is. In school I wasn’t taught to know myself. Only Western ways, modern ways and not who I am in terms of my own traditions and culture. If you cannot identify yourself in terms of who you are, you won’t value yourself. (Personal communication, January 14, 2005)

Marie Cooper suggests that “unless we begin to educate our people fully, holistically, unless our young ones begin to find their place, to see, hear, feel and experience our territory, to learn who we are as Saanich people, then we risk losing that
knowledge” (personal communication, February 9, 2005). These comments and others strongly suggest that current educational practices are not serving the needs of WSÁNEC people and contribute to the declining importance of a traditionally grounded sense of place. However, as Josephine Henry voices:

We are a positive people in spite of our colonial history. We need to learn to maintain and restore our lands, our earth, to take care of things. Respect the earth and educate people to preserve it for future generations. (Personal communication, November 29, 2004)

Mavis Henry adds to this saying:

We have a great history. I remember Dave Elliot passionately expressing that we are the richest people in the world. We have all we need here. (Personal communication, January 12, 2005)

And as John Elliott Sr. convincingly advocates:

My dad used to say we have a beautiful culture. We need to hold onto that but not back into the bush. And what I take from that is that we need to be progressive, but most important we need to be respectful and kind, to keep our same place in the world, but with a new sense of order. We bring a lot of awareness in the way we educate, the way we relate to our land and territory. We can all learn from that knowledge. (Personal communication, February 8, 2005)

A WSÁNEC sense of place is the holistic knowledge associated with the connections people have with their lands and traditional territories, their place. Implicit within this concept is an overriding theme of respect that is carried through Elders, their SENĆOTEN language and place-names, and the stories, values and teachings within them. Earl Claxton Jr. reflects:

It all comes back to respect. Respect for the environment, the creatures that live there, respect for each other. The land does not belong to us; we belong to the land. I have always heard that, as long as I remember. That is the way it is. (Personal communication, September 22, 2004)
The knowledge WSÁNEC people associate with their land is knowledge of most worth: for it is this knowledge that provides them with their sense of belonging and identity, their collective and unique history as WSÁNEC people. In 12 conversations, all people, to a considerable extent, referred to the knowledge associated with their land and territory when asked what they perceived as the knowledge of most worth. This was the only response that was touched on by all participants. What this clearly states, at least in an educational sense, is the importance WSÁNEC people, regardless of sex, age or amount of education, formal or otherwise, place in the connections they have to their lands.
Chapter 5: The Foundations of a WSÁNEC Sense of Place

Gregory Cajete (1999) states that the knowledge systems of First Nations people have evolved through direct experience of place, is entirely embedded in place and that the foundation of Indigenous knowledge is directly related to the environments in which they live. "The perspectives of small scale, regionally based indigenous peoples of North America reflect long term relationships to place" (p. 189). The foundations of this knowledge system have co-evolved from place. Sense of place research has contended, logically, that our practical understandings of the world are rooted in our life places, the region where we live out our lives (Butz and Eyles, 1997). The practical understandings this refers to are mediated by culture; that is, WSÁNEC culture both affects and is affected by the relationship people have with physical places.

Sense of place research furthermore posits that a sense of place is inclusive of social, ideological and ecological dimensions, which illuminates the holistic nature of the concept. What I will do now is use this triad as a vehicle to explore this concept of a sense of place in a WSÁNEC context and then amplify it into an educational context to strengthen a more holistic and cultural way of knowing place. Indeed, the intent of this thesis is to explore a WSÁNEC sense of place and to look for ways in which to strengthen people’s ties to land.

Butz and Eyles, (1997) state that the social component of a sense of place includes groups of individuals and their relations and interactions with one another that occur within a community. The ideological component of a community can be conceived as an expression of collective sentiment and matrices of symbols (in a WSÁNEC context, their creation story, LAU,WEL,NEW, raven and the Arbutus tree) pertaining to place that “can engender a sense of belonging and identity; individuals identify with a place, and feel they belong to it, because they share social values and sentiments with others in that place” (p. 4) and come to some collective understanding. The fact that all this collective understanding is occurring ‘some place’ cannot be understated. It is the relationship between the place and life world, which comprise the core of an ecological sense of place. An ecological sense of place is the knowledge related to a place’s ecological characteristics that yield meaning and allow people to identify with the place. “They are
not attributes of ecology alone, but rather products of human encounter with an ecological setting" (Butz and Eyles, 1997, p. 10). Very evident in this concept is a grounding in physical place. The knowledge associated with land that WSÁNEC people have expressed as knowledge of most worth, most certainly co-evolved from an ecological grounding.

Significant in this claim is the suggestion that the sense of place WSÁNEC people have talked about is traditional. And as such, I question the extent to which it exists now, in an ecological context. Many of the students I teach do not practice or experience their ties to land in the same way that Elders talked about, as reflected in conversations and my experience in teaching them. As Mae Sam states, “our young people are not interested in our traditional foods because they are not exposed to it” (personal communication, November 25, 2004). However, the fact that knowledge associated with land was expressed by all participants, suggests that it is still alive, but where? For example, the comment, “how can you know who you are without knowing where you come from” in some way shape or form was expressed by the majority of participants. The general concept of this knowledge certainly lives in the minds of people and is most certainly talked about. Therefore, I suggest that this knowledge, for the most part, exists in ideological and social contexts and not in, to a significant extent, a practical way. That is not to suggest many are not aware of it. All of the people I talked with most certainly articulated a love for the land and share a feeling that they need to protect it. They hear it through the Elders and through them, their ancestors, but is this knowledge today grounded ecologically, with meaningful and direct connection and experience with land?

I also heard in the majority of conversations that respect, perhaps the most important relationship to land, is not the same as it was before. Reasons for this could be fiercely debated. However, one aspect of this cannot be denied, that is, much of the dissolving of their relationships to land are the result of past residential school and, I will argue in this chapter, current educational practices. As was undeniably expressed in my conversations, questions arise of what students are taught to value in school. As will be argued later in this chapter, very little, if any, of what WSÁNEC people deemed knowledge of most worth is realized within currently prescribed curriculum. As such, it
will be argued that WSÁNEC people continue to be divorced from their lands and as a result much of their culture may continue to wane.

As a consequence, the ecological grounding of a WSÁNEC sense of place has been somewhat eroded. And, although the ecological rootedness is not as crucial, to the extent traditional WSÁNEC people lived them, it does not diminish the importance of those ecologically grounded traditions. Indeed, this is what people are advocating. Education has a place here. What if we made curriculum more grounded in WSÁNEC land and territory? If we re-root a sense of place in the ecological realm, might it provide a conduit for the knowledge of a sense of place, as what lives in the ideological and social minds of WSÁNEC people, to flow into the ecological, and rekindle a more holistic sense of place rooted in land?

An Ecologically Grounded Framework

Understanding the context of an ecologically grounded sense of place has significant implications in how we teach people, especially people with a unique and rich history connected to place, as the WSÁNEC people. As I have asserted, the spiritual, ideological and social components of a holistic sense of place co-evolved from an ecological grounding in place. And based on the responses of my questions, is the grounding of the knowledge deemed of most worth for WSÁNEC people. Moreover, an exploration into the construct of an ecologically grounded sense of place, how it develops and may be reinforced, can provide a meaningful and relevant framework toward creating ecologically grounded curriculum. Through sense of place research, I want to demonstrate how this framework can reunite people to their place and by incorporating WSÁNEC knowledge systems, reinforce a holistic sense of place.

I have taken the position that a holistic sense of place includes social, ideological and ecological characteristics, and to reinforce this holistic perspective, all of these components must be acknowledged and experienced. I have also suggested that all of these components traditionally stem from the intimate ecological grounding people have with their place. As WSÁNEC people have argued, education and in particular curriculum, must also be ecologically grounded. However, I want to clarify my position
and explain what I mean when I use the term “ecologically grounded.” Ecologically grounded, the way I use it, refers to the respectful and ethical, individual and communal relationships people have with their places and objects, or subjects as one Elder preferred, within places. Deloria (2001) states that Native people perceive their relationships with the natural world as always ethical. As such, this relationship must assume a spiritual realm as much as it implies a practical one. The spiritual relationship Indigenous peoples have with their lands cannot and should not be separated (Kawagley, 1998; Cajete, 1994; Deloria, 2001; Wildcat, 2001).

Cajete (2000) refers to Native knowledge as inclusive of “spiritual processes” (p. 69), that essentially no division exists between the spiritual and any other aspect of Native existence. The spiritual realm insists, “every act, element, plant, animal and natural process is considered to have a moving spirit with which humans continually communicate” (Cajete, 2000, p. 69). In order to attempt to ground learning ecologically includes an understanding of this ‘moving spirit’ as inclusive of actively engaging in relationship in natural places. The real test of living, Cajete (2000) notes, is “to be able to establish a harmonious relationship with that perfect nature – to understand it, to see it as the source of one’s life and livelihood, and the source of one’s essential spiritual being” (p. 179, emphasis added). A respectful, ecologically grounded sense of place must include this spiritual realm if it is to be inclusive of a cultural understanding of place.

Before beginning to posit how to go about ecologically grounding education, I want to explore a further understanding of how people and their culture interact with physical places. Butz and Eyles (1997) have suggested that ecological dimensions of a sense of place emerge from accumulated sets of perceived or known ecological affordances (potential uses) and effectivities (potential applicable skills). From this point forward, I will use the term potential uses and potential skills in place of affordances and effectivities respectfully. Furthermore, I want to make clear that when I use the term “uses” and “skills” that I do not refer to a utilitarian context but rather I mean engaging in a relationship with a place or particular subject within a place. An ecological sense of place then, is the personal and collective knowledge of a place’s ecological characteristics, which allow people to identify with a place and yield meaning as it relates to our personal and collective experience within these places. What we recognise, say in
a beach, depends upon what we perceive the beach offers us. Whether practical, spiritual or aesthetic, it produces meaning for people because of the relationship between perceived uses and what sets of skills, we hold in relating to the beach.

What this suggests, somewhat obviously, is that students not only need to be exposed to their territories, specific places and subjects within them, but also shown what they are useful for and how to practically use them. As an example, the three former students who I talked with expressed their love of their land, the beauty of nature, and acknowledged their desires to protect it. However, it seems, at least from what I gather from their conversations that for Kelly and Josephine, the potential uses their place provides is aesthetic and culturally assumed for the most part. Darcy’s potential uses were more understood because he had more potential skills in which to utilise his environment. Darcy’s reasoning, his love of hunting, existed because he learned to do so from his family, allowed for social interaction and provided food.

I love to hunt. I do it for the food. I’m out there learning something. I can be quiet. There is no need to talk. It is about patience. How to understand the deer, where it feeds and where it beds down. I learn where to go. I learned this from my grandpa, my dad. I go with my brothers and my cousins. (Personal communication, January 6, 2005)

As all three expressed, they were aware of the many potential uses of their territory but, to realize in a fuller extent, were unable to practice or experience them because they lacked the practical knowledge of how to use them. So, in order to maximize the ecological and cultural benefits of an environmental encounter, students need to be aware of what their environments offer them and, just as importantly, how to engage with and use these gifts.

As was expressed, potential uses and skills are just as significant in a traditionally educational, ethical and spiritual context as well. As Earl Claxton Jr. notes, “there were laws that we had, environmental laws that go back, way back that had special meanings” (personal communication, September 22, 2004). John Elliott Sr. emphasizes:

Our value system and beliefs are all related to our land and territory and within it all the teachings. The wind, the trees, all plants and animals, we
have teachings from all of them. (Personal communication, February 8, 2005)

And, as Vern Jack Jr. expressed:

It is important for students to learn the teaching of the self and become the spiritual person you are. We need to remember, the old people left something for the young ones at these places. (Personal communication, October 14, 2004)

Without the knowledge of how one might find these, and what the values of these are, students may not understand or appreciate the relevancy or meaning behind these cultural references.

The Elders, understandably, revealed the most ecologically grounded sense of place in that when they were talking of the importance to land, along with the knowledge associated with it, they were more concrete in their suggestions on how education may be involved. For example, Mae Sam expressed:

Our young ones are not interested in our traditional foods because they are not exposed to it. We need to get out there. Dig clams teach them how to steam clams and gather seaweed. We need to get kids out there doing it. (Personal communication, November 25, 2004)

Or as John Elliott Sr. expressed, for example, “go out camping, fishing, creating shelter, making and keeping fire, cook, pit-cook, roast duck, bake camas bulbs” (personal communication February 8, 2005). Each of these comments indicate an in depth knowledge of what these objects provide and furthermore, knowledge of how to use and engage with them in a more culturally meaningful context.

As an environmental and science instructor, I view the interplay between potential uses and skills as having profound implications in how we teach people and in how we might expose students to environmental encounters within any subject area. They provide insight into how students might find their own meaning and relevancy in what we teach. At this point I would like to review what Butz and Eyles (1997) suggest most inclusively demonstrates an ecologically grounded sense of place:
The strongest and most resilient ecological senses of place are likely to emerge among individuals whose interaction with a place is rooted in numerous and ongoing ecological encounters, contextualized by a variety of everyday practical purposes, in a social setting characterized by sustained communicative action regarding the symbolic and instrumental use value of the ecological characteristics of the place. (p. 24)

I suggest this classification of an ecologically grounded sense of place is more than just a description but also essential ingredients in the development of an ecologically grounded sense of place. This description, within an educational context, can promote and encourage a strong and resilient ecological grounding. First, they suggest that a rooting in the ecological will emerge with students whose interaction with their territory is reinforced by numerous and ongoing ecological encounters. I emphasize numerous and ongoing because it is essential for students to be continuously exposed to their environments. Each ecological encounter builds from past encounters; what we bring into a future environmental encounter is a product of both what we have learned from others and what we have experienced directly in previous encounters with that ecological setting. What we take away from those experiences is the knowledge of certain environmental uses: practical, spiritual, aesthetic, or destructive. Each time we visit a place, and learn from it, we further both our understanding of potential uses and skills, thereby encouraging our connections and relationships to that place. Secondly these experiences should be contextualized by a variety of everyday practical purposes. This is reiterated by Mavis Henry when she says, “using (for example) science to approach our (traditional) reasoning...to find the science of everyday life” (personal communication, January 12, 2005). For example, going to local sites and learning to identify, gather and prepare plants for food or medicinal use has both ecological and cultural value. Again, it is important to contextualize this in ways that have everyday practical purposes to promote the value of knowing this within a student’s life. Furthermore, these experiences should be provided in a social setting where students can actively discuss, communicate and negotiate how and why this ecological knowledge is important. These ecological uses, as shared by people when involved in an outdoor experience, become a basis for commonality in life-worlds (Butz and Eyles, 1997). As the majority of people expressed
to me, actually going out into traditional territory is central and to share that knowledge with people essential, if it is to grow into, again, a meaningful ecological sense. Mavis Henry expressed to me the importance of outdoor experiences because they provide opportunities to practice traditional ties to land in a social setting (personal communication, January 12, 2005). In this case, a shared ecological sense of place can achieve collective understanding, identity and belonging within their place.

Perhaps most important in a cultural sense are the symbolic or spiritual use values of these places or the objects within them. These experiences need to include Elders, as the knowledge carriers, to supply the spiritual use value within the practical, for example in place-names, histories, stories and teachings that are held within those references. Finally, through social interaction, a sense of place is always ‘becoming’ (Cajete, 2000), changing and evolving through social communicative and instrumental action (Butz and Eyles, 1997). The more people who realize potential uses and who gain practical and spiritual skills, the more this educational experience promotes particular types of attitudes, shared attitudes that are more ecologically grounded within particular places.

**Experiential Education and Ecologically Grounded Learning**

As evidence in the literature of Indigenous education, experience is how Aboriginal peoples gained their knowledge. “It is at the level of experience that our traditional and ancestral Indigenous scholars have left us the richest legacy - insights of the processual, interconnected, and interrelated nature of the phenomenal world” (Wildcat, 2001, p. 14). Indeed, direct experience within places is what this thesis encourages. As Wildcat (2001) emphasises, “we must explore experientially living in the world” (p. 39).

In grounding learning ecologically and culturally, I frame this idea around Deloria’s (2001) Power and Place philosophy. To use Deloria’s words:

Keeping the particular in mind as the ultimate reference point of Indian Knowledge, we can pass into a discussion of some of the principles of the Indian forms of knowledge. Here, power and place are dominant concepts -- power being the living energy that inhabits and/or composes the
universe, and place being the relationship of things to each other. It is much easier, in discussing Indian principles, to put these basic ideas into a simple equation: Power and place produce personality. This equation simply means that the universe is alive, but it also contains within it the very important suggestion that the universe is personal and, therefore, must be approached in a personal manner. (2001, p. 22-23)

Understanding Deloria’s equation helps illuminate an Indigenous sense of place; our personality, as I interpret it, is another way of describing a sense of place that is both ecologically, spiritually and culturally grounded. Wildcat (2001) uses Deloria’s idea and focuses it into one question, that of “How shall we live?” and in doing so, I feel, illuminates a central theme in which to culturally embed a framework of curriculum based on place. Our understanding of power and place grows with our personal experience, the product of which fosters our personality and our ability to connect with our places, instilling a deeper and more complex sense of place.

Contexts for Learning

To provide a deeper understanding of how to practically encourage this to occur within students needs some discussion on how to make experiential learning more ecologically and culturally grounded. In this section, I will explore the concept of using an outdoor placed experience, an ecological encounter, as a base for teaching students within places. To be ecological, students must be outside learning directly with experience, to be cultural students must be learning within a cultural context. While this may seem self-evident, there are several contexts in which to consider in making an ecological encounter most effective. Falk and Dierking (1992) suggest:

Learning is a continuous, active process of assimilating and accommodating information within social, physical and personal contexts. It requires the active accommodation of information and mental structures which permit its use at a later time. Learning should be viewed as a dynamic process at the intersection of these three contexts. What can be said for sure is that experiences which embody rich components of all three contexts, though, are most likely to be remembered. Richness of experience and learning are highly correlated. (P. 114)
The following section explores each of the following contexts: the physical, the personal and the social. I conclude this section with the concept of a WSÁNEC context for learning.

**The Physical Context - The Place**

This thesis is about place and therefore I assert the most important consideration of all is within a physical context. The physical context plays a significant role in what, when and how information is perceived, stored and recalled (Falk and Dierking, 1992). In order for students to recollect information at a later time, it becomes increasingly meaningful to recall the place in which the experience was embedded. The teaching experience of nature is powerful and the learning opportunities during ecological encounters, seemingly endless. In choosing a place for an ecological encounter, however, depends on the objectives set out for the experience. Do experiences provide opportunities for immediate and appropriate reinforcement to the objectives set out? Learning may become much more personally and collectively meaningful precisely because of a specific place, especially within a cultural context; for example, a place-name. What is remembered in a given situation depends on the physical and psychological context in which the event was experienced, and the knowledge and skills that the learner brings to the context (Hein, 1991). Is the site chosen because it has cultural meaning, lessons or teachings, and/or is a site chosen because of subjects within it, such as the abundance of nettle fibers for rope or a particular bark for tea?

A site may be chosen based on what Elders’ and/or we, as teachers, perceive as their teaching and learning affordances (potential uses). This is perhaps the only context that we have ultimate control over; we best make it meaningful. Considering a site based on its teaching affordances and our ability to teach the effectivities (potential skills) associated with them provides a most effective starting point from which to build objectives and lessons. If viewed in such a way, the experience enables the teacher and learner to continue their learning beyond the time and place of the experience, toward a greater appreciation of what these and other places provide in a more meaningful context. Attention to the interplay between potential uses and skills is key in choosing places as a
physical context. How can we allow for students to realize what an environment affords them, and how can we teach them to utilize their environment in culturally appropriate and meaningful ways? Learning becomes grounded in ecology because the place is the subject whether it be on a large scale, for example KENNES, the "watershed", or specifically, such as the practical use values of nettle fibres. As long as an Elder is present sharing knowledge in a cultural context, learning becomes culturally and ecologically grounded.

A Personal Context

Experiential learning posits that learners should be able to personalize information but also for them to layer the experience upon previous experience (Delay, 1996). Much of what was deemed important by former students, community members, teachers and Elders was understood to have significant cultural importance and meaning. All individuals showed an ecological knowledge base as expressed in a social and ideological context. A significant difference lies within the ecological context, the complexity and depth of understanding the practical and symbolic use values of that knowledge base. People are aware of this knowledge; they hear it from the Elders in various social contexts. So, based on constructivist learning theory, there is, at least to some extent, even only if in ideological and social references, an ecological base from which to build from. Therefore, before an attempt to build upon this knowledge, some depth and complexity of students' perceptions of their uses and skills should be discussed.

Regardless of what has been taught previously, students will have preferences for what they want to accomplish or get out of the experience based on previous experiences. The educator must consider what kind of previous experience the learner has in this type of physical context. It is obvious that feelings, beliefs and attitudes strongly influence learning. As Cajete (1999) notes, “significant learning is directly related to the degree of personal relevance the student perceives in the educational material being presented” (p. 88). Therefore, in planning for an ecological encounter, it is pertinent to acknowledge a students attitude toward, say for example, knowing how to dig clams and to smoke them in a traditional way. To encourage personal relevance, the teacher must consider
objectives that clearly relate to the needs and interests of the learner. What are the use values in knowing this? How does it relate to everyday life? What does this have to do within the context of what we are learning in general? Furthermore, as Cajete (1999) emphasizes, “a sense of identification with tribal roots can provide a prime source of motivation to learn as it relates to an individual's heritage” (p. 89).

As commented on earlier, each individual will have his or her own set of potential uses and skills in which they bring into the encounter, which will greatly affect their experience. Some may have been to the site before or may have plenty of nature experience from other areas, while some may be completely outside of their comfort zone and experience. The Elder or educator must consider the potential uses that a particular setting offers students and develop lessons that allow students to gain some practical knowledge, skills that support the potential uses. As Vern Jack Jr. expressed, “it is the Elder's responsibility to know when the learner is ready” (personal communication, October 14, 2004).

A Social Context

A social context can never be underestimated. Humans are social animals, and as such, ecological encounters within groups, allows people to share experiences both socially and physically. Falk and Dierking (1992) suggest one of the keys to long term learning lie in social types of learning environments and experiences. Many of us tend to remember the people and the emotions that coincide with memories of places. Delay (1996), asserts that the process of knowledge construction is a combination of the influence of social interaction and our individual roles within that experience. When planning for an ecological encounter, consider how students might interact. Are the learners engaging in group learning activities, for example sharing the responsibilities of gathering firewood, digging a pit-cook, gathering food or plants for tea? How are students and Elders interacting? How does the teacher plan to interact? In these cases people are engaged in a shared ecologically grounded learning experience and in so doing, fostering efforts to achieve collective understanding of a placed experience.
The Role of the Elder as Mentor

The importance of an Elder, to make experiences culturally rich, is critical in teaching WSÁNEC children. This ‘knowledge of most worth’ as deemed by WSÁNEC people is carried by and continued through Elders. “The Elders carry the knowledge of our history, your families” Glen Jim notes (personal communication, February 23, 2005). Mae Sam, an Elder herself, says emphatically, we need “to talk to the Elders to learn how they grew up. That is where the teachings are” (personal communication, November 25, 2004). The idea of ‘Elder as mentor’ is something I have heard said many times in my experience with First Nations people. In fact Kevin Paul suggested that an Elder as mentor is the most important aspect in educational reform for First Nations people. “Bring back the idea of apprenticeship with an Elder. This was a major role in our society and needs to become so again” (personal communication, October 6, 2004). And, as John Elliott Sr. states, “we need to live and do this by example” (personal communication, February 8, 2005). Simpson (2002) reinforces this notion:

Elders are keepers of tradition, guardians of culture, the wise people, the teachers. In Aboriginal societies, Elders are known to safeguard knowledge that constitutes the unique inheritance of the nation. (RCAP, Volume 3, 1996, as cited in Simpson, p. 17)

As such, she goes on to say, “Elders must be included, supported and looked upon to provide guidance and direction for both instructors and students...[and] in order to do this, programs must consider Elders as Gifts, not as extras or guest speakers” (p. 17).

Mentoring, Falk and Dierking (1992) suggest, is a strong way to develop modeling and motivation in a co-operative and collaborative manner. Furthermore, they suggest many of the social, emotional and even intellectual abilities of humans are learned by modeling the behaviour of other humans. Within this framework I have suggested Elders, through the use of stories, songs and shared experiences, help string together the experience in a meaningful cultural context. They are the ones who contain the holistic sense of place I have been talking about. They are the ones with the knowledge of language, place-names, histories, and ultimately the traditional knowledge
associated with their territory. Most significant in my assertion, they are the ones with the most ecologically grounded practical and spiritual affordances and effectivities. As Marie Cooper passionately expressed, it is through the Elders that students will “understand fully, the impact our knowledge of our land and territory means to the holistic place of our people” (personal communication, February 9, 2005).

It is not my intent to romanticize the important role Elders play in a culturally relevant curriculum. However, they carry a lifetime of culturally embedded experiences; what this embodies is a form of respect, deemed very important within their culture. SIA’M is a respected person, John Elliot says (personal communication, February 8, 2005). Glen Jim adds:

> It is about respecting people, how you carry yourself based on your family and what you have learned from the Elders. To live SIA’M, respect, the good life. (Personal communication February 23, 2005)

I have listened to many Elders speak and know their significance in the continuity of their culture. Paul, (1995) asserts that Elders rarely speak of anything directly. Words in the SENČOFEN language often express a more general idea than English words. “This concept allows the intent of an idea to clearly outweigh the details used to depict” (p.1, emphasis added). To reiterate the message Mavis Henry left me:

> Our way of communicating was through our oral history. We are taught to listen and to carry on that oral knowledge. It is important to participate in the teachings. You as a listener have a responsibility to remember. (Personal communication January 12, 2005)

In an educational context, it is the responsibility of the listener to actively participate in stories, thereby constructing knowledge based on the stories’ intent. To continue as Paul (1995) states,

> A teaching story is meant to maintain and pass on an idea, along with the values that form the idea. Only the most significant details of a story are maintained by succeeding storytellers, the details that the storyteller recognizes as important. Often the most important detail is simply an object; this object becomes very important to the maintenance of the story
and to the history that the story depicts. The object might be as small as a necklace or mask, or as large as a piece of land. (p. 1-2)

Each time I have the privilege to be involved in teaching or historical stories, I attempt to interpret the meaning of the message as well as connecting the story tellers ecological knowledge and beliefs to my own ecological knowledge and beliefs. Each time, the depth of my knowledge increases as I learn through the Elders skilful use of narrative, the interplay between knowledge and emotion, the symbolic and the practical. Having students actively engaged in learning of this kind is culturally and ecologically grounded.

Reflection for Learning

One way we can evaluate our own learning is in what we remember. And as Falk and Dierking suggest, learning and memory are connected. “To be learned, information must be retrievable for later use” (p.109). In order to learn how to remember, we must practically engage in its recollection. In this way, an emphasis on reflection must always be a major consideration in any form of experiential education (Dewey, 1938, Delay, 1996). Too often, reflection is left up to the learner and the only way we as educators get to assess our students’ reflection is through evaluation at the end of the unit or the course. Any learning episode must include recollection of previous knowledge, integrated with current experience, to facilitate a new construction of knowledge, and to synthesize it through a process of reflection. Stein (2000) states, “reflection blends learning through experience with theoretical and concrete learning to form new knowledge constructions and perhaps new behaviours or insights” (p.1). Through a process of reflection, learners come to interpret and create new knowledge and actions from their experiences. Opportunities must be provided for learners to explore and examine their own values, attitudes and behaviours.

Learning is a process and we must realize as educators that we do not have ultimate control over what is learned. Only the learner is engaged in his or her own knowledge construction. Allowing learners a chance to express their understanding of an experience, through reflection, enables the educator a glimpse into how an experience
fostered learning (if at all), and in which direction it is proceeding, either as intended or not. Furthermore, when reflection is engaged in a social process, such as debriefing, talking circle or discussion, teachers have the ability to help learners understand and make connections to their everyday lives to make the experience more meaningful. Reflection is also an experience and the process of reflection, for example talking circles, is also grounded in First Nations tradition. Talking circles, as Running Wolf and Rickard (2003) note, reflect Native American ways of learning and offer a unique instructional approach to promote learning in experiential education. These modes of reflection also hold potential for more traditionally appropriate evaluation and assessment for First Nations learners.

A WSÁNEC Centred Context

We need to teach youth to live in a natural sense with their environment. Learn to get out there. Camping. To know how to travel within our territory, fish their own fish; do not rely on fish being given to us. Learn to create a shelter, keep warm and dry. Learn to make fire, keep fire, cook, pit cook, roast duck, bake camas bulbs. Survival things! Move back into a life of gathering off the land. Gathering bark, roots, and to make beautiful things. Modernise it if we have to. But actually practice it! These provide a sense of identity as Saanich people. They provide a connection to place. Honour what is out there. Our people learn something from these exercises. They are learning and passing on an important value. Respect. (John Elliott Sr., personal communication, February 8, 2005)

Throughout this thesis I have used the term WSÁNEC context to describe a cultural grounding in place, a WSÁNEC sense of place. I continue to use this phrase and emphasize its importance in suggesting recommendations in Chapter Six. As such I want to clarify what I mean when I use this term. This research has found that the knowledge associated with WSÁNEC peoples’ land and territories was considered knowledge of most worth. This knowledge furthermore provides connections to language, placenames, stories and histories and within those, teachings and values (ceremonies) that reflect an intimate relationship with place, all of which are inclusive of a WSÁNEC context. As well as land providing spiritual and physical well-being, the ties people have
with place are also intimately linked to Saanich identity and sense of belonging. These are all dependent on one another and what encompasses a WSÁNEC sense of place and what I mean when I refer to a WSÁNEC context. It is also where I feel meaningful and relevant curriculum can stem from. Students need to be exposed to land, in a cultural context, in school within curriculum, throughout their school years. This needs implementation, to a considerable extent, if it is to be conceived by people to have meaning and relevancy in their lives.

WSÁNEC language, history and place-names, as well as the practical knowledge associated with their land, can be taught in the classroom. Certainly much of it is through culture and language classes but within a classroom, resemblance to meaningful and relevant context is significantly diminished. Beyond question, WSÁNEC people see and express a need to take this learning and place it within its real context, that is, getting outside practicing and experiencing ties to their territory. Practicing ties to land in any context has value. Within a day trip, students could learn, for example, how to gather and prepare cedar bark for weaving. Meaningful learning would occur. However, I feel that to maximize the experiences ecologically grounded value, to the extent that most people intended in my conversations, that these experiences be much more meaningful in a longer time frame, within a context where this knowledge has immediate and relevant value.

Based on my conversations with WSÁNEC people, an extended outdoor territorial experience that incorporates WSÁNEC knowledge associated with land is a powerful way to provide a cultural learning context that is ecologically grounded. In order to regenerate this 'knowledge of most worth', students must experience their territory and practice their practical and spiritual traditions first hand. As Kelly says with excitement:

Experience whatever it is by doing it, being part of the activity. Go on trips. Live the outdoor life by actually living off the land, travel to our places and our travel routes experientially. (Personal communication, January 14, 2005)
Darcy reiterates this:

I want to know what used to be there, old paths, our travel routes, where we used to go hunting and fishing. I want to be out there, outside. I want to get out there and see and experience our territory. (Personal communication, January 6, 2005)

Josephine expressed:

I would like to learn how we used the land, and what it was used for. Hands-on experiences, to actually see what is going on, what the environment is producing. We need to see it, do it, and practice it. (Personal communication, November 29, 2004)

All of these comments made by former students reflect a desire to learn and practice their traditional knowledge as it relates to their land and territory. John Elliott Sr. convincingly sums this up in the section-opening quote. “We need to teach youth in a natural sense within their environment.” He suggests, “learn to get out there, camping, to know how to travel within our territory.” John uses the term “survival things” to describe the practical use value of the knowledge associated with land. For example, “move into a life of gathering off land, barks, roots and to make beautiful things, to learn to create a shelter to keep warm and dry, fish their own fish, learn to make fire, keep fire and cook, pit-cook” (John Elliott Sr. personal communication, February 8, 2005).

However, we must question the value of knowing survival things within our modern society? If students are to find relevancy in experiences of this type they need to be learned within a context where they actually become survival things. The experience becomes meaningful because realizing the potential uses of a place and subjects within places and having some knowledge of possible spiritual and practical skills has immediate consequences to learning. To “honour what is out there” as John Elliott (personal communication, February 8, 2005) states, suggests a respect; students will be thankful because of a realization that land does provide gifts. The realization of possible
relationships ancestors experienced with their land becomes lived in a most meaningful sense. As John furthermore expresses:

These (lessons) provide a sense of identity as Saanich people. They provide a connection to place. Our people learn something from these exercises. They are learning and passing on an important value, respect. (Personal communication February 8, 2005)

Mavis Henry agrees:

Outdoor experiences are very important. I remember vividly our families fishing camp. They bring back feelings of comfort, safety and belonging. They help develop a sense of place. In living these experiences we are creating our own histories, our mental and spiritual histories. (Personal communication, January 12, 2005)

The details of the practical knowledge are important and should be a significant part of a curriculum, but it is not the details that ground ecological learning. The intended larger outcome is the ecologically grounded sense of place: reinforcing our knowledge of and connections to place. The more students are exposed to this type of experience, when its knowing has real meaning (food and shelter), the more learning becomes ecologically grounded. Learning also becomes culturally grounded when an Elder is a mentor, sharing knowledge, histories, stories and songs. This fosters and promotes ecological and cultural grounding in place because students find belonging in their territory through intimate practical and/or spiritual connection. Students find comfort in place because they know it in more meaningful and relevant ways. And, if the experience occurs in groups, “provides a chance for developing strong ties to land socially” (Mavis Henry, personal communication, January 12, 2005). In this way the social context becomes a major part of the experience. These experiences tie people together in a shared meaning-making context.

Within our modern society, within every cultural context, the educational learning and life altering benefits of extended out trips in wilderness settings have incredible value. In many instances these experiences provide life-changing events in peoples lives. I have certainly experienced this myself and have witnessed several instances where
people have indeed changed the course of their lives because of these experiences; they do something to the people who are involved. Outward Bound and Rediscovery camps are long established programs of this type that take people out of their familiar day to day experiences and immerse them into an experience where one is strongly encouraged toward a direct relationship with a natural place. Take for example the guiding vision of rediscovery: “Drawing on the strengths of indigenous cultures and the wisdom of the elders, with a philosophy of respect and love for each other and the Earth, Rediscovery aims to empower youth of all ages to discover the world within themselves, the world between cultures, and the natural world” (retrieved May 25, 2005 at website http://www.rediscovery.org/who.html). The experience provides a rich context where learning becomes more enjoyable because students are aware of the environment’s potential uses, and when taught, possess the skills to more fully experience them. Experienced within a group provides social interaction, a sense of co-operation and teamwork. People remember these experiences. Learning has occurred. Learning is grounded ecologically because the context is lived; relationships to land are experienced to a fuller extent because of an obvious need to know your environment in new and meaningful ways.

Students can also be exposed to other subject areas in Science, Biology and Geography, to expand the purpose of ecologically and culturally grounded experiences. These experiences can be used for students to contextually ground learning in Western areas of education, if and when taking these courses now or in the future. In this way, Science, Biology and Geography learning outcomes are added into a cultural experience and provide opportunity for students to construct knowledge frameworks inclusive of each other and not as two entirely different entities. Science is integrated within an ecologically grounded cultural experience. Students may learn Western curricula content in a culturally embedded experience and not the other way around. As Josephine Henry expressed:

We need to learn by incorporating both sides of an issue, by learning science and with an Elder, how we used the land and what it was used for. We need to learn to maintain and restore our lands, our earth, to take care of things. Respect the earth and educate people to preserve it for future
generations. As part of a curriculum, we need to re-learn that way of treating the land. (Personal communication, November 29, 2004)

Vern Jack Jr. suggests, “students need to be actually out there doing things in our territories, hands-on things, like investigating archaeology sites” (personal communication, October 14, 2005). Earl Claxton Jr. states:

I think something like science can help. Using science to investigate and test pollution of our food gathering sites. Knowing science is powerful and something that if you understand the whole picture, say of a tree, a medicine plant, an animal, say a salmon, and why it travels to a certain spot at a certain time, what it is doing spawning. By learning that, we are learning to get back some of our knowledge. (Personal communication, September 22, 2004)

There is a shortage of practical application that reinforces an ecological and culturally grounded sense of place in current curriculum. Although some teachers might suggest ways that it is possible, and it is, however they are still catering to currently prescribed learning outcomes. We are still far away from the point where culture guides curriculum. Where is the knowledge WSÁNEC people deemed of most value realized anywhere within currently prescribed curriculum?

Where does ‘Knowledge of Most Worth’ Fit?

The way we are teaching and learning does not fit. Students are learning in a false environment. We lived on the land and learned from it. The land was our environmental school. (John Elliott Sr. personal communication, February 8, 2005)

Unless our students begin to learn in a culturally meaningful way, they may as well go to the public school. (Marie Cooper, personal communication, February 9, 2005).

One of the pertinent findings of this research was the fact that very little, if anything, of what WSÁNEC people indicated was of most worth to them, is currently prescribed in any formal school curriculum. This form of education does not fit, as John
Elliott says, because it does not allow students to learn in a meaningful or relevant way to WSÁNEC culture. I assert that current education practices and curriculum will further erode any ecological and cultural grounding students have with their lands unless we ground learning in an ecological context, that is the relationships WSÁNEC people have/had with their places in all its forms and expressions. How do we as educators help change this? If we were to re-begin to create curriculum based on what WSÁNEC people perceive as knowledge of most worth, what would it look like? What problems would First Nations’ schools encounter trying to incorporate this perspective?

As a science teacher, I always ask myself how I can make science education more meaningful and relevant to WSÁNEC students. I try to add local knowledge into the existing science curriculum. This is what I have been attempting for five years of teaching First Nations’ students. However, in practice, this is not as easy as it seems. In this section I would like to explore this quandary by looking into the structure of current curriculum, in particular in an adult learning situation, and to discuss some of the issues and problems which add to the dilemma of trying to incorporate more culturally relevant and ecologically meaningful learning within current curriculum.

Many First Nations’ communities have incorporated adult learning in their schools. Adults and young adults are making the choice to go back to school into a program such as Adult Basic Education or other correspondence type learning in order to receive their adult dogwood diploma or to pursue education in some post-secondary form. For a variety of reasons, students have not been successful in public schools. Mae Sam says, “many of our young ones, they are not doing well with modern education, but I know it is important for them to get good jobs, and to make their family proud” (personal communication, November 25, 2004). Also many students at our centre come to us with an understanding that they have ‘graduated’ only to find out, that through modified programs, have a ‘school leaving certificate’, meaning they have not received an official dogwood. Others, as in Darcy’s case, quit school because the curriculum had no personal or cultural meaning to them:

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6 Dogwood diploma is given to students who complete British Columbia Ministry of Education requirements.
I quit school because of what the government said I was supposed to learn. There was no language when I went to public school, only French. It had no meaning for me. It wasn’t because I was unable to learn it. I think that is why lots of our people quit school. (Personal communication, January 6, 2005)

This is the reality for many adult students. It is important to say as well, that many First Nations’ students do very well in public school. I write this only to provide the reality we face at our adult centre and to provide a context for my argument.

As a teacher of adult students, I find trying to incorporate anything outside of prescribed curriculum problematic in a number of ways. First, it is the job of a teacher to follow prescribed learning outcomes (PLO’s), legally required in British Columbia schools, as the framework from where we build lessons, units and programs. Teachers are taught to follow the PLO’s in order for students to accumulate the knowledge needed to begin the next grade level. This is a requirement; in order to receive nominal role funding, based on student enrolment, teachers need to be ministry certified and follow the PLO’s determined by the Ministry of Education. Many teachers would tell you, especially at the early levels, they are given a fair amount of freedom in how they interpret the PLO’s, how they deliver lessons and evaluate students. However, in high school and adult learning situations, the apparent freedoms decrease when moving into the senior grades where evaluating students is more standardized, for example provincial exams or correspondence course evaluations. The room left in the box to supplement anything outside of the prescribed curriculum becomes smaller and increasingly more difficult to implement due to the restraints of augmented content and the time frame given to complete courses. Teachers are more concerned, and perhaps arguably so within a current educational context, with teaching children what the curriculum suggests students should be able to do. I will be the first to admit to have fallen into that trap, ignoring perhaps more meaningful and relevant experiences for material that needs to be learned for a test, material that has very little relevance for my students beyond program requirements.
Secondly, students learn very quickly what to value and perhaps by omission, what not to value in terms of content they are prescribed to learn. Kelly Paul, a former student who was quite successful in the public school system, asks:

What are we taught to value in school? I wasn’t taught the importance of my culture. How are we to identify ourselves without our traditions, to hold ourselves high, a high self-esteem? Instead, we learn to value what they value. (Personal communication, January 14, 2005)

I have on countless occasions tried to teach students ‘other’ ways of knowing science and to suggest how science might fit into traditional First Nations ways of knowing their place, that is when I have taken, or had, the time to do so. At the Saanich Adult Learning Centre, (SAEC), as a whole program, we try to make learning more culturally relevant for our students, in a variety of ways. Time is always put into our schedule for cultural events, guest speakers and feasts. In this case we are very sensitive to culture. Within my science class, I have guest speakers and field trips to culturally important places. However, and in contrast with many other students, some students choose not to participate in these activities or get frustrated when class time is taken away because they know this knowledge is not on any test. They cannot help but ask, even if to themselves, ‘what is its worth if it is not on the test’? What message does this present to a student and more so, I argue, what message should this present for teachers and administrators of First Nations schools?

My argument here lies in various forms of correspondence curriculum, South Island Distance Education School (SIDES), Open Learning Agency (OLA), and Adult Basic Education (ABE). No matter how much teachers may try to make classes more culturally or ecologically grounded, they still have to evaluate students based on Western forms of curriculum and corresponding tests. Now, it is important to mention the responsibility of teachers to prepare students for post-secondary education. If not, it is argued, we provide a disservice to students. For the most part, secondary education prepares students for post-secondary schooling. We need to prepare students for the demands of university or college education if that is where they choose to go. That is the
reality. This is the world where students are needed, reflected by Vern Jack Jr's comments, “we need the lawyers, teachers, social workers and environmental scientists,” but he also says, “they need to know where they come from in order to know who they are” (personal communication, October 14, 2004).

It can be argued that standardized curriculum and its evaluation perpetuate the dominant culture and its worldview over others. It teaches students what knowledge it is to value and, by omission, perhaps what not to value. Cajete (1994) argues that this is the hidden curriculum of modern education that has resulted in a ‘colonization of perception’ (p.78). I have witnessed numerous times when First Nations’ students do not value their traditional knowledge. Josephine Henry thinks:

It might have something to do with peer pressure. I think that many of our youth don’t practice our culture because it is acceptable now days. It has become OK not to learn your culture. (Personal communication, November 29, 2004)

After all, this is a modern world that students are living in. What value is in their culture when they are not provided an opportunity to practice it and be evaluated in the world that they are expected to live in?

However, some students are learning to question this. As Josephine Henry argues:

Our history, Saanich history is not taught in schools, only the views of colonial history. What is our history? What are our old ways, our ancestors? Nothing of that was available to us in school. Very little language, very little culture was available to us. (Personal communication, November 29, 2004)

Where are we teaching, in school, any understanding that relates to ‘knowledge of most worth’ as deemed by WSÁNEC people? In a school that is made up exclusively of First Nations people, mostly WSÁNEC, this needs to be a major push, at least at some point, preferably sustained throughout, during the course of their education. Some would argue that this knowledge be taught within family. However, I argue that for students to find
meaning and relevancy in what curriculum prescribes for them, that the knowledge their community and their culture think is important must be a significant part of their whole educational experience. The big question here lies in whose opinion is to be acknowledged based on what students need to know. This is the dilemma First Nations communities need to face and what adult, and other educators need to consider. What do we prepare students for and at what expense? Do we educate them ecologically and culturally or do we prepare them for post-secondary education based on current ministry prescribed learning outcomes? No doubt the answer lies somewhere in between. Where does this leave the findings of this research?
Chapter 6: Personal and Professional Reflections

I want to begin this final chapter by revisiting my initial research questions. What are the foundations of a WSÁNEC sense of place and to what extent was a sense of place, the place to begin this research? I must go back to the fact that place is a theme used in First Nations education (Cajete, 1994, 1999, 2000; Kawagley, 1995; Deloria and Wildcat, 2001) and which spawned the idea of using a sense of place as a developmental construct in the first place. As well the conversations I had with WSÁNEC people clearly expressed ‘knowledge associated with land’, their place, is of very significant value. All participants mentioned notions of land and territory, unequivocally, in answering the question, ‘what is knowledge of most worth?’ There was also an implied link to land in other areas also deemed important such as language, place-names and Elders as carriers of that knowledge. Furthermore knowledge of WSÁNEC history and its connection to identity and sense of belonging were also mentioned in the context of territory.

So what are the foundations of a WSÁNEC sense of place? As the literature suggests (Butz and Eyles, 1997), three components, social, ideological and ecological dimensions encompass a sense of place. However, a WSÁNEC sense of place is more than the sum of these parts. It is a much more holistic concept. But by viewing a sense of place, as such, provides a lens through which to view WSÁNEC notions of land, its development, its importance in the continuation of their culture and as I use it, a critical analysis of education for First Nations people regarding relationships to land. I suggest this ‘knowledge associated with land’, traditionally co-evolved from the intimate connection WSÁNEC people had with their lands and territory, what I refer to as an ecologically grounded sense of place. However, I question the extent to which an ecologically grounded sense of place exists now. Nonetheless, this ‘knowledge’ is still alive somehow, in some form, and in some place. It is still talked about; it still lives in the collective minds of WSÁNEC people. Therefore I suggest this knowledge, or at least its importance within their culture, exists in social and ideological contexts. The differences in the depth of WSÁNEC senses of place exist in an ecological dimension. Although there are certainly differences within ideological and social aspects of knowledge associated with land, it is within the ecological dimension that I felt the
depths to which they are realized, were most sharply demarcated and that I use as the foundation of my thesis.

I explore the notion of an ecologically grounded sense of place in terms of affordances (potential uses of subjects in places) and effectivities (potential skills) (Gibson, 1979; Ingold, 1992; Butz and Eyles, 1997) with which people take into an ecological encounter and engage with a place. The extents to which people know, for example, the ecological and cultural knowledge associated with a clam, and the environments that sustain a clam, differed because of the actual hands-on experiences individuals had with that knowledge within a particular environmental context. As would be expected, the Elders had the more ecologically grounded sense of place because they had more practical experiences within which to perceive and appreciate ecological encounters. They knew to a much fuller extent what an environment affords them as well as having the practical skills and experience in which to utilize those environments. Former students however, demonstrated some awareness of potential uses, but to a lesser extent had the skills in which to use them. This is quite obvious; younger people are often less connected to land because there is less of a need to know it for its practical uses. I suggest the interplay between affordances and effectivities can also be used to explore a spiritual context as well. If students are not exposed to culturally significant places and the knowledge associated with those places, i.e. the teachings, values and beliefs, there is little need to know them as such. In summary, three former students still talk about knowledge associated with land as knowledge of most worth, as did the Elders, teachers and community members. However, to varying degrees, this knowledge, and its importance, exists mostly in an ideological realm, as a body of knowledge that is, for the most part, culturally assumed. They all express a desire to experience the knowledge associated with land, but have not been provided the opportunity to know it, in a context that is valued in their modern lived world.

The Elders, teachers and school board members talk about a grounding in their cultural traditions from which younger ones can move from. They also see the knowledge associated with land as being very important to the continuing of their culture. Furthermore they express a witnessing of a decreased respect towards the land in their communities as a result, perhaps, of the declining knowledge about connections to land
and which current educational practices do little to counter. I asked the question, ‘what is knowledge of most worth’, for two reasons. One because I found it illuminated a sense of place and the other reason because an extension of this research is the culmination of curriculum that centred on WSÁNEC places. It was not my intent in asking this question to create a hierarchy of WSÁNEC knowledge but to establish a perspective to begin looking into curriculum that more appropriately includes a cultural context and relates these to issues within their community. I suggest that by making curriculum more ecologically grounded in WSÁNEC territory, it might re-connect students to the knowledge they hear the Elders speak, what lives in an ideological and social dimension of their sense of place.

In Chapter Five I begin the synthesis of people’s responses to my third research question, “to what extent is place where science or other curriculum can stem from and how can this concept be used as the framework for developing place-based curriculum. I relate a sense of place to Deloria’s (2001) equation, power and place equals personality and that grounding learning experientially is a significant precursor in a culturally and ecologically informed sense of place. I then frame the synthesis of the research around a WSÁNEC context for learning. I conclude the chapter with the question, where does knowledge of most worth fit and discuss some of the challenges educators and curriculum writers face in current educational practice.

**What is the role of a non-First Nations science teacher?**

In order to approach the challenges associated with the development of curriculum, especially within another’s cultural context, I want to delve into the last of my interview questions: “What is the role of a non-First Nations science teacher within your community”? I asked this question of WSÁNEC people because it is a question I have been asking myself since I started teaching in First Nations communities.

To begin, I have struggled in justifying my place as a non-First Nations teacher because I am of the firm belief that it should be a First Nations person teaching and creating curriculum that I, and WSÁNEC people have been advocating. First Nations students need to see themselves in these leadership roles. I do believe, however, there
must also be some cultural mix in schools because that is the world in which we live.
Still, I go about my work with the assumption that I am working myself out of a job.

So what is the role of a non-First Nations science teacher? There was a variety of
responses to this question each of which help define my role. Darcy, a former student
responded in a very matter of fact way. He stated, “What do you mean? To teach!”
When pressed to describe how to do this in a culturally respectful way, he quite simply
replied, “get someone to help you” (personal communication, January 6, 2005).
Josephine reflected a bit more and began:

I don’t want to say I am sad at it being a non-First Nations person taking
these steps but you have a role here. Teach what it is you are supposed to
teach. It is good you are acknowledging your role as a non-Native not to
preach to students to go back to the old ways. It is important for you to
express your views but also to sit back and let an Elder teach the cultural
aspects. (Personal communication, November 29, 2004)

However, she finishes with, “I also find it exciting when a non-First Nations person takes
an issue and acts on it within our communities” (personal communication, November 29,
2004). Vern Jack Jr. suggested there was a place for this research because no one else is
doing this. “These kinds of things need to be done now, so when the authority (over
control of curriculum) is given, at least a foundation is there” (personal communication,
October 14, 2004).

Marie Cooper saw my role as more of a facilitator, as many others also suggested.
She thoughtfully suggested to me in response to my discomfort at trying to teach cultural
ways of viewing our environment:

Might it be your place to facilitate rather than think you have to teach this,
especially if it is not your heart and spiritual way of knowing? How could
you facilitate this? You could involve people from the community to
teach it. Put on a place of collective learning because our people are
coming from a more collective basis. Trying to learn from each other.
(Personal communication, August 24, 2004)

Mavis Henry turned the question around and stated:
Think about what your role might be in the place of decolonization. You are in the place where you can bridge two worldviews and you might look at your own role of sharing that knowledge to other non-Native people. Think about being culturally sensitive, using an Indigenous lens through which to view education and science. What does it mean to share that knowledge respectfully? You are going out of your way in wanting to learn this and as a teacher you must always be learning. (Personal communication, January 12, 2005)

I must express that early in the development of the idea of this curriculum research that I was encouraged and supported. My appreciation and understanding of my role as a teacher in WSÁNEC has evolved. I still strive to improve my methods of instruction and delivery of lessons in an effort to ground learning ecologically. However, my appreciation and awareness of the importance of a cultural context within educational practice has been significantly heightened. I find myself in a place now where I can begin to recommend changes within the current structure of education that includes a more culturally meaningful and relevant context for learning.

**Recommendations**

The following is a list of the key points found in this research as well as a synthesis of other author’s suggestions of how to ground learning ecologically and within a cultural context. Many of these findings may appear idealistic and perhaps seen as unrealistic due to funding restraints, time tabling classes etcetera, but I do not want to be hindered by the practical limitations of existing educational structure. Moreover, all these recommendation are put forward as an effort to decolonize the classroom as much as that is possible. It must also be noted that like WSÁNEC notions of knowledge associated with land, each of these is inclusive of each other. To repeat, Marie Cooper, Tsartlip Elder, puts it this way:

We need to begin again to understand the holistic place of our people. Our connections to our land are not just physical. It is all encompassing. Our language, place-names, our heart, our soul, our spirit, our livelihood,
our way of living and being is tied up in our land. (Personal communication, February 9, 2005)

This is meant to be a holistic curriculum and as such, these findings blend into one another. These recommendations appear in no particular order.

Ground learning in an ecological sense of place through the study and application of WSÁNEC knowledge as it relates to the places of WSÁNEC.

I have asserted throughout this thesis that in order for the knowledge associated with land to be viewed as knowledge of most worth, we need to connect education directly to WSÁNEC notions of land and the relationships inherent within them. As John Elliott states, "Our culture is all related to our land and our territory and within it all our teachings. We need to know who we are, what makes us WSÁNEC. We need to know ourselves as WSÁNEC people and to value that knowledge" (personal communication, February 8, 2005). Grounding education ecologically assumes people's connection and relationship to places and the entities within places. Students need to be directly engaged in this relationship in order to be ecologically grounded and to foster a sense of place in this cultural way; understanding the place of Saanich as WSÁNEC is very significant in this claim.

Use SENĆOTEN place-names of WSÁNEC as the central point from which to build a curriculum of place.

Marie Cooper emphatically suggests:

Use the maps of our Saanich territory with SENĆOTEN place-names. Those places, we need to use them, KENES, SNI TCEL, TI KEL, Mayne Island and Goldstream, and involve ourselves in nature. We need to remember what is out there: our plants, medicines, sacred fishing, hunting and gathering sites. Wouldn't that be a great place to start curriculum, on the places of WSÁNEC? (Personal communication, February 9, 2005)
Place-names are central in my assertion to ground learning ecologically and culturally. As Earl Claxton Jr. states, “Our place-names are very important in identifying our homeland because each of those places contains an important meaning or a teaching. It is not just the name of a place. It is more than that” (personal communication, September 22, 2004). The use of WSÁNEC places as central themes in programs or units allows for knowledge to be built around a cultural context. I believe there is huge potential for holistic curriculum using places. Because places are the subject, teachers can build specific lessons around what the place is, what is in it, and what it means in a cultural context and then connected into larger units of study based on currently mandated outcomes.

Elders should take a central role in current educational practice.

The importance of an Elder, to make experiences culturally rich, is critical in teaching WSÁNEC children. This ‘knowledge of most worth’ as deemed by WSÁNEC people is carried by and continued through Elders. Skip Sam reflected in our conversation that “It wasn’t until I had children of my own that I began to realise the importance of our teachings. It is our Elders who are our teachers” and Mae Sam adds, “That is where the teachings are” (personal communication, November 25, 2004). The idea of Elder as mentor, Kevin Paul suggests, is the most important aspect in educational reform for First Nations people. “Bring back the idea of apprenticeship with an Elder. This was a major role in our society and needs to become so again” (personal communication, October 6, 2004). This is also where the teaching of WSÁNEC knowledge systems must be expressed to students. The Elders are the carriers of WSÁNEC knowledge and history and to maintain a very important cultural tradition must be the ones teaching a significant portion of this knowledge.

Prioritize experience in curriculum including an effort on applying the knowledge learned and placing it within a context that reflects local community significance and importance.
Wildcat (2001) emphasizes, "It is at the level of experience that our traditional and ancestral Indigenous scholars have left us the richest legacy (p. 14)..."we must explore experientially living in the world" (p. 39). Experiential education is an essential ingredient in ecologically grounding learning and what this thesis argues. As Kelly Paul reflects, "I think we need to learn more holistically. Experience whatever it is by doing it, being part of the activity (personal communication, January 14, 2005), or as Mavis Henry asks, "What is the science in our knowledge? How can we use science to approach our reasoning? Find the science in everyday life" (personal communication, January 12, 2005). Important in this point is the connection of what students are learning to the concerns and points of view of the community. Glen Jim suggests, "students need to learn the impacts and consequences of environmental actions that relate to their communities like run-off from farms, development and golf courses. Our traditional gathering grounds are polluted. How do we fix them (personal communication, February 23, 2005)? A student's ability to learn is increased when they see relevance in what they are learning. By connecting what they learn in school and then applying it in a community context adds meaning and relevancy in what we teach.

Include and ground SENĆOTEN language within all subject areas.

Darcy Sampson Jr. states without hesitation that language is most important. "It's important to learn and keep it alive so people can speak it fluently down the road. Within our language are our teachings and all that those little things entail" (personal communication, January 6, 2005). If language is going to kept alive it needs to be practiced on a daily basis. When language is used within school and is expected to be tested and applied within all curriculum areas, much like other language immersion, it has a much greater chance for people to maintain its usage. Even if SENĆOTEN words, such as plants and animals, are used within curriculum, and tested, students will have meaningful and relevant reasons to learn some usage of the language and therefore its value in their modern world.
Include WSÁNEC history, teachings, values, metaphysics and philosophy at every opportunity throughout curriculum.

Much like the previous point, SENĆOŦEN words carry much meaning. John Elliott Sr. emphatically expresses, “Our value system and beliefs are carried by our language. It is all related to our land and territory and within it all the teachings. The wind, the trees, all plants and animals, we have teachings from all of them” (personal communication, February 8, 2005). This is perhaps the most important point and central theme in this thesis and what I am referring to when I use the phrase WSÁNEC context for learning. This is the metaphysical place where WSÁNEC knowledge and the intimate way of knowing and viewing place (sense of place) is expressed and transferred. When SENĆOŦEN words are used, even if explained in English, the meanings, values, teachings and ethics are still being articulated. For example, Earl Claxton Jr, explains, “There were laws we had that were environmental laws. They go back, way back that had special meanings” (personal communication, September 22, 2004). This knowledge and philosophy is best, and perhaps only, expressed in the SENĆOŦEN language.

Develop personal affinity with the places and subjects of WSÁNEC through practical and daily experience out-of-doors and that reflect an ethic of care and respect.

John Elliott Sr. expresses this as, “Saanich thinking” (personal communication, February 8, 2005). He goes on to state, “It’s about respect. It’s about saying thanks and giving an offering.” Earl Claxton Jr. articulated it this way in our conversation about caring for the salmon. “You had to respect the fish, call it by a respectful name. The first fish you caught, after you cleaned it, you were supposed to take the carcass down and push it out to sea and say a prayer for it, respect it and the fish would return” (personal communication, September 22, 2004). Regenerating the identification and uses of traditional WSÁNEC medicines, foods, technology and art is central in this point. If students are to develop an affinity for their places within a WSÁNEC context, they need to be exposed to their places and shown what they are useful for, including practical and spiritual references. Marie Cooper points this out most effectively as, “instilling the
knowledge of our people as caretakers of our lands” (personal communication, February 9, 2005).

*Regenerate more traditional forms of ceremony and practice throughout the program year.*

One expression that was touched on by most people in my conversations was “the ways of our people.” Marie Cooper explained it to me this way,

Ceremony should be an integral and intricate part of our lives. They are at the root of who we are. Our heart, our soul, our spirit are expressed through our ceremonies, to think more about our ancestors and the Creator. The heart, the soul, the spirit moves around our cultural ways, our values and our ways of living. We need to have more of this in our educational system. And not just when something awful happens but because it is a good day, like our salmon ceremony. (Personal communication, February 9, 2005)

What I have learned in being with First Nations people is that the knowledge associated with land is intimately connected to practical and spiritual ways of acknowledging relationships to land and ceremonial life is an integral way of expressing that. Claxton Sr. and Elliott Sr. (1994) express:

The origin of living things of this world are our ancient relatives and they must be treated with respect. There must be honour given to the life around us. Ceremonies and rituals are taught to the young to ensure the perpetuation of the WSÁNEC way of life. (p. 27)

To repeat what Earl Claxton Jr. left me with in our conversation:

It all comes back to respect. Respect for the environment, the creatures that live there, respect for each other; the land does not belong to us, we belong to the land. I have always heard that, as long as I remember. That is the way it is. (Personal communication, 2004)
Include major emphasis on experiencing territory through extended out-trips throughout traditional WSÁNEC territory.

This finding, to me as an outdoor educator, is most significant in grounding learning ecologically and in creating an affinity for places; extended outdoor camping experiences are fundamental in fostering a respectful ecological sense of place. As Kelly Paul emphatically expresses, “Go on trips. Live the outdoor life by actually living off the land, travel to our places, our travel routes experientially.” There is no substitute in creating a social ecological experience that impacts students; fifteen years of being involved in outdoor education, in some form or another, has confirmed this belief. It also becomes a culturally relevant experience as John Elliott Sr. comments, “We knew our land very intimately. Throughout the summer months, the growing season, we traveled around to places in the Gulf Islands and San Juan Islands and we gathered food and prepared it for the winter months” (personal communication, February 8, 2005). All the previous points mentioned may be applied in these extended territorial experiences. Therefore these experiences should be a major part of curriculum, to be used as an opening and/or culminating event where students demonstrate the knowledge learned.

Identify and set aside tracts of land as places to be utilized and preserved as learning resources.

In conducting this research I wanted to illuminate a learnable sense of place and what I found related to the knowledge WSÁNEC people associated with their land. As John Elliot Sr. poignantly expressed, “We lived on the land and learned from it. The land was our environmental school” (personal communication, February 8, 2005). Whenever I sense a piece of land, I look for ways in how one can learn from experiencing it. There are several different types of micro-ecosystems in the WSÁNEC territory such as Garry Oak ecosystems. It has become increasingly evident that WSÁNEC people maintained and sustained these ecosystems by controlling unwanted growth by burning and by farming species such as purple and giant Camas. Garry Oak ecosystems are also one of
the most endangered ecosystems in Canada (retrieved July 13, 2005 at website http://garryoak.bc.ca/history.html).

Having the privilege of being invited to a Garry Oak Ecosystem workshop sponsored by the Cowichan Tribes, I witnessed the huge potential of these ecosystems being used and studied as a learning resource. Questions of how to protect, preserve and sustain these ecosystems allows for students to acquire the practical skills in which to regenerate these and other natural environments. These ‘learning laboratories’ are ideal because they are very culturally important; traditional food and medicine was harvested in these areas. Also by preserving and cultivating these pieces of land for future generations echoes what many WSÁNEC people deemed as very important; As John Elliot states, “We need to protect our land. We need to be giving back to our land. That is what the ancestors said” (personal communication, February 8, 2005).

Identify and develop more appropriate forms of assessment and evaluation of students within curriculum.

If we are going to try and regenerate more traditional forms of education then we must also consider more traditional forms of evaluating students. Leanne Simpson (2002) suggests using more appropriate forms of evaluations such as reporting to the community, the use of field reports and the use of student reflection journals. Evaluation and assessment might consider more traditional forms such as talking circles and other forms of oral communication.

Practical Application – A blending of context

I have attempted throughout this thesis to blend literature and ideas of a sense of place from both an Indigenous and Western perspective. And although I have attempted to limit the amount of Western influence as a worldview in the development of curriculum, I have done so at the expense of my own experience; I have been heavily influenced by the philosophy of science and Western notions of education. Yet I have also been exposed to a culture where clearly, this form of education is severely lacking
and where I see huge gaps between what is prescribed and what is needed as expressed by First Nations people. I have listened to WSÁNEC people, and read numerous Aboriginal academics and what I have found is that the line that defined the apparent dichotomy I was feeling between these two worldviews has begun to blur somewhat. As such, I find myself in a place now where I feel I can begin to “take the best of both worlds” as Mavis Henry said to me (personal communication, 2005) and put a framework together that incorporates meaningful and relevant knowledge of place from both perspectives. What I fall back on now is my own experience, however, significantly influenced by the people of WSÁNEC and the First Nations and non-First Nations academics that have focused my view.

What follows is an idea based from my own experience and that tries to incorporate a framework of legitimacy from two worldviews. By no means do I feel this idea is without its problems. From the outset, I recognize the epistemological conflicts involved here. However, as a framework, I feel it has application in the development of curriculum that is based on the place, and places, of WSÁNEC. It is my view that it is the context of learning where current education is failing First Nations students (and others). It is within a context of place, WSÁNEC places, where I see meaningful changes can occur.

Based on the prior recommendations, I propose a cultural program be developed that revolves around the places of WSÁNEC as a central and consistent theme. Although curriculum of this type should be prescribed for all ages throughout their school years, I will focus on secondary and adult learners. There are two subject areas within currently prescribed curriculum which lend themselves nicely to the Deloria’s (2001) notion of power and place: the Biology 11 and Geography 12 curricula respectively.7 It must be noted that it is a legal requirement for teachers to follow the mandated curriculum and as such all the PLO’s described in the curriculum must be taught. These two Western science areas can be presented as a useful tool for First Nations communities to address particular issues within their own community context. Currently, the Biology 11 curriculum revolves around three major themes: evolution, the diversity of life, and

7 The prescribed learning outcomes in full can be accessed through www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/
ecology. This course offers much in terms of learning about Power, or as Deloria explains more precisely, “spiritual power or life-force” (p. 2). Although Western science may not view its content as such, at least the general idea of the concepts students are exposed to offers an opportunity for a more appropriate cultural way of viewing life. It also allows for an opportunity to explore the differences and similarities between these two ways of viewing life within a more holistic perspective. The content areas of the Geography 12 curriculum revolve around Place, and include the nature of geography (themes, systems and skills), Systems of the Earth (weather, climate, tectonic forces, gradation processes) and Resources of the Earth (the nature, management and sustainability of resources). As with Biology 11, the Geography 12 curriculum provides opportunity to learn its content within a context entirely open to First Nations ways of knowing and viewing relationships to land. It also opens the door for discussion of the differing ways (worldviews) people perceive their places, and in understanding their own and other entities roles (personality) within places.

I recommend that this idea will require a significant time-frame and therefore should involve an entire semester or a whole year. Time and resources need to be made available for students to explore, experientially, WSÁNEC places, within a cultural context and that is inclusive of both local WSÁNEC knowledge and that of these two curriculum areas. A significant amount of time should be made for cultural knowledge within the context of what students are learning. WSÁNEC history, language, place-names, teachings and values, a WSÁNEC context, can fit within curriculum topics. Just as easy, Western biological or geographical content can be taught around a cultural purpose, for example a particular place (KENNES), the practical and spiritual value of the entities within the place. The diagram that follows, illustrates how the marriage of these two courses, as well as the incorporation of significant local WSÁNEC knowledge can be used. By no means is this complete. Much work still needs to be done, but as a framework, I feel it has much to offer, and provides an appropriate foundation from which to build curriculum programs to obtain the objective of ecologically grounding learning that is culturally meaningful and relevant.
**WSÁNEC Context**

- WSÁNEC Metaphysics
- Larger Place of WSÁNEC
  - Incorporate 4 (PLO's)
- What is the history of place from WSÁNEC perspective?
  - Incorporate 1 (PLO's)
- How place was created and shaped?
  - Incorporate 5 (PLO's)

Place-names ex. KENES
- What is significant about place-name?
- What are the stories, teachings and values of knowing this place?

- Language - incorporated throughout
  - What are the SENCO/TEN words that describe this place?
  - What are the words for the plants and animals that inhabit this place?

- Incorporate 2 (PLO's)
  - What are the words that describe the philosophy/teachings of subjects*

- Practical Use Values of subject*
  - Students learn, prepare, use subject of study

- Spiritual Use Values of subject*
  - What are the teachings, values of knowing, relating and understanding of subject?

- How people and place shape each other over time.
  - Current resource issues
  - Incorporate 3&6 (PLO's)

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**Community Perspective**

- Community Service Learning.
- Work with Elementary school - projects, presentations, mentoring.
- Liaise with community organizations relating to land, treaty rights, environment, resources
- Connect to meaningful work experience in community
- Environmentally monitor places, gathering sites - establish database for community and other organizations to connect.
- Preserved land as learning resources.
  - Ex. Garry Oak Ecosystems, Wetlands, Beaches
  - Restore impacted areas - stream/beach rehabilitation - garbage clean up
- Horticulture
  - Community gardens
  - Propagate and Plant Native species
  - Eliminate exotic invasive species
- Investigate Archaeology Sites - various sites in territory.
- Mapping Traditional Use Sites
- Outdoor Recreation Opportunities
- Hagan Creek Watershed - Ocean and Stream Keepers
  - Baseline data
  - Monitor

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**Prescribed Learning Outcomes**

(PLO’s) of Biology 11 and Geography 12

For example

KENES
(Hagan Creek) or other culturally relevant place.

- Saanich Moons # document can be used as a calendar in which curriculum follows.
- Reelfoot technology # can be explored from various objectives (ecological, technical, ocean currents, salmon, etc).
- *Refers to plant, animal or subject of study.

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**Biology 11 Curriculum**

1. Evolution
   - Explore the concept of how place and life shape each other over time - ex. cedar and salmon.
2. Diversity of life
   - Within each Phyla studied - explore cultural use values and roles of local species
3. Ecology
   - Explore the relationships (personality of subject within cultural context)

**Geography 12 Curriculum**

4. Nature of Geography (themes, systems and skills)
   - as they relate to WSÁNEC community
5. Systems of the Earth (weather, climate, tectonic processes, gradation processes)
   - as they relate to local and cultural understanding of phenomena.
6. Resources of the Earth (nature, management and sustainability of resources)
   - as they relate to cultural interpretation of the term resources
The following is a brief description of figure 1. Within a WSÁNEC context, the main units of Biology 11 and Geography 12 are incorporated. The larger place of WSÁNEC should be used as the overall theme of the program. I incorporate the "Nature of Geography" here because the themes, systems and skills allow for the application of an overall concept of place, for example defining of place and region, bigeographical systems of place as well as mapping and other forms of documenting aspects of place. A WSÁNEC history is then introduced and where the concept of "Evolution" is discussed; how place and life shape each other is a product of their interaction and adaptation to the ecology of places. Within a places history, "Systems of the Earth" (Earth Science), can be incorporated, especially as they relate to the place of WSÁNEC.

I recommended earlier that specific places be identified and preserved as learning resources. These and other places, identified by their SENĆOTEN place-name, can be studied based on the life forms that inhabit these areas. The "Diversity of Life" (based on Western classification) is introduced and where the practical and spiritual use values and skills can be taught and practiced. "Resources of the Earth" is a very relevant topic in a First Nations context. The idea of resources may be understood differently within this context and must be a significant aspect of this unit. As well resources are tied very intimately to the WSÁNEC land base and has much community relevance. "Ecology" as I have used it in this thesis is a very significant topic and what I feel can be used as a theme that runs throughout the entire program. Our relationships to place are very much within an ecological realm and can be thought of as such.

It must be noted that many of these ideas of practically grounding learning in experience is simply effective pedagogy for all learners. It is the inclusion of a WSÁNEC context that makes the program culturally grounded. As such it must be re-emphasized that Elders must have a central role in this program if it to attain its objective of cultural meaning and relevancy. To be most effective, the use of SENĆOTEN language and WSÁNEC metaphysics needs to be articulated by the carriers of this knowledge.

What was very clear in listening to WSÁNEC people was the assertion of getting out on the land and living in it. As such, I propose students participate in an extended
camp experience, during the summer or at the beginning of a school year and at the end of the program year. During this experience they can be exposed to cultural and ecological knowledge of their environment and where they directly experience and practice hands on activities that have immediate benefit. The purpose for a program opening trip is to set up a context for what students learn during the year. The purpose of a culminating trip is to apply the knowledge learned, which may also provide an effective means of evaluating the students overall learning.

Within WSÁNEC territory are numerous reserve lands surrounded by the Salish Sea. These are the places where traditionally WSÁNEC people went to gather resources in the gathering season (John Elliot, personal communication, February 8, 2005) and the larger physical context where an educational program of this type can achieve many objectives that relate to knowledge of most worth. Four of these reserves are located on islands with ferry access. These can be the locations of camps. Access to these places for Elders and younger children makes for easy and relatively inexpensive transport. Two very important aspects if this will be attainable. I suggest students participate in these camp experiences throughout their school years. Begin during the elementary stages with short duration trips, two or three days, and then increase in duration and intensity, as students get older. Within this holistic ‘classroom,’ all areas of current curriculum can be incorporated. As students get older, they can travel, by kayak or canoe, to these areas and experience traditional travel routes within their territory. Traditional maps exist which show travel routes, place-names, fishing and gathering sites. Throughout the route, place-names and other culturally relevant places and phenomena can be the focus. Map and other geographical skills may be taught using WSÁNEC maps and traditional sites be visited for purposes of gathering, fishing, or for its spiritual or teaching value.

As has also been suggested, if students are to develop personal affinity with the places and subjects of WSÁNEC, it must be through practical experience out-of-doors. It is important that these trips be numerous and ongoing. As noted, within the school year students need to be traveling to other culturally significant places within the Saanich Peninsula. It is of utmost importance, in my view, that these trips not be perceived as fun interludes away from the rigors of the classroom or as add-ons, which many students
view them as now. Students should associate this with their ‘formal’ education and be expected to learn and be evaluated, in some form, on what is learned.

First Nations teachers and Elders must have central roles in these experiences. As well, it would be an advantage to have other First Nations people, parents or relatives who have an interest in this type of experience or who have knowledge of places, and other knowledge associated with land. The more people involved, the more value students connect to these experiences. Although many non-First Nations teachers are teaching in First Nations schools and may not have this ‘knowledge associated with land’, it is just as important for students to see their teachers learning this knowledge. In this way, teachers and students experience a collective learning environment, a more culturally appropriate way of learning (Marie Cooper, personal communication, February 9, 2005). Teachers need to be involved because they have the responsibility to connect what is learned in these experiences into the general curriculum. This is a huge role, and one that is critical to this type of programs success if students, and the teachers who are teaching it, are to find value. Students will then be able to associate places, traditional use values, WSANEC history, language and identity into the curriculum they learn in school. In this way curriculum value is added to culture.

Implications for Future Curriculum Development and Research

This research has highlighted the importance of place within WSÁNEC culture, and the need for significant change within current educational practices and curriculum. As curriculum is an extension of this research, much remains to be done. The recommendations and practical application of the findings are hollow without the cultural context. In order for this to commence will require much time, collective gathering and documenting of ideas, formulation of goals and outcomes and development of program relevant learning materials. The most culturally sensitive work is still to be done, that of documenting the language, practical use values of a huge variety of things, stories, place-names and the teachings and values inherent within them. This will involve intense collaboration with WSÁNEC people and significant effort on the part of the people creating the curriculum and learning materials. If ‘knowledge associated with land’ is to
continue to be ‘knowledge of most worth’, curriculum needs to be developed in such a way as to ground learning in culture and in the ecology of their places. It has been suggested that this type of curriculum can be used as a grounding; if students are to find cultural, and personal meaning and relevancy in their education, then curriculum that connects this knowledge to their every day lives is essential. The challenges are considerable.

First and foremost, curriculum development of this type is contingent on community input if it is to promote cultural values and identity. First Nations students need to see themselves in the development, implementation and experience of a curriculum. The goals and outcomes of a curriculum of this type need to be addressed by community and the school board that directs education for its people. Furthermore, methods of assessment and evaluation that are culturally appropriate and perhaps more authentic also need to be developed. As well, First Nations people, to be most meaningful to students, should be the ones who are teaching this knowledge. An elder as mentor becomes most critical, as they are the ones who hold and share this knowledge. How this is done will take community guidance and support, as well as consent.

In the future, when curriculum is established, research could be initiated that assesses if a curriculum of this type is meeting its goals and objectives. Is it promoting WSÁNEC history, language, identity and value, a knowledge of place, to the extent where students realize its importance in the sustainability of their culture? As was commented on earlier, there is a big difference between the planned curriculum, the enacted curriculum and the experienced curriculum (Marsh and Willis, 1995). This is an area that once curriculum is developed, could stem future research.

Are the findings of this research relevant to other First Nations schools and communities outside of WSÁNEC, or to our society as a whole? I would like to think so. There has been other research, or at least literature, on the importance of place in First Nations education. Although I have referred, quite heavily, to work by Gregory Cajete (1994, 1999, 2000), Oscar Kawagley (1995), and Deloria and Wildcat (2001) in the development of my overall framework, these come from vastly different places. Certainly the general results of this research confirm much of their claims, most significantly the importance of grounding curriculum in local knowledge. It is my firm
belief that this kind of work needs to be undertaken in all First Nations communities. In order to maintain what they feel is 'knowledge of most worth,' it needs to be documented and then applied to some form of curriculum if education is to promote this knowledge. One thing must be made clear however. Each community is as unique as the ecologies, the places, they call home. Therefore only in a broad sense do I believe the findings of this research relate to other places. This work is based on place, a specific place WSÁNEC, and to a lesser extent, the larger region of the Saanich Peninsula and Southern Gulf Islands. I do believe that this larger region may perhaps find some relevance in these research findings, especially in the development of environmental education. The ultimate goal of developing, using Delay's (1996) words, a "compassionate sense of place" should be a goal of meaningful and relevant ecological education. However, this was not the intent of this research. The significance of this thesis lies in the specifics of place, its culture and its ecology; to suggest its direct application in another place, and another culture would go against much of my assertion. This research, although rooted to a certain extent in my own passions, is the culmination of working with WSÁNEC people.

However, I do hope other First Nations communities, and their teachers, can find some inspiration and go about the development of curriculum of place in their own places. I feel the research methodology that was created through collaboration with WSÁNEC people is something that other teachers in my position can learn from. However, these things take time. Trust needs to be built and a relationship established. This is perhaps the most rewarding result in working with First Nations people within their communities.

Conclusions — An informed sense of place

In closing, I would like to answer the last of my research questions: "How has this research experience influenced my own knowledge of place and its relevance to ecological education?" What was obvious when I began this journey was a need to make curriculum more meaningful and relevant to WSÁNEC people. The influence is most strongly felt in realizing where curriculum change can stem from. I feel I have a clearer
direction in where to go from here in supporting this effort. Our understanding of our worldview is constantly in flux. As we communicate, understand and learn with each other, our worldview changes slightly. In listening to and reflecting on my conversations with WSÁNEC people, I began to realize how an understanding of a WSÁNEC sense of place changed my own. In finding my place within a WSÁNEC sense of place, I have become a better teacher. That is what I hoped for. Through this experience, I have realized a sense of place is more than a grounding in nature, more than our awareness of our feelings toward a landscape and the life it supports. A sense of place is also about belonging. There is comfort in feeling you belong in a place, that you are welcome. Important in this notion, is a feeling of giving back, a sense of contributing to the well being of a place and the community within it, to feel supported in wanting to contribute. What I have also realized is that the tensions I have felt as a non-First Nations teacher were self-imposed. Never, have I felt uncomfortable because of the people I work with or the students I learn with. Ultimately we are all people searching for a path to follow in hopes of finding a place where we feel we belong.

This research has also confirmed many of my earlier beliefs about the importance of respectful and ecologically grounded education, but with the important qualification that culture is now a significant extension of this. It has also opened up the possibility for more meaning within those beliefs. There was a place for this research and it has found a niche. It is a unique place because it is a part of me that has been guided by WSÁNEC people. And, as long as I am welcome here and I continue to provide meaning and relevancy in what I teach my students, I do have a place.

A sense of place is a personal construct built from ones experience in places. How those experiences inform our sense of place is what, I feel, this thesis has helped illuminate. In conducting this research, my aim was to find out what aspects of a sense of place are most culturally meaningful and relevant to WSÁNEC people and then how do we guide learning experiences that reflect and promote these. It became quite clear that knowledge WSÁNEC people considered of most worth was the knowledge they associate with their land and that these cultural representations of land are very inclusive of both ecological and spiritual relationships. Experience in place is the only way to inform our sense of place that is both ecologically and culturally grounded and where there needs a
major effort in curriculum development with WSÁNEC people. When this happens, knowledge of most worth will begin again to find its place in education.

The fact that ‘Wisdom Sits in Places’ is only as true as we let ourselves believe. Perhaps it is this notion that has affected the growth of my sense of place most profoundly and where I will always leave myself open to the possibilities. Vern Jack Jr.'s words leave a hopeful message: “We need to remember, the old ones left something for the young ones at these places.” It is only through experience in these places that we give ourselves the chance to sense this message and I can’t think of a better way to inform a WSÁNEC sense of place.
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