

Turning the Tide: Learning to change in grassroots activism

by

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BA, University of Ottawa, 2003

MA, Concordia University, 2012

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## **Supervisory Committee**

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Dr. Budd Hall, Department of Public Administration  
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## **Abstract**

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There is a growing movement of indignation around the world that is calling out injustice and developing creative strategies to stand up to power and change the world. These are sparks that have flared up in the Arab spring, the occupy movement, idle no more, massive strikes in South Africa, environmental protests and many more. A growing body of literature suggests that movements such as these are not isolated instances but a growing global movement, despite what the mainstream media suggests (e.g. Brecher, Costello and Smith 2002; Hall, Clover, Crowther and Scandrett, 2012).

This participatory action research tells the story of one grassroots environmental protest campaign. The protest campaign is ongoing and organized by non-native environmental kayaktivists in Coast Salish territory. It culminates each year in a five-day human powered flotilla of 100 people through the Salish Sea to connect communities and protest increased tanker traffic and a fossil fuel based economy. The research was both suggested and guided by the organizer activists. Their voices are openly represented in the research in order to reflect and appreciate their expertise and role in the research.

The story this research tells demonstrates the role and value of protest campaigns in challenging root inequalities and presents practical strategies for building capacity for a global movement of social and environmental change that connects and addresses intersectional

oppression globally. It also problematizes activist settler and First Nations relations. The research situates these campaigns as important sites of public learning and presents practical strategies for teaching and learning as if the world mattered. The organic and experiential approaches to learning revealed are applicable to informal, non-formal and formal learning practices.

The research challenges the incestuous, white male, Eurocentric, hierarchical control of knowledge and knowledge making that has been used for centuries to justify and hide oppression and exploitation of imperialism, colonisation and war. This research emphasizes the need for creative solutions to the planetary crisis at hand, which require a reflection on the world and our position in it from diverse cultural perspectives. This means listening and learning from the wisdom of those who have been silenced. It requires a new type of learning that values wisdom over cleverness and places peaceful co existence at the centre of the curriculum. Learning in grassroots protest campaigns, such as the one represented in this case study, offer possible strategies for carrying out such learning.

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I recognize that my heritage has enabled me to fulfill this endeavour. I am deeply grateful for this privilege. I recognize that part of this heritage is colonialism, and that I have lived and studied on the lands of Coast Salish people. This land was stolen and cultural knowing was repressed. I am grateful to my Coast Salish friends and colleagues who have helped me to reflect on this past so that we might reconcile the future. I am inspired by your fortitude, patience, and compassion. HÍSWĪE.

## Chapter 1: Introduction to Research and Research Questions

### *The Great Mother Wails*

The Earth extends her arms to us;  
revealing through her nature the  
changing condition of our existence.  
She bends and twists,  
deflecting the swords of  
our foolishness;  
our arrogance;  
our gluttony;  
our deceit.  
Unbridled by red alerts or amber warnings,  
Her ire gives rise to monsoon winds,  
jarring us from the stupor of  
our academic impunity;  
our disjointed convolutions,  
our empty promises;  
our black and white dreams.  
Filled with unruly discontent,  
we yearn to dominate her mysteries;  
reducing her to microscopic dust,  
we spit upon her sacredness,  
tempting the fury of her seas.  
We spill our unholy wars  
upon her belly's tender flesh,  
blazing dislocated corpses,  
ignite her agony and grief.  
Still, in love with her creations,  
she warns of our complacency  
to cataclysmic devastation,  
rooted in the alienation of  
our disconnection  
our rejection,  
our oppression,  
our scorn.  
And still, we spin ungodly  
tantrums of injustice  
against her love,  
against ourselves,  
against one another.  
When will we remove blindfolds from our eyes?  
When will we stretch our arms—to her?  
When will the cruelty of our

hatred cease; teaching us to  
abandon the impositions of  
patriarchy and greed?  
Oh! that we might together renew  
our communion with the earth.  
She, the cradle of humanity.  
She, the nourishment of our seeds.  
She, the beauty of our singing.  
She, the wailing that precedes.  
—Darder (2010)

In this poem, Darder assumed what could be seen as a critical eco-pedagogical stance, which I interpret as the convergence of a deep ecological worldview with a critical consciousness of the systemic problems inherent in rampant global neoliberalism. Darder is perhaps suggesting many of us are blinded by our own greed and gluttony to the grave cruelty that we inflict on the earth, and on other people. Of course, one must always question who is ‘us’, for there are many disparities in that word, and what and how greed and gluttony are perpetuated. Darder linked this blindness and these senseless acts of cruelty to our disconnection with the earth. She is critical of the oppressive, patriarchal global system of living that depends on the domination and exploitation of people and the environment.

Darder’s poem lighted a fire in my heart. I also share Darder’s apparent disbelief and outrage with the neoliberal economic system that ruthlessly governs our world today. In the poem Darder illustrated this system as repressive of human and environmental rights, based in senseless greed, and controlled by an oligarchy of a few powerful people. Our western society has built intellectual barriers of myth and religion and academia, and erupted physical barriers of iron and steel. Within the framework of what we call civilization here in the west, we measure success by our individual possessions and importance based on power over others. Oppression and exploitation are justified,

rationalized, and ingrained in our society. But, I ask, where is the justification? What really is the rationalization for the ongoing exploitation and oppression? How can we rationalize or justify our very existence? Is this caring? Is this loving? Is this deserving of the rewards we wealthy reap?

How can we western societies awaken, as Darder (2008) suggested needs doing? How do we grow the courage to acknowledge oppression and our role in it? How do we admit our vulnerability and culpability, empower ourselves with responsibility and take action to right ourselves, save our souls. There is a broad base of critical learning theory that supports and aggressively promotes a link between learning and action and provides a common front of opposition to unjust practices in our current phallogocentric, neoliberal capitalist, global society (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2002; Kincheloe, 2004). Critical environmental adult learning theorists (Clover, 2012; Hill, 2006) call for greater recognition of the work of environmental movements and ecological theories that promote social and environmental justice in creating change. Likewise, radical adult learning theorists (Holst, 2002; McLaren, 2007) have connected social and environmental justice to activism and social movements. Hall, Clover, Crowther and Scandrett (2012) and Foley (1999, 2001) have outlined the importance of social movement learning in radical adult learning, challenging foci on social movements that ignore the power and potential they hold for societal change. In the midst of all of this is the critical ecopedagogy movement, which attempts to unite the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1970) with critical ecological theory in a biocentric view of the world (e.g. Gadotti, 2008).

Darder (2008) suggested that we need a fundamental shift in the way we look at the world and the way we place ourselves in the world. She asked when we would wake up. I interpret this waking up as critically reassessing and altering our actions both individually and communally, holding ourselves ethically accountable, and developing a society based on a new model of success, like the one David Orr (1994/2004) prescribed: “The planet does not need more successful people. But it does desperately need more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of every kind. It needs people who live well in their places. It needs people of moral courage willing to join the fight to make the world habitable and humane. And these qualities have little to do with success as our culture has defined it” (p. 12). If we could work towards a shift in thought that measured our success on living well in the world rather than on accumulating wealth and profit, then we would be much better off. For me this shift in perspective requires radical, critical transformative learning for democratic participation, a type of learning that brings us closer to our roots and empowers us to live well in community with each other and the world. This is synonymous with the goals of critical ecopedagogy, which unites critical theory with a deep ecological worldview (Gadotti, 2008), and is well represented by Darder in the above poem. It is this perspective of critically tying environmental and social injustice to systemic problems caused by our neoliberal and ironically undemocratic way of life that guides this research.

The goal of this research is to examine how meaningful learning through public engagement can challenge the status quo, shift perspectives, and ultimately contribute to changing the world. For me, such learning requires critical reflection and concrete action, leading to democratic participation that challenges norms and exists outside of the

status quo. Although things are changing Clover (2012) reminds us that social movements and grassroots organizations have for too long been overlooked and under-investigated for their nonformal and adult learning potential. This is why I look to social movements, and community, grass roots, activist organizations that have a mandate to engage the public and catalyze social change through learning, with the utopian, but practical, goal of making this world a more equitable place.

In this participatory action research I conduct a case study of the grassroots organization Turning The Tide (TTT), which leads a learning protest campaign against a proposed increase in oil tanker traffic in the Salish Sea with a broader goal of building a movement of regional care for people and the planet and ultimately policy that will reflect this. The research emerged as a question after the first year of the paddle when fellow organizers of the paddle suggested I use TTT as a component of my doctoral research. The research question is: **How do grassroots movements and activist organizations with mandates for systemic and democratic change in society become catalysts of change, and how do they view their role as such?** The research situates these campaigns as important sites of public learning and presents practical strategies for teaching and learning as if the world mattered. Central to this is the question of how social movements can open up learning spaces that challenge the dominant culture and intersectional oppression. The research highlights the particular instance of colonialism, and the relationship held between dominant, white organizers and indigenous peoples whose lands we occupy.

The research stems from a perceived need both in the literature, and by the activist organization being studied, to capture the role of grassroots organizations in

driving change in our society. The questions and methods were developed in coordination with the participants in this study and interpret creating change synonymously with learning.

### **Significance and contributions**

This research, through the lens of TTT, provides insight into the background work of activist organizations in building support for social movements. It identifies the learning value of protest campaigns, especially when considered through a longitudinal lens, that digs deep and connects issues that have the capacity to shift perspectives and policy over time. It highlights learning that centres ethics in decision-making, facilitates complex understanding of intersectional oppressions and challenges the hegemony of dominant power. By drawing attention to specific learning practices in TTT, the research offers possibility to learn through movements such as TTT and will be beneficial to a wider community of activist organizations that can also learn from the generalization of the results. In conducting this research, I also hope to inspire and connect local organizers with the knowledge that what they are doing is valuable and necessary. I also hope to tell a story that can contribute to a greater body of knowledge examining places and methods of learning that prioritize learning to live well in this world.

I approach this research from a particularly critical position. I am critical of the system in which we live where exploitation of the environment and other people is internalized and normalized in daily life. The fundamental basis of our lives is rooted in selfishness and greed, rather than community and care. I come from the perspective that people are merely a part of this earth, and not masters of it. I do not believe in a hierarchy of people or things, but rather that we all participate in an ongoing, shared

existence. I strongly believe in equality and inclusivity, and do not attribute greater value to my own life than any other person. I do not identify with the dominant narrative, but acknowledge my privilege and participation in its reproduction. I am looking to find ways to end this oppression and therefore enter this research with open senses in the hopes of genuinely creating change. As a researcher, I am presented with the possibility, through PAR, to challenge accepted forms of knowledge, and knowledge production, and hopefully identify a means of creating genuine change in this world.

Critical ecopedagogy embraces this worldview, and suggests that a critical element is necessary for people to shift their view, empower themselves through transformation and change society. There are numerous terms and definitions of critical forms of learning theory. I therefore follow the example of critical ecopedagogy (described in greater detail in the literature review) as a framework for integrating multiple theoretical perspectives such as transformative learning, critical learning, radical adult education and adult environmental education. Critical ecopedagogy integrates these frameworks with complexity learning and a deep ecological perspective. The goal of this research is to examine how such learning can take place in a meaningful way, to challenge the dominant narrative, reflect on deeply rooted intersectionalities and shift perspectives and world views.

Hall (2005) argued “that the catalytic power of learning and its sister activity knowledge creation have been undervalued and under-theorized in the discourses of social movements” (p. 46). I intend to contribute to the discourse on social movements by valuing, theorizing and shedding light on the catalytic power that social movements have

in raising social and environmental justice issues in the public sphere and exacting change in this world.

## Chapter 2: Background and Problem Statement

The consciousness of the oppressor tends to transform everything around him into an object of his domination. The earth, property, production, the creations of people, people themselves, time—everything is reduced to the condition of objects at his disposition (Freire, 1983, p. 94).

### Neoliberalism and Corporate Power

We live in a period of globalization where western neoliberal ideology is spreading rampantly throughout the world like a plague, glossing over the gross exploitation of people and the environment and ever increasing inequalities as logically necessary for democracy and freedom to flourish. Jim Schultz (2013), the Director of *The Democracy Centre* in San Francisco, suggested there are two fundamental challenges faced by the world today: “One is enable billions of people across the world to lift themselves from the sufferings of poverty and the other is avoid pushing the planet off a cliff toward dangerous and irreversible environmental changes”(p. iii). He goes on to clarify the difficulty of achieving such a task because of the imbalance between powerful international corporations with law binding trade agreements seeking profit at any cost, and citizens, social movements and non-binding international agreements. Here, Schultz is pointing out the systemic problems with neoliberal globalization and corporate power.

For the purposes of this paper I define neoliberalism as a theory of market liberalization. Rowlands (1997) stated that neoliberalism is associated with a loss of faith in the state and growing privatization. Banya (1998) argued that in neoliberalism market forces are seen as supplanting national economies. Miles (2002) explained that at the

heart is a process by which “land, labour, and nature...are reduced to commodities and exploited” (p. 24). I like Nelly Stromquist’s (2002) definition of neoliberalism as a program capable of destroying any collective structure attempting to resist the logic of the "pure market," a powerful discourse that is extremely difficult to combat because of the entrenched power it manifests. Stromquist argued that neoliberalism presents a realism impossible to question because it represents the coordinated actions of all forces that hold prevailing positions. Likewise, Noam Chomsky (1997) was also critical of the current power imbalance, highlighting corporate power and ascertaining that corporations were consciously designed through the courts in a process where “the principal architects of policy consolidate state power and use it for their interests” (23). Chomsky traced the current conceptions of the free market to Adam Smith, and in so doing clarified the ridiculous aberration of our current system in comparison to Smith’s conception. According to Chomsky, Smith specified that equality of condition (not opportunity only) is what we should be aiming at, warning that the state needs to “take some measures to prevent the division of labour from proceeding to its limits” (p. 19). Chomsky is critical of the power imbalance in our current system and claimed that Smith even warned that the consolidation of power through policy by merchants and manufacturers would be used to ensure that their interests are attended to, no matter what the impact on others.

Clover (2002a) exposed this ominous facet of neoliberalism whereby transnational corporations cooperate with governments. She pointed out how governments support corporations through international trade agreements, often against the will of the majority. Clover referred to the NAFTA agreement between the United States, Canada, and Mexico as an example, but a more recent ultra secret (and

democratically questionable) negotiations on the Comprehensive European Trade Agreement (CETA) between the European Union and Canada and the larger 12 nation (and counting) Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Both of these deals seek to encroach even further on public rights by further deregulating trade, banning privatizing public services, limiting rights to public health care and access to medicine, eroding environmental protection measures, and undermining access to knowledge and the open internet (Council of Canadians, 2017). The Council of Canadians (2014) exposed an investor rights chapter of the TPP deal that would extend, beyond NAFTA limits, corporations' latitude to sue governments over policies that get in the way of their profit making. The danger here is as Clover (2002a) pointed out, the democratic process is rapidly being eroded.

Vandana Shiva (1997) noted this erosion, pointing out that we are "seeing the replacement of government and state planning by corporate strategic planning and the establishment of global corporate rule" (p. 22). Research by Andy Egan (2012) supports this by defining the intricate role that corporations play in all aspects of our lives from food, to health, the environment and disciplines/subjects taught in school. Egan (2012) explained that "Global corporations and national governments are often working closely together to shape the lives we lead and the world in which we live" (p. 45) and suggested that often corporations have more control than governments, especially in the global South, where governments "are often more accountable to global corporations, international financial institutions (IFIs) and even development NGOs than their own people." (p. 46). He exemplified Mozambique where foreign sources contribute half of the national budget. This power goes well beyond the global south however; western

governments also exhibit dependency on corporations as neoliberal economics increasingly drives politics.

George (2013) clarified this phenomenon, identifying that 40 of the top one hundred economies in the world are corporations. The report is based in part on quantitative research conducted by Battiston, Glattfelder and Vitali (2011), which maps out ownership of the top Transnational Corporations (TNCs). They use a rather complex series of mathematical formulae, which determine ownership of companies based on percentage of shares owned. Their research showed that 737 TNCs control, through both direct and indirect ownership, 80 per cent of the value of the 43,000 TNCs included in the study. They further refine this group to 147 companies with near complete control over themselves plus 40 per cent of all the TNCs studied. 50 of these corporations were identified as “knife edge” that could send the world economy into a major recession if they were to fail. The forced bailout of major financial institutions and large corporations such as General Motors in the United States (Amadeo, 2013) are a good example of this dependency. The work of Battiston, Glattfelder & Vitalli (2011) has demonstrated the power and control exerted over the majority by the minority. This is particularly dangerous as this small minority generally acts against the greater good.

Not only do these corporations wield immense power, but also they directly contribute to the human and environmental rights abuses that international development seeks to address. I have selected a few recent examples of social and environmental injustices below, documented by independently funded organizations and campaigns that have greater liberty to blow whistles because they are not limited by funding conditions. I have chosen these examples because they are recent, have at least passed through the

public eye, they are specific to Canada, and urgently require attention. The 2001 tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) and Social Policy of the International Labour Organization (ILO) states rather delicately that MNE operations may lead to abuse of concentrations of power, conflict with national policies, conflict with the interests of workers, and sometimes give cause for concern. The language used by the ILO is careful not to state the problem outright, but only gently suggest alternative options for MNEs that would improve the social impact of their work. While it may not be explicitly stated, the declaration, by virtue of its publication, inherently bares the discrepancies in social justice of MNEs, and their current campaigns displayed on their website against child labour and for the rights of indigenous peoples to free prior and informed consent demonstrate the urgency of some of the negative impacts of MNEs. Chomsky (1997) was more direct in stating outright that many large corporations are neither socially or environmentally responsible. Indeed, groups like Mining Watch (2017) and GRAIN (2017) document atrocities and exploitation of peoples and the environment all over the world through land grabbing, seed patents, large scale agriculture, and extracting resources to name a few. Oxfam Canada (2017) has a current campaign about land grabbing and groups such as Avaaz (2017) and Sumofus (2017) try to raise awareness about fair-trade and human rights.

The entire garment industry is an example that has finally caught some public attention internationally in the wake of the April 2013 Rana Plaza tragedy in Bangladesh that killed 1,138 people and severely injured another 2000. (Clean Clothes, 2017). However, despite mounting international pressure some major clothing retailers such as Walmart and the Gap have refused to sign an international, United Nations endorsed,

accord to ensure worker safety in the garment industry in the wake of Bangladesh (Clean Clothes, 2013).

Russell (2016) from Mining Watch Canada documented that Canadian mining corporations are especially well known for their poor social and environmental policies. Russell explains that the Canadian mining industry has one of the worst reputations in the world for exploitative trading policies, with little transparency and few regulations holding them accountable. Ward (2012) called attention to 2012 human rights reports on Canada published by the UN and Amnesty International which both suggested that Canada had stonewalled human rights for international trade. Ward Stated: “There are no binding legal standards for the conduct of Canadian companies operating overseas and human rights standards are seldom written into trade deals” (para. 19). The UN special rapporteur on indigenous human rights James Anaya (2011) expressed his “grave concern at the situation [in Guatemala]” (p. 2). His report specifically referenced the Marlin Mine, owned by Canadian mining giant Goldcorp, and documented human and environmental rights violations:

The repercussions include numerous allegations concerning the effects on the health and the environment of the indigenous people as a result of the pollution caused by the extractive activities; the loss of indigenous lands and damage to indigenous people’s property and houses; the disproportionate response to legitimate acts of social protest, and the harassment of and attacks on human rights defenders and community leaders (pp. 1-2).

These abuses of human and environmental rights are taking place all over the world. Bagelman and Wiebe (2014) identified the environmental and human rights

abuses of the proposed Enbridge pipeline in western Canada that crosses through the land of many First Nations peoples against their will. The pipeline aims to bring bitumen from Alberta, Canada's environmentally toxic tar sands, which have been developed against the will of the First Nations peoples living there such as the Beaver Lake Cree and the Whitefish Lake peoples, both of whom have launched lawsuits against the Alberta provincial government (Raven, 2014). Furthermore, a recent research study by Health Canada, the Athabasca Chipewyan and Mikisew Cree First Nations, and the University of Manitoba documented a massive increase in cancer cases among people living in the area of the tar sands, finding increased toxins from the tar sands in the fish, animals, and water (Klinkenberg, 2014). This officially documented what the Mikisew and Athabasca Cree First Nations have been protesting since the beginning of the development.

Given that these issues are well documented, and officially recognized, it is difficult to understand how they are able to continue. I would like to return to the relationship corporations hold with government, and the "architects of public policy" to address this. Marcuse (1965) pointed out the process by which the liberal state, together with corporations today, assert democratic tolerance, as they insist that radical activists are subversive of the very ideals on which our society is based. This is a process whereby anyone who speaks out is portrayed as violent, a troublemaker disrupting the public peace with the goal of destroying society. More recently, Best and Nocella (2004) described this through the post 9/11 crackdown on activists, emphasizing the patriotic language used by corporations and government such as protecting 'freedom' and 'democracy' to develop a false binary between loving one's country and activism. Under the recent Harper regime in Canada this happened at an extraordinary rate. Miller (2013) revealed

how Harper had been spying on environmental groups like The Dogwood Initiative and Leadnow, who opposed an expansion of the tar sands. Brent Patterson of the Council of Canadians (2014) exposed how Harper had allocated \$8 million to monitoring charitable public interest organizations including “David Suzuki Foundation, Tides Canada, West Coast Environmental Law, The Pembina Foundation, Environmental Defense, Equiterre, Ecology Action Centre and Amnesty International ”(para. 2). In my own research (2013) I examined the role of Canadian Civil Society Organizations (CCSOs) engaging the public about the fundamental causes of poverty. I identified that CCSOs identified with the aims of global learning but “Unfortunately, the current conservative government severely restricts any criticism of its foreign policy creating a catch 22 situation, whereby public engagement becomes more urgent for greater citizen engagement, but this very engagement is being reined in more than ever” (p. 53-54). My research identified the case of several larger CCSOs like Kairos and the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) who lost all of their funding as a direct result of criticizing foreign policy, sending a message to other CCSOs. Reilly-King (2011) summed it up well in a report as a consultant for CCIC:

In recent years, the space available to civil society to discuss and debate government policy and positions has shrunken considerably. A number of organizations who have critiqued the government’s positions, including Alternatives, Climate Action Network (CAN), CCIC, and KAIROS – Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, as well as countless women’s groups, have seen long-standing core and project-related government funding drastically cut or cancelled. (p. 4)

The McLeod Group (2010, 2011), an independent group of international development policy experts in Ottawa, pointed out these actions gave a clear public message to CCSOs not to criticize government policy. Human Rights Watch (2014), a respected independent international human rights organization, revealed that in Canada “Recent federal government actions undermining the ability of civil society organizations to engage in advocacy impede progress on a range of human rights issues” (para. 1). The actions that the report is referring to are likely the 2012 amendments to the Income Tax Act severely inhibiting charities “political activities”. This extended governmental control of critical learning significantly beyond government funded projects and, as Fitzpatrick (2012) pointed out, represses freedom of speech.

Even more problematic in Canada is Bill C-51, which was introduced by then Prime Minister, Stephen Harper. The bill passed in 2015 with the support of the current governing Liberal Party of Canada despite major public outcry across the country from academics, human rights organizations (e.g. Amnesty International, United Nations Human Rights Commission), journalists (Canadian Journalists for Free Expression), businesses (e.g. Mozilla), civil society (e.g., Council of Canadians, Canadian Civil Liberties Association), The Canadian Bar Association, and First Nations. The Canadian Journalists for Free Expression and Canadian Civil Liberties Association have launched a charter challenge arguing that it represents a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (CJFE).

The bill was presented as an “anti-terrorism” act and was immediately subject to major and ubiquitous public outcry against the increased power given to police forces to impinge on public privacy and human rights. The bill gave CSIS (a Canadian Intelligence

Agency) the ability to place under surveillance including access to private health, financial and tax information any potential or suspected threats to security with little or no oversight, place people on no fly lists also without needing a reason, detain security threats without charges. It also grants CSIS the power to take any ‘disruption measures’ it deems necessary for the security of Canada. This is ironic, as CSIS was created precisely because it had proven impossible to restrain the RCMP’s similarly empowered security division from acting in a manner that was unacceptable to Canadians. CSIS, along with its intelligence gathering sub unit CSE (Canada’s ultra secret digital spying agency-our NSA) virtually free and unchecked reign in any event that they deem a threat. Particularly problematic was the broad and sweeping terms that were used to “define” a security threat. The Canadian Bar Association (2015) described it in this way: *“The powers of CSIS have always depended on how a “threat to the security of Canada” is defined, and section 2 of the CSIS Act already has an extremely broad definition. This has been interpreted to include environmental activists, indigenous groups, and other social or political activists. Concerns are heightened with the proposal to grant CSIS a ‘disruptive’ kinetic role.”* (p. 2). Nelson (2015) made clear the connection between bill C-51 and expansion of the Tar sands, pointing out the language used in the definition of “security threats”, economic interests as critical infrastructure which could criminalize peaceful protest if it interrupts or interferes with the lawful use, enjoyment, or operations of any part of a critical infrastructure. The Assembly of First Nations (2017) also opposed the law on the grounds that it would target first nations communities (many of which are sovereign nations, especially in British Columbia, who have never ceded their land

through war or treaty to Canada) in particular as they mounted opposition to proposed pipelines through their land.

The point here is that the people that have consolidated power place their own economic interest before other people and the planet. Corporations are closely connected to governments, which use force to protect their interests. The neoliberal system of governance is unfair, unjust and undemocratic and urgently needs to be changed. By identifying and bringing injustice into the public sphere, social movements and grassroots organizations help to educate and manifest change.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

In this chapter I have outlined the some of the systemic problems in our neoliberal system of living. I have highlighted the hegemonic power structures which make this system undemocratic, and pointed out the reliance of this system on exploitation and domination of people and the environment. My goal was not to provide all the examples available, but rather to illustrate some of the problems with the dominant culture in our society. I do not claim that all people in power are deliberately trying to exploit people, however, exploitation is taking place, and it is the result of a system in which we live -- the dominant norm where power functions tacitly to reproduce the dominant norm. It is important to keep in mind that corporations are only a part of our neoliberal system, in which individuals are active participants. Shiva (2005) pointed out that corporations are dependant on and legally responsible to their shareholders, for whom, generally (though not always) profit is the bottom line. In the next section I will begin to look at what learning can look like, to challenge this norm as Judith Butler (2012) suggested, reworking it and changing our perceptions of society. I will examine how critical

ecopedagogy and social movements challenge the dominant narrative, open space to consider intersectional oppression, and represent positive, hopeful learning for change, rather than just a negative critique of “the system”.

### **Chapter 3 Critical Ecopedagogy**

Humanity has passed through a long history of one-sidedness and of a social condition that has always contained the potential of destruction, despite its creative achievements in technology. The great project of our time must be to open the other eye: to see all-sidedly and wholly, to heal and transcend the cleavage between humanity and nature that came with early wisdom. (Bookchin, 2005, p. 152)

#### **Introduction**

I use critical ecopedagogy as a base theoretical framework to guide and focus my research because it both stems from and attempts to unite radical social and ecological adult learning (Darder, 2010; Gadotti, 2010; Kahn, 2010). Some of the commonalities in these theories include a social justice agenda, a critique of current (Western) political and ideological systems, a global perspective, learning that is based in, or leading to action, an axiology based on collectivity, rather than individuality, a non-linear, complex conception of the world, and a shared existence with nature rather than an anthropocentric stance, epistemologies of communal learning, and the valuing of traditional knowledge and other non-modernist ways of knowing such as presented by critical and deep ecologists and complexity theorists.

While critical ecopedagogy is based largely on Freire's critical pedagogy, it is important to note that it also embraces and seeks to unite other critical adult environmental and deep ecological perspectives. In embracing these, it does not seek to speak for them, but rather borrow elements that, when combined, work together to form a new vision of critical learning that unites social and environmental justice. A leading

advocate of critical ecopedagogy, Richard Kahn (2010), summarized this here: “the critical ecopedagogy movement represents an important attempt to synthesize a key opposition within the worldwide environmental movement, one that continues to be played out in major environmental and economic policy meetings and debates” (p. 11). He emphasized that, “ [critical] ecopedagogy, while drawing upon a coherent body of substantive ideas, is neither a strict doctrine nor a methodological technique that can be applied similarly in all places, all times, by all peoples” (p. 21). Critical ecopedagogy can therefore be applied to informal, non-formal and formal learning alike. Schugurensky (2006) explains that formal learning is institutional based (k-12, college, university, etc...), non formal learning is “organized learning that takes place outside the formal education system (e.g. short courses, workshops...” (p. 163), and informal learning is all forms of learning that is not included in the previous two.

### **History and Purpose**

The ecopedagogy movement emerged from discussions among grassroots environmental movements in Brazil surrounding the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. In 1999, Moacir Gadotti, the director for the *Instituto Paulo Freire*, with the Earth Council and UNESCO, convened the first International Symposium of the Earth Charter, which “was quickly followed by the first international forum on Ecopedagogy” (Kahn, 2010, p. 19). According to Antunes and Gadotti (2005), the discussions around ecopedagogy form the background for environmental learning as it is described in section 14 of the Earth Charter, which is available directly on their website (<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/>): “Integrate into formal learning and life-long

learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life” (np, 2014). The Earth Charter is a declaration of:

Fundamental ethical principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st century. It seeks to inspire in all people a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the whole human family, the greater community of life, and future generations. It is a vision of hope and a call to action (The Earth Charter Initiative, 2014).

The many environmental groups in civil society who helped draft the charter hoped it would be adopted internationally at the Earth Summit in Johannesburg in 2002; however the summit refused to ratify it after pressure from political and economic interests of wealthy nations (Gadotti, 2008). Instead, the United Nations’ “decade for sustainable development” was announced to promote greater environmental learning, of a kind that has been criticized heavily as hegemonic, and maintaining the status quo rather than solving environmental problems (Gonzales-Gaudiano, 2005). Antunes and Gadotti (2005) posited that the motives for the ecopedagogy movement were to move beyond the conversations of learning for sustainable development to a broader, more critical framework that replaces an anthropocentric worldview with a biocentric worldview, and connects social and environmental problems as espoused in the principles of the Earth Charter:

The Earth Charter recognizes that the goals of ecological protection, the eradication of poverty, equitable economic development, respect for human rights, democracy, and peace are interdependent and indivisible. It provides, therefore, a

new, inclusive, integrated ethical framework to guide the transition to a sustainable future. (The Earth Charter initiative, 2014, np)

Transformative learning theorist O'Sullivan (1999) has critiqued traditional ecological learning for not recognizing the connection between social and environmental ills: "despite the fact that social and environmental ills are interconnected, environmental learning programs often ignore ecological issues that give... preeminent emphasis to inter-human problems frequently to the detriment of the relations of humans to the wider biotic community and the natural world" (pp. 63-64). O'Sullivan suggested that environmental and social justice learning need to be linked and addressed together. This is the goal of critical ecopedagogy. Gadotti (2008) emphasized that ecological learning must have a central focus on social justice, combating devastating environmental problems, since it is "...well known to all that environmental degradation generates human conflicts" (p. 43). Kahn (2010) explained that because ecopedagogy emerged from grassroots movements of the global south it has a focus on political action, and challenges fundamental socio-cultural, political and economic inequalities, as demonstrated in the following quote: "ecopedagogy aims to interpolate quintessentially Freirian aims of the humanization of experience and the achievement of a just and free world with a future oriented ecological politics that militantly opposes the globalization of neoliberalism and imperialism" (p. 19).

I would argue that ecopedagogy is largely an extension of Freire's critical pedagogy, and shares many of the same themes, such as learning as a political act, learning for social justice, learning for agency, conscientization, and praxis. While Freire's earlier writings do not include a discussion of ecological learning, in his later

writings Freire (2004) acknowledged the importance of uniting social and environmental issues: "...the notion seems deplorable to me of engaging in progressive, revolutionary discourse while embracing a practice that negates life - that pollutes the air, the waters, the fields, and devastates forests, destroys the trees and threatens the animals" (p. 120).

Critical ecopedagogy relies heavily on Freirian pedagogy, and for this it has been criticized. Bowers (2006) contended that Freire is overly concerned with self-empowerment, which limits his capacity to have a wider biocentric view and that critical theory is overly linear and does not take into account traditional cultures and knowledge. However I agree with McLaren (2007) who refuted this on the grounds that Freire focuses on collective praxis and a common struggle strengthened by dialogue. McLaren noted that Freire stressed, "reflecting critically on and renaming the world, which does not imply forgetting one's culture" (p. 151). Likewise, Darder (2008) interpreted Freirian culture through action. It is, she explained, how "students come to clearly perceive and experience themselves as historical subjects of their world...They begin to discover that...they can and will change the course of history" (p. 119). Freire also hints at a biocentric vision of the world in his later writings, though perhaps not with the same degree of focus as Bowers. Take for example this 2004 quote in which Freire explicitly reconciles critical pedagogy with a cultural appreciation of the earth:

I do not believe in loving among women and men, among human beings, if we do not become capable of loving the world. Ecology has gained tremendous importance at the end of this century. It must be present in any learning practice of a radical, critical, and liberating nature (p. 25).

Critical ecopedagogy in many ways has extended this later view of Freire's and made this biocentric earthly view a fundamental starting point. In this next section I will address the cultural concerns embraced by ecopedagogy, which "attempts to foment collective ecoliteracy and realize culturally relevant forms of knowledge grounded in normative concepts such as sustainability, planetarity (sic), and biophilia" (Kahn, 2010, p. 19). This is a theoretical perspective taken largely from critical feminist educators, deep ecological educators, and many indigenous understandings of living, all of which take exception to a traditional western, positivistic, patriarchal vision of hierarchy and dominance over people and the environment. This perspective speaks to a non-linear, non-hierarchical understanding of being.

### **Critique of western knowledge paradigm**

Central to a critical eco-pedagogical vision of social and environmental learning is a fundamental shift from the liberal western conception of the world to a deep ecological perspective, an inter-objective understanding of the world that does not consider humans as separate, dominant or superior. Kahn (2010) suggested that environmental learning should challenge the dominance of western cultural understanding of knowledge and being, especially what he referred to as White Male Science (WMS) and embrace the Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) of indigenous peoples:

I envision this inclusion taking place as part of an institutional paradigm shift that radically reconstructs WMS for the emergence of new perspectives, understandings, sensibilities, values, and paradigms that put in question the assumptions, methods, values, and interpretations of modern sciences (p. 108).

The positivistic paradigm of modern sciences is entrenched in the neoliberal society that we live in. It is one that does not recognize knowledge outside of the parameters of traditional western Eurocentric ways of living, and has been used as an excuse for the domination, exploitation and “civilization” of people throughout the modern world. Battiste (2005) explains that “to succeed in creating the belief that their world view is universal and therefore objective, colonizers must erase Indigenous memories and knowledge.” (p. 125). She points out that not only are Indigenous knowledge and culture erased, they are stolen and patented, and gives the example of pharmaceutical companies appropriating Indigenous peoples’ knowledge of medicinal plants. Battiste explains that this is a form of global racism that assumes cultural superiority of Eurocentric colonizers.

Clover (2002b) repudiated neoliberalism for grossly diminishing cultural ways of knowing that exist outside of the modernist western liberal tradition, referring to it as “the problematic of cultural homogenization” (p.163). Similarly Shiva (2005) stated the privatization of knowledge, and of biodiversity, is a threat to the future of humanity. She also suggested that it is an enclosure of the intellectual and the biological commons. Bowers (2014) posited that, “the modern idea of development equates progress with bringing what remains of the cultural and environmental commons under the control of the market forces that have been made even more destructive by the expansion of global competition” (p. 7). Bowers (2006) referred to this privatization and monetization of the physical environment and symbolic world that are shared in common as “the enclosure of the cultural commons” (p.9). For Bowers, culture cannot be separated from an understanding of the environment. Bowers argued that the “current way of representing

creativity and intelligence as an individual attribute, and language as a conduit through which we pass our ideas and information to others, contributes to a destructive form of environmental learning” (p.16). Language is important here because, as Bowers emphasizes, we use language based on metaphors with neoliberal implications. Bowers uses the example the term “environment”, associated now with the conception of humans protecting or taking care of, and thus owning it. Bowers posited that the western modernist perspective of the world does not have a framework to comprehend cultural knowledge accumulated over generations because of the anthropocentric world view which assumes superiority and does not acknowledge anything outside of the market system “with its emphasis on economic values and technological innovations” (p.15).

Bowers considered technological innovations as taking away from and closing off traditional knowledge such as intergenerational knowledge and social interaction. He suggested that technological innovation goes hand in hand with enclosure of the cultural and environmental commons (through patents for example) and repudiates the resulting monetized culture based in consumption and false individualism rather than social interaction and collectivity. Saul (2001) accentuates this same issue, emphasizing the need for social interaction and ethical learning because technology is incapable of making ethical decisions.

In contrast to the cultural homogenization of Eurocentric knowledge and market values, Kahn (2010) explains that critical ecopedagogy encourages a complex understanding of the world, which values cultural diversity and embraces a biocentric worldview. Norwegian philosopher and environmental activist Arne Naess (1989) described biocentrism as imagining humans as one species among many, where justice is

strived for beyond the human realm, by including the entire natural world. This stance risks sweeping under the rug human struggles for social justice such as colonialism, gender issues, feminism, and race. However, viewed through a critical ecopedagogical lens, which connects social and environmental justice and draws on multiple threads of critical theory, biocentricism is connected to human struggles.

### **Critical Learning Theory**

Critical Ecopedagogy recognizes that neo-liberalism is fundamentally responsible for both the social and environmental injustices of the world and suggests that it is only in challenging the root structural problems inherent in our global system that we can begin to dream of a more egalitarian, sustainable place. These structures are entrenched in white male hegemonic power. McLaren (2013) summarized this well, arguing that in opposition to capitalist discipline, critical ecopedagogical practices bind “people to the defense of diversities both ecosystemic and social against capital’s manipulation of them as people-commodities” (p. 90). It is this junction of critical pedagogy and critical ecology in opposition to neoliberalism that links social and environmental visions of society, and presents a common learning vision. In this section I will present these critical perspectives of neoliberalism from a learning standpoint.

**Deconstructing learning.** Critical learning theorists are critical of the current paradigm in which we live as one based on senseless abstractions, where we are educated for complacency, dis-engagement, and adherence to patriarchal norms which promote individuality, competition, privatization, and the ‘free market’ (e.g. Giroux, 2006; McLaren, 2013). Chomsky (1997) condemned schools as institutions of brain-washing and reproduction, as did Illich (1970) who argued that schools operate according to a

hidden curriculum that merely perpetuates the existing order. Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2008) suggested that the neoliberal agenda is reinforced and reproduced in schools with a sense of inevitability: “The naturalization of neo-liberal ideology is widely evident in a range of contemporary curricula that typically describe present circumstances to students in terms that suggest either their inevitability or their desirability” (p. 29). Cote, Day and de Peuter (2006) went beyond the curricula to look at schools themselves, claiming that they are increasingly becoming a part of the market economy, “ongoing corporate colonization of public schools at all levels, from coke machines in the hallways...to computer labs ‘donated’ to universities” (p. 13). Likewise, Foley (2001) pointed out, “Driven by economic crisis and global economic competition, governments have transformed learning from a citizen’s right into an instrument of economic policy” (p. 80). What these critical pedagogues are pointing out is that learning is increasingly becoming a form of training, the means to incorporate people into a neoliberal society as ‘good citizens’, rather than a process of learning to live, to think in broader ways and to critically question the status quo.

Critical environmental adult learning is based in identifying and resisting the hegemony of neoliberalism and the effect it has on both the environment and people. Darder (2010) posited, “The Western ethos of mastery and supremacy over nature has accompanied, to our detriment, the unrelenting expansion of capitalism and its unparalleled domination over all aspects of human life” (p. x). Hardt and Negri (2004) suggested that it was an ‘empire of the few’, referring to the unrelenting capitalist expansion as expropriating the planetary commons and privatizing nature.

Clover (2002b) argued that current environmental learning did not address this fundamental problem. She was critical of environmental learning for its over-emphasis on awareness-raising and individual behaviour change rather than examining the underlying problems and promoting collective engagement and activism. She argued this model was disempowering and insufficient because it ignored “the powerful structures and policies at the heart of environmental destruction” (p. 318) and merely blamed the individual. Gadotti (2010) also pointed out that the current model of environmental learning is based on teaching isolated actions in a ‘banking model’ of learning. Like Clover, Gadotti is critical of teaching “recycling, reusing and reducing,” suggesting, “simply improving the current model of learning is to continue to follow the learning model that has been destroying the planet since the nineteenth century” (p. 210). Kahn (2010) also argued that current models of learning based on awareness raising and minor adjustments were in fact based in market principles and institutionalizing a false reality about environmental problems and solutions. Kahn contended that ecological issues require “a much more radical and more complex form of ecoliteracy than is presently possessed by the population at large” (p. 6).

Kahn is making the same point that Illich (1970) made, namely that schools are actually reinforcing a mistaken view of environmental problems and solutions. This model reinforces a neoliberal market based lifestyle, one that Bowers (2006) was critical of for enclosing the commons. This illustrates Clover’s (2002b) point about environmental learning being disempowering. It is not surprising that a learning model that merely reinforces the status quo and tells you there is nothing you can do beyond taking shorter showers develops complacency and disempowerment. A five year old

could figure out that this is not actually going to make any concrete change in the world. What is needed is a critical learning that addresses the fundamental causes of environmental devastation that lie in neoliberalism and market capitalism.

**Reconstructing critical learning.** Clover (2002b) posited that a model of learning is needed that is based on developing critical consciousness of society and culture, and empowering people to understand their capacity to create change. Gadotti (2010) too believed that shifting from a transmission model of learning to a transformative model, borrowing the Freirian notion of conscientization where critical, horizontal dialogue is essential to develop agency and democratically construct possible alternatives to oppressive systems. This is very much an empowering version of learning, where, like Freire (1970) advocated, a critical conscientization is developed in the student. Similarly, ecofeminist Karen Warren (2000) called for a ‘cognitive dissonance’, “to motivate one to reexamine one's basic beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions - one's conceptual framework” (p. 56), to dismantle ideologies of superiority between humans, and humans over nature. Transformative educator Edward O’Sullivan (2002) envisioned a model of transformative environmental learning that must “articulate a planetary context for learning that can effectively challenge the hegemonic culture of the market vision and that can orient people in their daily lives to create an environmentally viable world in our present time” (p. 7). This connection to political conscientization of power and democratic change is clearly the same message delivered by critical pedagogy, and I would argue, along with critical ecopedagogues, that it is this that connects environmental and social justice learning.

To examine this connection of learning as critical of power and developing confidence to take action and participate in society (agency), it is worth taking some examples from critical pedagogues. The contribution of Paulo Freire is foundational to critical perspectives in learning. In perhaps his most famous work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire outlined a critical pedagogy aimed at developing an awareness of one's social position as being tacitly moulded by dominant powers, and reinforcing the need for action as an outcome. Freire highlighted learning as being a constant process of critical reflection and action, which he described as 'praxis'. Learning was about empowerment, it was to challenge the social norms, and develop agency and confidence to change society. Freire was critical of the 'banking model' of learning for reinforcing dominant social, economic and cultural norms. In the banking model of learning, learning is considered a transfer of knowledge from an expert to a passive recipient. The recipient is viewed as an empty account waiting to be filled with information. Freire was critical of this approach for not accounting for the diverse knowledge and experience of the student.

For Freire (1970), learning had to be lived, and power had to be shared between teacher and student through a dialogical relationship, as he put it, "learning is communication through dialogue" (p. 139). Freire (2004) stressed that students need to learn within a contextual framework that is meaningful to them, as opposed to learning containing authoritative lectures, class discussions and learning materials that are foreign to them. Freire emphasized the democratic process of learning as a practice as collaborative and empowering, accentuating that it is neither "a gift nor an opposition" (p.93). This is important, because by opposing the notion of benevolence Freire

reinforced his opposition to a hierarchical construction of knowledge. Likewise, the emphasis against ‘opposition’ recognizes the student as knowledgeable. This concept is essential for Freire because it allows students to form their own understanding, rather than being forced to think within a system of preconceived ideas and knowledge that, develops agency and empowerment both in teacher and student. Perhaps his most important contribution was that Freire *lived* praxis, through his work in Brazil and Chile. Indeed, he fought tirelessly alongside the oppressed people for social justice through learning (Macebo, 2004). For this reason Freire’s model of empowering learning exerted considerable influence on critical strains of learning, including critical environmental adult learning, radical adult learning, and critical ecopedagogy.

In the face of neoliberal economic power, radical and critical theory continue to struggle against these hegemonic forces in a Freirian model of learning. Foley (2001) suggested “critical learning makes judgments about injustices and attempts to rectify them by addressing their fundamental causes, their deeper dynamics and determining factors” (p. 2). He also clarified radical learning as “critical and emancipatory” (p. 72), and therefore learning that addresses the fundamental causes of oppression and seeking to help people gain control of their lives. Kincheloe (2004) argued that learning should teach to recognize the hegemonic forces and tacit power structures of our society. Similarly, Giroux (2006) argued that learning should develop political agents aware of the struggles over politics, power, and democracy with the skills, capacities, and knowledge to act, and belief that these struggles are worth taking up. Giroux goes further to explain that educators need to make connections between the political and the cultural in order to “break the continuity and the consensus of common sense” (p. 29). Here he is

referring to the static normalization of neoliberalism. Hyslop-Margison & Sears (2008) argued this same point, suggesting that critical learning is the responsibility of a democratic society: “the moral imperatives of learning within a democratic society require students to be provided with the necessary knowledge and dispositions to make informed choices about current political and social conditions, and entertain possible alternatives to improve these conditions” (p. 34).

There are common themes that emerge in the above reconstruction of what critical learning should look like. Fundamental to critical learning is the Freirian concepts of conscientization and praxis. Critical learning is a process of empowerment and transformation. Critical ecopedagogy suggests that environmental and social issues are in fact linked to the same base structural problems inherent in neoliberalism. I would argue they cannot be considered separately as they are inherently linked, and critical ecopedagogy therefore represents a practical theoretical and holistic model of learning. This critical perspective, evident in both critical environmental learning and critical adult learning, is by no means limited, and cannot be limited to a local context. Chapter one identified the global nature of neoliberalism, problematizing transnational and corporate power. Central to ecopedagogy is the critical voice challenging these power relations and fighting for human rights globally (Darder, 2002; Gadotti, 2010; Kahn, 2010). Thus I would like to explicitly reference the critical development educators’ vision, which is also largely influenced by Freire and involves a call to action.

**Link to global perspective.** The 2002 Maastricht Global Learning Declaration suggested that global learning is, “learning that opens people’s eyes and minds to the realities of the globalized world and awakens them to bring about a world of greater

justice, equity and human rights for all” (North–South Centre, 2003, Appendix 1). Likewise Cabezudo (2010) linked transformative learning with global learning, suggesting that it create “citizens who take on the responsibility that cannot be left to governments” (p.9). Cabezudo argued that global learning “involves a deep structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings and action” (p. 9) and must challenge the dominant discourse, envision an alternative and process a change. It must bring people to understand their real power to influence the future and act on it. Participation and partnership are central to Cabezudo’s vision. Likewise, Egan (2012) posited that a challenge for Development Learning (DE) is to juxtapose learning with action, asking: “How can DE develop processes that link critical understanding of corporate power to collective action as citizens to engage with and challenge global corporations identified as contributing to global injustice, inequality and poverty?” (51).

For me this question is the key to addressing our social and environmental problems, and the answer to me is clear: critical educators need to reflect on their own positionality, develop confidence in their own agency, join the wave of indignation and speak out against power despite possible repercussions. In so doing we can become active proponents of our own philosophy, inherently completing the link between critical awareness and action to catalyze change in this world. This is not easy, but it is possible; and indeed it is essential, for if we don’t, then who will?

This chapter has outlined some of the main theoretical tenets of critical ecopedagogy. From this I have extracted 5 key interrelated points that I feel are central to critical ecopedagogy and need to be considered as key components in learning for environmental and social justice learning. 1) Critical ecopedagogy identifies

neoliberalism as a root cause that connects social and environmental injustices. 2) Critical ecopedagogy assumes a non-hierarchical, complex axiology and epistemology that emphasizes values diverse approaches to learning and understanding the world. 3) Critical ecopedagogy is critical of power and intersectional oppressions that maintain unequal and undemocratic conditions of living. 4) Critical ecopedagogy emphasizes a holistic understanding of social and environmental injustices. 5) Critical ecopedagogy is an action-oriented approach to learning, which values prior knowledge and experience.

In the next chapter, I will consider these points in relation to learning in social movements and grassroots organizations.

## Chapter 4 Learning in Social Movements

In their 2012 book, *Learning and Learning for a Better World: The Role of Social Movements*, Hall, Clover, Crowther and Scandrett argued that social movements are important sites of public engagement, learning and catalysts for social change. Likewise, Holst (2007) has noted the value of social movements in shifting public perception and challenging power. He pointed out that as a result, “radical adult educators are more frequently looking to social movements as an important, and at times, the fundamental site for social change” (p. 17). Likewise, Schultz (2013) demonstrated his confidence and hope for social movements as forums of societal change: “At the Democracy Center we believe deeply in the potential power that activist democracy always offers us to shape our world” (p. iii).

When examining the role of social movements, and the learning that takes place in them, I return to Freire and his learning vision, because it is really his critical perspective that drives the action component of critical ecopedagogy and inherently challenges the dominant culture narrative of what Kahn (2010) labeled white male science. Freire (1970) recognized that the banking model of learning (used in schools around the world at all levels of learning) reinforced dominant social, economic and cultural norms through a top down process whereby the “all knowing” educator makes a knowledge deposit into the head of the learner who, it is assumed, knows nothing. Freire criticized this method as being static and disempowering. He created a break in this pattern, suggesting that the knowledge of the students was in fact valid, that they did have knowledge and they did hold power. For Freire (2004) the role of radical, critical, and revolutionary learning and knowledge production is crucial, then, to the conscientization

of spirit, a community of action, and a fight for a more egalitarian world. This to me is synonymous with activist learning and learning in social movements, which challenge the status quo, become sites of praxis, and reflect a democratic and shared learning experience.

### **Hopeful Learning**

The active, experiential and hopeful nature of learning differentiates it from the overwhelming, overburdening nature of learning in the banking system, which is susceptible to piling up the problems of the world without offering a hope for viable change. This stagnant, “it is what it is and I can’t change it” mentality is disempowering. In contrast, social movements force people to re-examine the status quo and offer space for conscientization, empowerment and social change. They demand that people fight back against repression, that they take back democratic power and take action. This then is learning of hope, of empowerment, and of living.

Freire discussed at great length different types of hope and why hope is so necessary. At a time where the world is increasingly moving towards an Orwellian state of authority, his sage advice is helpful and necessary. In *A Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire (1992) stated “I am hopeful not out of mere stubbornness, but out of an existential need” (p. 2). He goes on: “I do not understand human existence, and the struggle needed to improve it, apart from hope and dream. Hope is an ontological need” (p.2). Freire importantly distinguished between mere hoping and hoping with action. He explained “hope needs practice in order to become historical concreteness. That is why there is no hope in sheer hopefulness.... just to hope is to hope in vain” (p. 2). Freire (1992) explained “without a minimum of hope we cannot so much as start the struggle” (p.3).

He cautioned that hopelessness “paralyzes us, immobilizes us. We succumb to fatalism, and then it becomes impossible to muster the strength we absolutely need for a fierce struggle that will re-create the world” (p. 2). Hence, hope is connected to action and it is the “task of the progressive educator...to unveil opportunities for hope” (p. 3).

Similarly, Giroux (2006) distinguished between the false, disempowering hope of neoliberalism, which suggests that there is nothing beyond consumerism and accumulation of more things, and one of empowerment. Giroux argued that educated hope develops when one’s life can no longer be taken for granted. Like Freire, he assigned a liberatory value to hope, suggesting that it is political and collective and “translates into civic courage...that confronts...the weight of social suffering with the force of individual and collective resistance and the unending project of democratic social transformation” (pp. 33, 34). Likewise, Cote, Day & de Peuter (2006) suggested hope is a political commitment to act. They viewed it as a “process of becoming” (p. 13).

Clover (2002b) reinforced the connection between conscientization, the political nature of learning, and the empowering nature of learning in social movements. She exemplified this through an explanation of the disempowering nature of current environmental learning, which she described as being overwhelming because it does not provide tangible hope for change. Clover differentiated this with activist learning that offers the possibility of contributing to real change and is thus empowering and practical.

Likewise Hall (2009), in his discussion of learning in social movements, highlighted the active component of learning for participants through a struggle for immediate social change, suggesting that recent social movements are more than indirect

struggles for power and future change, but are also “the world we want experienced right now” (p. 49).

### **Social movements as sites of learning**

For me, the most important lesson to take away from Freire is the lived component of learning in social movements; this requires a fundamental break with the traditional understanding of knowledge transmission and valuing knowledge. Social movements are diverse and defined in multiple ways, but no matter what the cause, they are inherently disruptive of normative patterns of learning, both for organizers and the public in tacit and explicit ways. This is done through taking back public spaces, creating a public classroom. It is accomplished through informal and non-formal learning of the organizers, and it is done through the informal and non-formal learning of the public. The literature identifies learning in social movements as valid and valuable forms of knowledge production. Hall (2009), for example, identified three types of learning in social movements: Informal learning, intentional non formal learning (through organized efforts) and unintentional informal learning that takes place in the public sphere. Schugurensky (2006) explains how informal and nonformal learning contribute to greater participation by increasing agency. Based on his research in Brazil, he suggests that as people come to understand that what they say can make a difference at a local scale there is a tendency for people to participate in broader and broader circles.

Foley (2001) described learners in an activist campaign to save a rainforest in New South Wales to demonstrate the formal and non-formal learning for participants and organizers of social movements. He explained that organizers developed knowledge of the rainforest and skills for working with the state and the media, tangible skills that they

were consciously learning. Foley pointed out that they were also unconsciously developing an understanding of power functioning through authority and a sense of their power to disrupt it and democratically influence society. Foley noted that it was not until they reflected with him on the outcomes of their efforts that they became conscious of this learning.

Hall (2005) pointed out that social movements have the power to engage merely by being in the public space. In occupying a public space activists draw issues out of the dark recesses of conformity and force them into the consciousness of the public sphere. Habermas (1996) referred to reclaiming public space as re-entering the life world, and Giroux (2002) noted that it was essential for learning to “struggle to produce critical public spaces...in which popular cultural resistance is explored as a form of political resistance” (p. xii). Likewise, Shiva (2005) identified the implicit learning power of reclaiming the commons. She pointed out that beyond bringing issues to the forefront, physically occupying public spaces challenges the dominant narrative of privatization, asking people to reconsider the meaning of shared space, community, and the commons.

### **Examples from the Quebec student strikes in 2012**

Palacios, Hampton, Ferrer, Moses and Lee (2013) explained that in the 2012 Quebec student movements a lot of explicit learning was taking place with organized learning outcomes through teach-ins, workshops and demos, while protests and pickets educated both the public and the organizers. This is something that I can relate to personally, as I was there, participating in teach-ins, demonstrations and gaining important experiential learning in the process of mobilizing graduate students in the faculty of learning at Concordia to support the strike, and take to the streets. Reflecting

back, I learned a number of skills that are involved in the process of democratic participation, both in terms of assembling, achieving quorum, voting procedures, and coordination with other departments and unions. Most importantly, through active participation I gained a tremendous amount of confidence in myself as an organizer, leader, and participant in society. It is difficult to express exactly, but prior to the strikes I had cared about the world, but did not have a lot of confidence in myself or in my ability to actually impact the world, and generally remained aloof from political and social activism, leaving space for better-suited people. While I did not miraculously emerge as a great leader, I did learn that I could directly effect change as a participant. This is incredibly inspirational because it gives me hope that change is indeed possible. This realization has spiralled me into the invigorating world of activism and community participation.

Another direct outcome of the Quebec student strikes was the numerous classes that were held outside of the classroom. When students went on strike there was a plethora of classes that were offered informally, not for credit outside of institutions. There was no formal organization beyond a forum that matched teachers to classes. Classes were taught by sympathetic professors, professionals, grad students, and in some cases undergraduate students. They were held in coffee shops, community halls, and public parks around the city of Montreal and covered all kinds of topics from law to biology to politics and environment.

The impact that such actions have on the public (as Hall 2009 suggested) can be exemplified again in the Quebec student strikes through the behaviour of my younger brother. He was also a student, but did not identify at all with the fight against tuition

freezes at the beginning of the movement. As the movement was prolonged and grew, he began to ask questions and eventually he even joined in the movement. Had this not been in the public sphere he would not have thought more deeply on the matter and I am sure that he is not the only one.

An appreciation of these types of learning is significant, not only to understand learning outcomes, or to create immediate social change, but also to challenge dominant neoliberal constructions of knowledge as institutional and to challenge learning as a banking approach. In acknowledging multiple ways of knowing and learning in social movements we are resisting the narrative of white male science and suggesting other possibilities of learning, and ultimately of being.

### **Addressing intersectional oppression through social movements**

Thus far I have focused on global and social elements of learning through critical pedagogy. I have suggested that social movements are important places for broad societal change, namely against neoliberalism. The danger of this broad approach is that it sweeps all people into my white cultural perspective. As I study the value of social movements, I am reminded that within these broader movements, there exist also tensions of race and gender and class among other things. I am reminded of my own position as a white male settler in Canada, and recall the work of bell hooks (2000) who outlined the second phase of feminism as being dominated by wealthy white women, thus forgetting and forsaking women of colour and women in poverty. Palacios et al. (2013), through their study of the 2012 Quebec student strike from the perspective of students of colour, problematized the Quebec student movement at the outset for representing the concerns of the dominant white hetero male and thus reinforcing and normalizing intersectional

oppressions in society. In their study of the student movement, Palacios et al. also outlined the potential of social movements to open spaces of critical thinking about intersectional oppressions. They outlined how they challenged the dominant narrative within the Quebec student movement. The case of the Quebec student strikes is a very good one to bear in mind, as it was primarily led by the majority, white, French population. Palacios et al. revealed their struggle to link racial, colonial and gender issues to the broader student movement through their organization, Students of Colour Montreal (SoCM). They explained that at the outset, the movement did not include the voice of students of colour, or those who identify as queer, trans or gender non-conforming, but that they forced the issues to the forefront through teach-ins and changing the language of official student documents so that, “increasing numbers of white students began to make the links between the neoliberalisation of higher learning and the role of colonial capital in expropriating Indigenous land and displacing racialized migrants.” (p. 9). They pointed out that this would not have happened if SoCM had not joined forces with the LGBTQ community to struggle and act on their own oppression within the activities of the broader movement. They asked very poignantly what the response would be if the students who took to the street were predominantly black, queer, or aboriginal. This reminder is vital to the study of social movements as it reveals both the danger of perpetuating dominant narratives and the opportunity to address them more deeply. Palacios et al. explained the potential of social movements to address these issues well in the following quote: “Resistance requires that we break out of the compartments into which we are socially slotted by a (White supremacist, neocolonial,

hetero-patriarchal)<sup>1</sup> society that would have us believe that what is...is all that is possible” (p. 15).

Mann (2011) described how social actions can achieve this in his example of the bus riders union, which started out as a movement to increase the number of buses on the road in Los Angeles in 1992. He explained how the movement valued and embraced the leadership of a wide and diverse community and in so doing it critically addressed issues of poverty, LGBTQ, immigrant and race rights within the common battle for more buses. He suggested this changed the participants’ views on many issues. He gives the example of an organizing meeting to discuss future action, where there was also a presentation on LGBTQ rights. For Mann, the bus riders union was merely a window into a multitude of the social justice issues, and ultimately for radical social change and global justice. Indeed this is an element of activist organizations and social movements that must be at the forefront, and one that I will pay particular attention to in my research.

Hall (2009) went so far as to say “I would argue that in every area of sociological analysis or political theorizing, the new frameworks for understanding power in relation to race, dis/ability, gender, the rest of nature or even spiritual life have originated in the movements of our time.” (p. 67).

## **Chapter Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have claimed that social movements are fundamental places of empowering learning, and as such serve as potential spaces to catalyze change. I consider learning in social movements to be compatible with the 5 key points I identified in critical ecopedagogy: 1) Critical ecopedagogy identifies neoliberalism as a root cause

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<sup>1</sup> Parentheses are part of the original quote.

that connects social and environmental injustices. 2) Critical ecopedagogy assumes a non-hierarchical, complex axiology and epistemology that emphasizes values diverse approaches to learning and understanding the world. 3) Critical ecopedagogy is critical of power and intersectional oppressions that maintain unequal and undemocratic conditions of living. 4) Critical ecopedagogy emphasizes a holistic understanding of social and environmental injustices. 5) Critical ecopedagogy is an action-oriented approach to learning, which values prior knowledge and experience. I suggest that critical ecopedagogy has potential to guide grassroots activism and social change. Together they can occupy our consciousness and actions, and create the change we want to see in this world here and now.

I use this theoretical framework to examine the question: How do grassroots movements and activist organizations with mandates for systemic and democratic change in society become catalysts of change, and how do they view their role as such? The research situates these campaigns as important sites of public education and presents practical strategies for teaching and learning as if the world mattered. Central to this is the question of how social movements can open up space to challenge the dominant culture and intersectional oppression. Specifically in Victoria, social movements cannot be addressed without the consideration of colonialism, and the relationship held between dominant, white organizers and indigenous peoples whose lands we occupy.

## Chapter 5: Methodology

With everything having life, with everything having the power of speech, with everything having the power to breathe, with everything having the power to teach and guide, with that in blessing we will live. (Navajo chief, in Abram, p. 237)

### Introduction

This research aims to highlight positive spaces of nonformal and informal learning and learning that offer an opportunity to live well in the world. This requires identifying and confronting hegemonic power, and specifically the hierarchical structure of Western Knowledge, which Battiste (2005) explains “rates some kinds of knowledge as more valuable than other kinds of knowledge” and has a “destructive impact on many indigenous principles.” (p. 123). This is, in my mind, an understatement. As identified in the discussion of Critical Ecopedagogy, Eurocentric claims of control over knowledge function to maintain power. This is evident in Canada where Indigenous culture and learning has been repressed systemically, and is recognized as cultural genocide in the 2015 *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015). The university is therefore firmly entrenched in colonization both in terms of the history of cultural repression and knowledge validation and also in terms of physical dispossession of land. The University of Victoria stands on the traditional territory of the WS'ANEC' (Saanich), Lkwungen (Songhees) and Wyomilth (Esquimalt) peoples of the Coast Salish Nation. Ultimately, this institution exists because Indigenous people were dispossessed. WS'ANEC' scholar Claxton (2015) connected indigenous learning to land explaining, “the real problem is the disconnection and dispossession of our indigenous peoples from

their land and waters.” (p. 14). Removing learning is a big part of the colonial legacy in Canada. I bring this up to identify the particular need to consider knowledge and knowledge production from a perspective far broader than the traditional Eurocentric perspective.

The monopolization of knowledge is not only a function of reproducing and reinforcing colonial power, it has significantly reduced human ability to realize our full potential which could emerge through diverse ways of knowing and looking at the world. The monopolization of knowledge and reduction of diversity has resulted in significant disharmony and brought the entire planet to the brink of catastrophe. Umcek (2011) explains that the current crisis is a reflection of internal disharmony caused by the narrative of natural selection and survival of the fittest where the powerful prevail with no adequate way of identifying any spiritual or moral values. He suggests that the resulting current state of inequality is “a process of imbalances and disharmonies that guarantees conflict.” (p. 22). Likewise Mota and Esteeves (2014) suggested,

The geopolitics of knowledge produced through the colonial capitalist pedagogies of everyday life enacts a violent monological closure and silencing of all ‘others’. Emotional, embodied, oral, popular and spiritual knowledges are delegitimized, invisibilised (sic) and denied. Other ways of relating to the earth, each other, the cosmos and our selves are annihilated. (p. 5)

This hegemonic power needs to be critically challenged, and in its place we need to embrace a deep ecology, one that does not assume hierarchies or dominance over nature, animals or fellow beings.

Davis (2004) suggested that knowing and learning is an unfolding of personal and collective identities, culture, intercultural space, and the biosphere. This attitude needs to be encouraged in learning and research. Knowledge needs to be understood as co-created, and living as co-habituating. Learning a story that encourages diversity and values a wide range of techniques for studying and interpreting the world, is for Umeek (2015) entirely necessary in order to find harmony in the world and avoid the catastrophe of complete planetary destruction that currently faces this earth. I have approached this research, and this entire program of study with the goal of comprehending, as the introductory quote in this chapter suggests, that everything has the power to teach and guide. This research is ultimately attempting to reharmonize and balance the world. It showcases a type of learning that prioritizes a story of collaboration, interdependence, love and hope. It is important for me that in doing so, I use a method of inquiry that embodies the learning and teaching I attempt to orchestrate here.

Contemplating my own research I must earnestly consider that I could in fact be contributing to colonisation and control of knowledge by participating in the University and being conferred a title that suggests I have achieved “higher learning”. This has caused me great consternation, and has lead me to seriously contemplate, especially at these latter stages in my program, to purposefully withdraw from the program prior to receiving the validation of this research, through a piece of paper calling me a doctor and allowing me to join a privileged club of ‘knowers’. When my own research is rooted in the collective, diverse knowledge of my community and showcasing the importance of valuing this knowledge, it is difficult to rationalise my own institutionalized knowledge. Am I validating the system even as I try to expand it? Do I believe that somehow the

tools and assumptions that brought us to where we are can be used to get us out of the problem? Or, is there also another story present in the university? A story that is changing the institution itself, and what the meaning of knowledge is? I have spent countless hours reflecting on these questions. I am not certain of my decision, but have arrived at it by reflecting on my own lived experience at the university and the examples of my mentors who slip between university and community in their work.

I have come to appreciate diverse ways of learning as a result of the relationships I have built in the community and also in the university. As I look around at my mentors and colleagues at the university with whom I have worked closely over the years, I cannot ignore the influence that they have exerted, largely by example, in challenging me to revisit my own perceptions and worldview and to have this reflected in my research methods. This presents a different perspective of the university, of people committed to introducing and showcasing broader understandings of knowledge and challenging the supremacy of traditional Eurocentric white male knowledge. My research hopes to honour and contribute to this second perception of the university through the praxis of recognizing and emphasizing the learning that takes place in the community, contextualising it through theory and applying it in the community. The learning that takes place in social movements and grassroots organizations represents a democratic and organic form of knowledge creation, with a focus on learning about the heart and the connection to the planet. Mota and Esteeves (2014) suggest “the pedagogical practices of social movements are at the heart of the reinvention of an emancipatory politics of knowledge for the 21st century.” (p.21). I want my research to also challenge the traditional white male scientific paradigm of knowledge production that still exists

ubiquitously in the university and is reproduced through positivistic research practices that claim “objectivity” and definite truth. Qualitative research practices that value other types of knowing and living have immense potential to challenge these antiquated views and to transform our society into a more just and caring place. The principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR) such as reciprocity, shared knowledge creation and shared democratic outcomes informing social change (e.g. McGregor, Clover, Sanford, & Krawetz, 2008) therefore align well with my intended outcomes. Hall (2009) suggests that democratising knowledge creation and validating multiple sources of knowledge are among the purposes of using a participatory action research approach.

### **Methods of Inquiry**

**Participatory Action Research (PAR).** I would like to first address the use of the terms Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Participatory Research (PR), as they are both used to refer to a similar process, one that I will be using to conduct my research. Joyappa and Martin (1996) suggested that Participatory Action Research (PAR) refers to the same general process as PR, with some slight differences; namely, PR stresses liberatory aspects, whereas PAR stresses cooperative aspects between researcher and subjects (p. 5). Joyappa and Martin (1996) conceded that the difference is subtle and that both terms generally refer to the same process. Similarly Hall (1985) acknowledged that the processes are generally the same. Hall (1985) and Joyappa and Martin (1996) all distinguished that the term PAR came out of social movements in South America, while PR originated in social movements in Tanzania, both in the early 1970’s, and both heavily influenced by the work of Paulo Freire. Both are concerned with grassroots participation rather than a top down driven research process, both have a social justice

initiative and both developed out of activist/ social movements as part of a struggle against oppression. In addressing this research process, I will use PAR and consider it, like Hall (2005), interchangeable with PR.

Hall (1985) articulated that PAR is a social action process that combines research, learning, and action to challenge unequal power structures and empower exploited peoples (p.16). He argued there was no set rule book of methods for doing PAR, but that it is based in social justice, and is a research process that is practical, collaborative and the issues and ways of working flow “from those involved and their context” (p. 20). Brydon-Miller, Kral, Maguire, Noffke & Sabhlok (2011) used the metaphor of a Banyan tree to express that PAR provides a space within which community partners can come together, highlighting that it is a process by which they can critically examine the issues facing them, generating knowledge and taking action to address these concerns. They combine theory and practice in cycles of action and reflection that are aimed toward solving concrete community problems while deepening understanding of the broader social, economic, and political forces that shape these issues. Creswell (2013) suggested that PAR is an action agenda for empowerment, liberation and transformative change. Likewise, Tandon (1988) suggested that PAR has “enormous potential as a major contributor in transforming the struggles of poor and deprived peoples” (p.6).

Central to PAR is the understanding that everyone is capable of generating knowledge, that knowledge is subjective and socially construed. The research process is therefore democratic and collaborative. Brydon-Miller et al (2011) posited that PAR is built on the notion that knowledge generation is a collaborative process in which each participant’s diverse experiences and skills are critical to the outcome of the work.

Similarly, Creswell (2013) described PAR as an inductive and emergent process. He highlighted that it holds an epistemological assumption of knowledge as subjective and collectively construed.

The dominant, neo-liberal paradigm of thought is so ingrained in our everyday lives that PR remains an alternative, radical method of research. Joyappa and Martin (1996) argued that the current research paradigm is based in patriarchal power-oriented approaches where control over what knowledge is and who has access to it is preserved in the hands of those in power. They pointed out that the tendency is for a top down objective approach to research whereby the researcher tends to treat the researched as objects of study rather than as actors in their own right. This emphasizes a “we know better” philosophy and preserves an imbalance of power. Joyappa and Martin (1996) demonstrated how the old paradigm is being challenged by progressive research methods such as Feminist Research (FR) and Participatory Research (PR) explaining that they are both “empower-oriented approaches in that they seek to empower individuals and community in ways that lead to social change” (p.2).

It seemed intuitive that I would use PAR as a method of research, as the ontological and epistemological assumptions align with the goals of this research. Critical theory, like PAR is concerned with power relations and social justice; one aspect of this is control over knowledge. My discussion of critical theory in the literature revealed that learning institutions and knowledge production has been usurped by neoliberal ideology and reproduces the dominant norms. The theory demanded a fundamental change in the way we look at the world. PAR developed from a realization that we can't fix problems using the same methods that caused the problems in the first

place. Critical theory calls for action based on reflection. PAR emphasizes an action component that challenges knowledge production and power structures. PAR as a methodology can be reflected in multiple methods of research both quantitative and qualitative. I have chosen qualitative research approach because the study seeks to illuminate the stories and lived experiences of the participants.

**Qualitative research.** Bogdan and Biklen (1992) explain that qualitative research aims to understand the participants' points of view. Marshall and Rossman (2011) explain that qualitative research tends to be conducted in natural settings where the researcher views "social worlds as holistic and complex" (p. 2). Marshall and Rossman emphasize that qualitative research is "emergent and evolving and is fundamentally interpretive" (p. 2). They emphasize that because qualitative research is subjective, the researcher must therefore constantly reflect on and clarify the influence they exert on the research. Likewise Berg and Lune (2012) identified that qualitative research recognizes the subjectivity, bias, identity and positionality of the researcher in relation to the research. Yin (2003) highlights the emergent nature of qualitative research suggesting that there are no routine formulas or preconceived findings. She elaborated the researcher must be flexible and open to the possibility of findings that were not predicted.

**Case study.** Moore, Lapan and Quartaroli (2012) posited that qualitative case studies examine complex phenomena and how people interact with them. They clarified that case studies select single instances, and generate thick, rich descriptions that capture the complexities of the phenomena being studied (p. 243). Moore et al. indicated that the parameters of a case study must be identified, and the personal biases of the

researcher disclosed. This research study aims to generate deeper insight into the learning value of activist organizations by capturing the stories and lived experiences of the research participants. The participants in the research identified the use of a case study as a useful means of capturing and understanding the complexities of the campaign being studied.

### **Consolidating the study and the methods**

When I first began to develop the parameters for this research, I had only a few general ideas. I wanted to challenge social and environmental injustice, and find compelling, and hopeful ways to have others do the same. I knew that the research would necessarily be a grassroots-based process and challenge my own position of power. I entered the research with the goal of finding learning that speaks truth in the face of power and illuminates global injustice and exploitation perpetrated by Canadian trade, foreign policy, investments and lifestyle. My Master's research had identified that civil society organizations and NGOs are generally limited in their ability to speak out publicly, so I was on a search to find a grassroots organizations that do this type of work.

PAR embodies a practice of social justice, and challenge the traditional knowledge hegemony by embracing and learning from community experience. In order to pursue this research, directly upon arriving in Coast Salish territory, I attempted to get to know the community as best I could. I have spent five years working with a variety of groups on projects ranging from international development, local poverty, and environmental issues. I participated in learning campaigns, organized political rallies, volunteered in soup kitchens, helped with community garden initiatives, and participated in direct action where necessary. Most importantly, I have become exposed to local Coast

Salish cultures and entered into discussion and attempted practice aimed at decolonization. It was in this context that I became involved in a protest campaign against tanker traffic entitled Turning The Tide: A Peoples Paddle for the Salish Sea. It was a kayaktivist project initiated as a sub project of an activist organization I work with, the Social Environmental Alliance. I helped to organize the campaign in the first year, and produced a short film about it. It was in conversations with members of this organizing group about my program of study and research goals that Turning The Tide (TTT) was proposed as a potential research project, by members of the organizing committee. I was not entirely convinced at first that this would quite match the global nature of what I wanted to study, but I was convinced by organizers that in fact tanker traffic and fossil fuel extraction had an impact on climate change and therefore the globe. My interest was piqued, and keeping in mind what Yin (2003) explained as the emergent nature of qualitative research, and Hall's (1992) description of PAR as developing from a question in the community, I agreed to a case study of the second year of Turning The Tide (TTT).

My initial question examining grassroots movements and activist organizations with mandates for systemic and democratic change in society did not change, however my focus shifted from global to local context, with an emphasis on environmental activism. In the process of producing the film in the first year I had noticed a great deal of learning that connected social and environmental issues in a manner that resonated with critical ecopedagogy, with a strong emphasis on colonialism and reflection about the meaning of protesting as settlers on Coast Salish water. TTT committee members expressed an interest in examining these relations further through this research. I have

related my story of entry into this research to establish credibility of the study in terms of PAR, and also to reinforce the close and trusting relationship I hold with the participants in the research.

### **Timeline of research and study design**

After informal conversations with the organizers of TTT in 2014 and the suggestion by several of them to conduct this research, my proposal was addressed in the organizing meeting of January 26, 2015 where a resolution was passed unanimously that I would, with the guidance of some of the organizers, conduct a case study of the TTT 2015 campaign. Organizing members signed consent forms authorizing me to record meetings with audio and my own notes, as well as use official meeting notes and publicly available resources such as the website and Facebook page. At each of the following organizing meetings I reminded participants that I was conducting research and requested permission to audio record. Other than a couple of times where the recording was asked to be paused, when personal issues were being discussed, all meetings were recorded.

In April I sat down with two organizers who had an interest in developing the study, and we agreed to conduct interviews with the members of the organizing committee directly after the Flotilla campaign of July 24 to July 27, 2015. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest that literature inform the questions and I therefore shared the 5 points identified in the literature on critical ecopedagogy and social movements to help guide the research questions. These 5 points are: 1) Critical ecopedagogy identifies neoliberalism as a root cause that connects social and environmental injustices. 2) Critical ecopedagogy assumes a non-hierarchical, complex axiology and epistemology that emphasizes values diverse approaches to learning and understanding the world. 3)

Critical ecopedagogy is critical of power and intersectional oppressions that maintain unequal and undemocratic conditions of living. 4) Critical ecopedagogy emphasizes a holistic understanding of social and environmental injustices. 5) Critical ecopedagogy is an action-oriented approach to learning, which values prior knowledge and experience.

In April, I drafted a list of open ended semi structured questions, and distributed them to the organizing committee for approval and suggested edits. The questions are available in Appendix B. I then met in person with the two members who were guiding the research and we decided on a final list of questions to be used as general guidelines for post interviews with participants. All members of the organizing committee were invited to participate in interviews. Interviews were conducted directly after the protest campaign, in the first two weeks of August 2015 with 13 participants, representing different components of the campaign. Some of the research participants opted to be interviewed together. All interviews were conducted in a place of the participants' choosing, which meant that I travelled to their homes, several of whom live on the Southern Gulf Islands. All participants except one declined video recording, choosing audio recording instead. The one interview that was video recorded includes a visual of the route travelled through the campaign and this segment is included in the data presentation. The participants come from different backgrounds, live on different islands and held distinct organizing roles in the protest campaign, and thus combined their disparate perspectives have generated a rich data set and a holistic story of TTT. Shenton (2004) has explained that having diverse participants help to broaden perspective and ensure validity in qualitative research by triangulation. A description of the participants and their role in TTT is described in the data and available in chart form in Appendix C.

In addition, the meeting notes and my field notes helped to triangulate the data, as prescribed by Bogden and Bicklen (1992) to ensure validity in research. I transcribed the data personally in the fall of 2015, and began to code and analyse the data in the spring and summer of 2016. PAR dictates that research must come from the community and also benefit the community. This particular research has and will continue to benefit the specific strategies in place for the ongoing TTT campaign through my own participation and through ongoing reports back to the organizing committee as the research has progressed.

The results of this research clearly extend to the broader activist community in the region and will be transferred to other organizations and campaigns through the individual organizers of TTT who are involved in other activist groups as well, and through a public presentation of the results organized by the Social Environmental Alliance upon successful defence of my dissertation. Members of the organizing committee for TTT have also expressed interest in reading my full dissertation and disseminating the information through a podcast and through a presentation as part of the learning programming for TTT 2017. They hope that the dissemination of the research can extend the learning initiatives behind TTT. This is consistent with the data that emerged about the learning in TTT itself, which identifies story as a powerful means of learning and inspiring hope and action. This is discussed further in the data analysis chapter of this dissertation; here I draw attention to the transferability of the results to reinforce the validity of the research. Presenting the data to the participants also holds me accountable.

## **Data coding and analysis**

Berg and Lune (2012) suggest that data analysis requires focus and time. The key to my method was to read, read and re-read the interview transcript. Transcribing the interviews personally helped me to become more familiar with the data. After reading through all of the interviews twice, I began making a list of general categories that emerged, indexing them with notes in the margins of the transcriptions. I then grouped quotations according to emerging categories by copying and pasting the relevant quotations into separate category specific word documents. I then read through the separate documents and regrouped them into sections and subsections within broader themes that emerged as a result of the indexing.

The data analysis emerged little by little as I began to categorise and classify categories and themes in relation to the research question. There was a lot of data, especially in the meeting notes, which introduced themes related to organizing structure and procedure, and organizers learning new skills. While these themes are consistent with learning in social movement theory, they were not relevant to the specific research question and therefore not included in the presentation of the data or the analysis. The analysis of the data presents a thematic story of learning and strategy for grassroots protest campaigns and social movement building. The three broad themes that emerged and which are presented in the analysis are: 1) Building regional capacity, 2) Informal and non-formal learning and 3) Systemic Change: Cultural learning and global connections.

## **Ethics**

Ensuring a relationship of trust and having accountability to the participants in the research was important for me. All participants signed a consent form and were fully

cognizant of the purpose and scope of my research. They were also aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions. The same consent form was used for all participants (Appendix A) and presented both at the outset of the research and again upon being interviewed. I reminded them at each meeting about the research and requested to pursue it. There were a few instances where I was asked to omit private conversations from meeting notes, which I did. Participants in the research were open in their organizing roles and did not choose anonymity, although they were given the option to be assigned pseudonyms. The research questions were steered by the committee of interested participants. There are no power relationships here, as I do not hold a position of authority over any of the members. Data was stored electronically on secure password protected servers. Interviews were conducted using professional equipment borrowed from the university, and all files were erased prior to returning the equipment. Participants are aware of the risk that police may target them as environmental activists under current Canadian security legislation (as discussed in the literature review in chapter 2), though not having done anything illegal. As known leaders in their community, and open organizers of this event, they recognize that this risk is more likely to come to fruition through the public nature of the campaign.

### **Locating myself as the Researcher**

I have detailed above an approach to research that relies on the guidance and participation of the organization that I studied. I would like to emphasize that this research process itself opens a space for learning to be acknowledged and understood differently. It is the process and product of learning, challenge dominant power relations in a positive, liberating and empowering way and is thus integral and essential to the

struggle for social and environmental justice in our world. However, it is impossible not to forget that I am an active member of the organization that I am studying. This gives the benefit of stronger and closer relationships with the participants in the research, however it also brings me closer to the research. I have constantly reflected upon and analysed my own position throughout the research in an effort to keep the participants' voices dominant.

Living in Canada as a white settler, and especially occupying Coast Salish lands, which have never been ceded, I acknowledge that in fighting for human and environmental rights, I am doing so as a colonizer and settler myself. My own learning and ability to enter the university is based on privilege accrued over generations. This privilege reflects the dispossession of indigenous land and culture and ways of knowing through this same time period. I hope that this research can begin to untangle some of the complexities of settler-activist colonial relationships. I would like to make clear that while I attempt to contribute to the conversation of decolonization, decolonization is not the central focus of this research. I think the research suggests that there is a lot more work to be done to reconcile the colonial past and move towards a decolonized future. All of our futures depend on it.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have laid out some of the principles of qualitative participatory action research. I embodied them in the interactive lens of my own experience, the literature and the research I would like to pursue, all of which challenge the hegemony of positivist conceptions of knowledge and knowledge production. The literature and the research insist that knowing is subjective and that learning is collaborative. This is

balanced by the grassroots, emergent, democratic nature of participatory research, which has potential to be transformative, empowering and liberating as they challenge the participants to think critically and take action.

I would like to emphasize the importance of using this methodological approach, as it is fundamental in the struggle for social justice. The research process itself opens a space for learning to be acknowledged and understood differently. It is the process and product of learning and it challenges dominant power relations in a positive, liberating and empowering way. Therefore the research process is integral and essential to the struggle for social and environmental justice in our world.

## Chapter 6: Data

This chapter presents the data in four categories: 1) building leadership; 2) building a movement; 3) connecting people and the planet; and 4) broader community engagement. These categories emerged in response to my research question: How do grassroots activism and activist organizations with mandates for systemic and democratic change catalyze change in society? Prior to entering into these categories I present a brief description of Turning the Tide (TTT), the participants and their role in TTT to help contextualise the data.

### Event Description

The full name of the campaign is: “Turning The Tide: A people’s paddle for the Salish Sea”. The mission statement according to the website reads:

Turning the Tide is an ongoing public awareness campaign culminating with a multi day human powered journey through the Salish Sea. Our goal is to do more than simply demonstrate our opposition to new pipelines and increased tanker traffic, but also build organizational capacity and links of solidarity among concerned citizens in coastal communities. We see this campaign as a piece to a larger movement to protect our coastal environment and resource economy and build a broad-based mass movement focussed on building solutions beyond the petroleum based economy. (n/p)

TTT took place in July 2014, 2015 and 2016. The year that this research examines is 2015, which involved 100 people over 5 days swimming, kayaking, and canoeing from Swartz Bay to Salt Spring Island to Mayne Island to Pender Island and back to Swartz Bay for a total of about 60 kilometers travelled. I will rely on Doc, the route planner, to

tell the story of where the paddle took place. I use video here because it makes the physical component of the paddle much more visceral and draws the reader into the campaign in ways that words cannot. Doc traces the route on a map and explains the water conditions and route times. [Click here for the video](#). The transcript of the video is available as Appendix D.

There was a large programming component in the campaign, which is important to share in order to get an idea of the learning and engagement throughout the campaign. This included community celebrations with public speakers, music, and shared food on each of the islands as well as workshops, public speakers and facilitated sessions aimed at identifying and initiating planning for action on issues that people felt were important to them. The workshop schedule, taken directly from meeting notes is available as Appendix E.

**Participants.** Participant roles are available for quick reference in chart form as appendix B. Participants that I interviewed together I present together in this section as they generally worked closely together in the organizing process.

***Sasha and Kristen.*** The idea of TTT originated with Sasha and Kristen's daughter as Sasha recounts:

My daughter bought me a book about a long distance swimmer who raised awareness about political issues. Simultaneously the Enbridge pipeline approval came down with the 200 or so conditions and it seemed like there was a need to engage people on the coast on this issue, do something constructive.

Sasha and Kristen are both politically active and have been organizing together in

the activist community for a decade. Sasha was the chair of TTT, and he views his role as one of oversight and applying his services where they were needed. Kristen was responsible for registration, but felt involved in multiple ways: “A small group of us organized the whole the thing really. We did it all.” They both identify as central leaders to the event and even as mentors to less experienced paddlers.

Both Sasha and Kristen agree that accomplishing the TTT mission involved focusing on the learning and empowerment of the paddlers and less on the island communities hosting the paddlers. Still, they viewed a primary goal of the flotilla as “building solidarity among coastal communities, I think this is the ultimate reason why we paddle.” Kristin sees TTT as an uplifting, reinvigorating and inspiring event for potentially burned out activists and she wants “to be part of creating that in my community.” In addition, they both see this as fitting into a broader social change project.

**Ben.** Ben is a Victoria city councillor and Central Regional District Director. He is an academic with a PHD in history examining social movements. He is a central figure in the activist community in Victoria. His main role in organizing was updating the website and social media and helping to facilitate on the water logistics (coordinating the paddle groups). It was Ben who suggested to me, after the first year the event took place, that TTT could be a good case study for my dissertation, and he and Sasha played a central role, in giving direction to the research.

Ben sees TTT as “an embryo of a social movement”, which advocates for “the transition to a post carbon economy to protect the Salish Sea from the threat of tankers, tar sands and pipelines, but also to build solidarity between conscious citizens...and to make progress on other social and environmental issues”. For Ben, the most exciting

aspect of TTT is linking the physical communities of the Southern Gulf Islands, as well as linking communities of people and organizations who are connected by shared values. Ben felt that the TTT experience was a unique combination of “outdoor recreation with friends and family with social justice, ecology and inspiring political action.”

**Doc (FlotCom).** Doc is an instructor in wilderness first aid, and a long time outdoor guide and activist. He occupies the position of Flotilla Commander (FlotCom), and is responsible for safety on the water, route planning, as well as recruiting and training kayak guides. He sees himself as an outdoor educator, building political and ecological learning through the experience of being on the water.

Doc joined TTT because he cares about the Salish Sea and wants to protect it: “I work and recreate in these areas. I have also worked in Alaska and seen first hand what happens when a tanker leaks, and I don’t want to do it here.” Doc is the eldest of the organizers and sees his involvement as being “for my kids”, both because he wants them to grow up in a healthy environment and also because he wants them to see that he is trying: “Once I’m dead and gone the planet is going to be a different place for [my kids], and I want them to look back and say, gosh my dad really tried.” Doc sees the goal of TTT as exposing people to the water and the environment from a perspective they do not get on larger watercraft like the ferry. He also sees value in “connecting islanders, and showing that we are all people with similar concerns.”

**Ryan.** Ryan is the Director of the Redfish School of Change, and a sessional instructor at the University of Victoria in environmental learning. Ryan led a workshop entitled “It Takes All Kinds” which aimed to get at what change looks like. She included TTT as part of a for-credit field course for 20 students from British Columbia and

Washington State. Her role was to integrate her school program into TTT. In her interview, she reflects on learning largely in relation to what her students took away from the experience. Ryan joined TTT because she had heard about the previous year's experience. For her, TTT is a space of empowerment and vulnerability where people can share their fear, joy and love for the world, and ultimately care for it.

**Emily.** Emily has a background in political organizing at the local, provincial and federal level. In terms of TTT, Emily explains her experience:

I came into TTT two years ago through a friend. I strongly enjoy the socializing of organizing and the impact on the Salish Sea, so I guess my motivation for participating is selfish and altruistic given that I am taking action for what I believe is for the betterment of the larger community.

Emily's role was in the learning and programming component. Her perspective is therefore focused on the purposefully created spaces of non-formal and informal learning. She distinguishes the learning as "intellectual learning goals, and more tangible experiential goals". In response to what she gets out of TTT she indicates "community skills, knowledge: All the things that I want everybody to have."

**Ron and Misty.** Ron and Misty are organizers on Pender Island. Misty is a marine biologist working for the Raincoast Conservation Foundation and the Gulf Islands Alliance. She helped organize and plan events on Pender Island and delivered a workshop on her research looking at Salmon and Orcas in the Salish Sea. Ron runs the recycling centre on Pender Island and his family owns the campground where we stayed. He was instrumental in organizing musicians and food and he built a massive stage for the event. For Ron, the event was really important because he gets to, "participate and help out in a

project that is meaningful for me that embodies the values that I value.” He feels that an oil spill is a real threat to all of the island communities. Ron and Misty both feel that TTT has an impact on the Pender Island community, as Ron explains: “People in the community are really activated and encouraged by TTT.”

**Jay.** Jay owns and operates Pender Island Kayak Adventures. He provided kayaks to a number of paddlers, offered a workshop on kayak skills as part of the programming and his role was to, “facilitate a clean smooth event on Pender.” This included taking care of the food and general set up and take down of chairs and renting out the community hall kitchen.

Jay said he joined the organizing team because, “I love helping out as much as I can, especially when there is a good cause.” He views TTT as a good cause because “it created awareness not only around here, but many beyond the 100 paddlers that were here”. Jay offers a dual organizing perspective, reflecting on the impact of the paddlers on the island community, and as a kayak guide from an outdoor educator’s perspective. He also reflects a good deal on the relationship with First Nations. For Jay, changing perspectives about living was a key goal: “I think in terms of generations, having a young family here now. A lot of the “progress” of the world and the industrialization of everything is not sustainable.”

**Kye.** Kye owns and runs Dog Mermaid Excursions on Pender Island, which offers eco friendly hiking, kayaking and stand up paddle boarding excursions. She is also a yoga instructor. Kye views her role as a host. She “provided a stand up paddle board yoga workshop, got the food, and worked on the posters.” Kye sees the paddle as an empowering learning experience. She joined TTT because she wants “everyone to feel

this voice they have.” She feels that there is urgency in protecting the Salish Sea because otherwise, “it is not going to be here 10 years from now.” Kye explains that the paddle had a big impact on the Pender Island community the year before and so, “this year I really wanted to be part of it.”

***Sandra and Jan.*** Sandra and Jan organized on Salt Spring Island. Jan took the lead on organizing a community reception on Salt Spring, with Sandra’s support. This included welcoming the paddlers to Salt Spring, organizing local musicians and a potluck style community meal. Sandra organized the event the year before. They also organized a lead-up event where they showed a movie of TTT from the previous year. Both emphasize connecting people to strategize to create environmental change in the region.

***Annette.*** Annette was the sole organizer on Mayne Island. She is a schoolteacher, small business owner, mother and environmental activist. She organized a welcoming ceremony, a community cultural event with food and music in a local park and energized the Mayne community. Annette is an intervener with the National Energy Board on the proposed Kinder Morgan pipeline, and joined TTT to raise awareness about the threat of oil spills in her community. She places a lot of emphasis on learning about colonisation in the area and working for reconciliation. Annette provides insight into the impact of TTT on the Mayne Island community in the interview emphasizing a shift in thought on Mayne Island, and a feeling of renewed inspiration as a result of the paddle.

**Governance model.** TTT came together as the result of an idea initiated by Sasha’s daughter and taken up by Sasha and Kristen. They remained the de facto leaders of the organization, sharing duties of convening and chairing meetings. However authority for decisions was done by all of the organizers at monthly meetings. Consensus

for decisions was generally aimed at, with a circle model of communication where everyone had a chance to speak their opinion before opening up the floor to general discussion. In the case of differences in opinion, a vote was held with majority ruling, however in instances where someone had a strong opinion then this was negotiated until agreed upon. Sub committees were formed to address different aspects of organizing, and these committees, once given their approval by the group had considerable leeway to do what they want. So the model was one based on power sharing which encouraged the voice and experience of all organizers.

The participants in the research are all dedicated to building a stronger community based in sustainability and equality. It is in this context that they joined efforts to build TTT. Their stories emerge in this research in four categories: 1) building leadership; 2) building a movement; 3) connecting people and the planet; and 4) broader community engagement.

### **Building Leadership**

Participants see building leadership as a key objective for catalyzing change in society. Ben explains that building active leaders is “the nucleus for any project of system change”. He explains that ultimately change really comes down to “what participants of TTT do in their host communities year round.” Other participants also see this as a core goal. Doc, for example, feels: “We need to reach people who can build in their own community”.

The data related to building leadership is presented in two interrelated subcategories: 1) increasing political agency and participation in society; and 2) facilitating a deep transformational experience.

**Increasing political agency and participation in society.** This subcategory generally refers to participants' perspectives on building leaders in the specific environmental action of saving the Salish Sea from increased tanker traffic. However the data shows that participants also feel that this would lead to deeper engagement with social and environmental issues at a broader level. The data in this subcategory emerges in three parts: 1) the active nature of the paddle leading to deeper commitment to the cause; 2) the inspiration gained by working together; and 3) the value of being in place.

*Active contribution.* Mann (2011) emphasizes that engaging people actively is important for deeper participation and leadership in activism and social movements. Participants referred to several specific characteristics of the paddle they feel are important because 1) it was challenging; 2) the act of being in movement connects ideas to action, pushing people to start playing an active role; and 3) it enabled a group effort which develops ownership and grows confidence.

Participants suggest that the mental and physical challenge of TTT solidifies a stronger commitment to the movement. Sandra explains, "If we are going to have a paradigm shift then the event needs to show the shift." She feels the "blisters" from paddling in TTT connect to "really big things like behaviour shifts, and economies that need to change." This in turn makes the paddlers more directly connected and committed to leading change.

Participants point out that the physical nature of the paddle is a catalyst for spurring intellectual engagement and leadership for change. Kye describes it here: "They are already in action, paddling, so subconsciously they are already thinking... and then the ideas start coming because they are in a place of doing something positive."

Participants see creating a participatory environment where the paddlers don't just view themselves as individuals, but as contributors to the group, as integral to building leadership. Ryan explains that things like helping to serve dinners, cleaning up and helping set up tents were important participative pieces that made the paddlers feel like they were contributing: "They really did feel like they were part of the learning and they could share their learning with everyone who was there." Participants feel that embodying principles of collaboration and valuing everyone's contribution are important in setting a positive example of the equal and diverse world they are fighting for.

***Inspiration.*** Participants view the inspiration that paddlers experience in working and spending time alongside each other as a valuable learning experience. Inspiration comes to new or potential activists through the example of others, but also through the realization that everyone has something to contribute and participants want this to come out.

Participating in a collective experience is integral to inspiration for leadership because people begin to get a sense that there is a community of people working for change together. Ryan suggests that working alongside community leaders, hearing their stories and sharing their time was important to understanding that, "creating change isn't something that other people do", but something that everyone can do. She describes it as "the wall of 'other people are in charge' just came down". She suggests this is exceptionally important as a first step towards self-realization and confidence building. Sasha explains that: "We want to get people wherever they are at in terms of their consciousness of these issues, put them together and create a space and work together and maybe move further along in whatever journey they are on politically."

Participants feel that in working alongside each other, less experienced activists become inspired by the stories of more experienced leaders, and more experienced leaders are inspired by the hope and energy and effort of new people to the movement. These reciprocal relationships contributed to broader learning outcomes. There were also more formal opportunities during the paddle where community leaders were invited to deliver speeches. Ben, for example, explains his role as an inspirational speaker: “Certainly my comments and a lot of the different activities and the way the whole thing was structured was to instil in people the belief that a better world was necessary and possible and that they are an integral part of the solution.” Doc explains how lesser involved participants inspired him: “Seeing these people out there immersing themselves and learning and trying, some struggling a little, that is energizing for me as well.”

**Place.** Being in the place is an important leadership-building aspect that emerged in the data. The experiential nature of the learning led to a direct connection and understanding of the place that TTT was hoping to primarily protect: The Salish Sea. The participants all feel a strong tie between creating an experience of connection to the ocean, and inspiring people to become more involved in protecting it. Doc draws attention to the fact that we are paddling in the exact route where the tankers will pass, and can see how narrow it is: “So in TTT you are right there on the water, where the tankers are coming through, you know we stopped and pointed at where they would pass. You know if that can’t inspire people to take action, then I don’t know what will.” Kye discusses the value and importance of being immersed and connected to the environment in order to care for it: “So you have this great experience, and you realize that if there is an oil spill you can’t do this anymore”. Being in the place where it could occur makes the

experience visceral. The video description by Doc (available here, and in Appendix D) really clarifies just how perilous the tanker route is especially at “turn Point” where we were paddling. Doc, the safety guide and certified marine safety instructor with significant experience in these waters explains, “This is a very big turn for a big ship to make...Tides and currents can be very significant here...it’s not that wide and it’s a lot of moving water. If you add wind it can be pretty ugly...it really does show you how close you are to this marine traffic...you see these little islands all in here, Gooch and Rum...these are places that a ship that losses propulsion could run aground.” Below is a screenshot of the area from google maps, which I labeled to help the reader understand.



Several participants comment on the formal workshops that complemented the visceral experience and helped people to learn more about the Sea and the issues

impacting it. Sasha suggests that the workshops “gave deeper ecological knowledge about whales and stuff like that. This knowledge gives them a deeper more meaningful connection to place.” Kye describes the goals behind her own workshop of stand up paddle board yoga, which was designed specifically to develop an ethos of care: “They don’t care if the water is cold, or if something is going to come up and tickle their feet, and they just become one with it. So how can you become one with it and not care about it?”

Participants also commented in depth about being out on the water and connecting directly with the ocean as being important as an opening meditative space for reflection on why we act. Doc refers to this connection as “having my paddle dipping in the blood of the earth”, and Emily emphasizes that just being out on the water for that many hours “creates solidarity with the entity we are trying to protect. It’s an emotional connection to that entity. And I think that is the most powerful experience for that program.”

Participants feel this space generates informal discussions about social justice, environmental justice and changing the world. As Kristen comments, “When you get all these people on the water for five days you just create this opportunity for all these organic conversations to happen.” Kye explains that it happens through opening up a meditative space: “It is really peaceful and you become very meditative. That is when people's brains start doing other things. You are solving those problems in the world. Everyone’s issues are different and you have no idea what it is triggering in somebody. There is something about the ocean air. It clears the head.”

According to the participants, the goal of developing leaders in TTT is to motivate people to become more passionate and active in their care for the ocean, and in the fight

against increased tankers and a fossil fuel based economy. In the next section I present the transformative nature of the TTT experience to see how it builds empowered, self-aware people who are capable of becoming leaders in a movement to change the world.

**Facilitating a deep transformational experience.** When interviewing the participants, it became evident that a transformational experience was at the core of the paddle. The specific term ‘transformation’ came out in several interviews, especially when participants were referring to the closing circle. The closing circle happened on the last night on Pender Island, with everyone sitting in a circle reflecting on the experience and sharing how it was meaningful for them. Ben comments on this: “The 70 or so people who weighed in at that closing circle, 90% or more, they all expressed having gone through a pretty profound experience”. Emily, who was part of the programming and learning team, explains that the profundity of the experience was a key element to the learning goals of TTT, and for her demonstrated the success of the event: “To hear that it was transformational, inspirational, beneficial, and resounding, those were all the things that I hoped would come out of it.” Kristen refers to feedback she received after the paddle: “The words profound, transformative, inspirational, amazing -- you know those kind of consistently pop up. I don’t think anyone thinks of it as a holiday... It leaves a mark on people.”

What emerged through interviews was the empowerment of self through a realization of vulnerability and connection, to place and other people. Participants saw hope and love as fundamental to transformation and self-empowerment.

**Hope.** Khasnabish (2008), in his study on the Zapatismo movement, explains that imagining the possibility of a better world is the starting point for any revolution. In

order to counter the violence of neoliberal capitalism, a movement must embrace a different path of love, hope, creativity and listening. He suggests that these principles can “break the ideological and mythical encirclement of neoliberal capitalism and the cynicism it has so effectively generated.” (p. 277).

For participants, breaking the cycle of cynicism is central to developing strong, empowered leaders. Ryan asks: “How do you go from feeling like you are plodding through somebody else's script to understand that you are a human being with valuable experience and you have value to share with the world?” Participants draw on personal experience to explain how easy it is to get bogged down and overcome by the seemingly insurmountable injustices in the world. They see a hopeful understanding of the world as an antidote. Ryan speaks of her experience with burnout a few years prior to TTT: “I felt like we are never going to win. What got me out of it is Joanna Macy who talks of love of world as love of self”.<sup>2</sup>

Participants feel that emphasising activism as a by-product of feeling and love for the world is an important piece in the transformation from plodding along to leading change. Ryan describes activism as joyful: “We are people who care about the world. Swimming in the world, paddling in rainstorms, playing Frisbee and laughing: It’s hard, but it's a joyful thing.” Kristen agrees that in TTT “people leave feeling more loved, more connected and more hopeful than when they came.”

***Connection to each other.*** Mathie and Gaventia (2015) discuss leadership in terms of ‘collective agency’, suggesting that the power to act for change comes from trust and collaboration and a realization of collective power. Participants see building solidarity

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<sup>2</sup> Joanna Macy is an American Buddhist scholar, anthropologist and peace activist who writes about the role of active hope in changing the world. See Macy 1991, 2007.

and working together as being imperative to creating change through TTT. Ben voices it here: “There is no choice of being an atomized individual. You have to work collectively to organize and educate and empower and mobilise in the here and now.” Kye suggests that realization of collective power leads to individual agency: “[TTT] shows people that the small voice can say something....about racism, colonialism, the military..... They see that the world is not only corporations. No we are not going to get swallowed up by them and yes we can stop them.”

***Vulnerability.*** Participants feel that being out on the water involved experiencing moments of tension and vulnerability. These moments of vulnerability then translate into a deeper thought process of self and the world. Ryan describes the scenario in TTT that enables people to build trust, get over fear of being imperfect and move forward:

When we are travelling together in dangerous water and we have varying skill levels and there are people who are scared, we as a community make it through those times of discomfort and fear -- that is how you build trust. I think you need to jump into the water with someone and then when you are there you have that trust and then you can be vulnerable and be okay with it. That helps us feel okay about taking another step forward... I think making spaces where people can be vulnerable, share that web, share that fear, share that dancing in the world, not just fighting in it, that is what TTT is.

Kye sees it as building up the nerve to be vulnerable. She refers to her workshop on stand up paddleboard yoga to explain: “They are moving with the waves and then the first person comes up with the nerve. They let their guard down and so now they are relaxed and really at one.” According to participants, TTT offers the opportunity to

embrace vulnerability and take a step toward self-introspection. This leads to a greater sense of empowerment and confidence and leadership. It helps to get through the despair of the world and open up to care for the world.

**Reflection.** Reflection and realization of self-learning emerged as an important part of TTT. Freire (1970) places a lot of emphasis on the reflection component of learning. He refers to praxis as the interrelation of action and reflection, giving equal weight to both. While paddlers had time to ponder and think out on the ocean, there was also formal time allotted to communal reflection on the experience in workshops and in the closing circle where paddlers were formally asked to reflect and share their experiences. Kristen explains that the value of reflection is “getting people to think about themselves and how they live their lives actually does contribute to social change”. Jay reflects on his own experience: “TTT has made me have those conversations with my wife, and think about what we are going to do as individuals and as family.” It was the closing circle where people voiced their reflection and spoke about transformation and profound experiences. Ryan points out the power of the circle and communal reflection:

There is something powerful about being in a circle and hearing every voice. It deepened my understanding of what TTT was about and it also helped me articulate what the event was for me. It crystallizes things when you have to articulate it.... You are making the path by walking it when you take the time to listen to how 79 other people feel.

This discussion on building leadership shows that the participants’ view, as Ryan suggests, “making the path by walking it” integral to developing empowered and capable leaders. The learning is seen to emerge informally and non-formally through individual

conversations, workshops and active participation. In addition, creating spaces of hope and vulnerability facilitated learning about self and being in the world.

### **Building a movement**

The official mission of TTT includes building a movement by connecting communities of care around environmental stewardship, social transformation and a move away from capitalism. This is prominent in participant interviews and elaborated on in this category, which is divided into three subcategories: 1) building communities of care; 2) networking; and 3) connecting the islands.

There is overlap between this theme and the previous one, in that the learning that occurred is largely informal and non-formal, and also because building leadership and capacity are important contributors to building a movement. While the previous category focused on the paddler experience, this category places greater emphasis on island communities that hosted TTT. I begin by explaining the different communities.

**Defining communities.** The paddler community refers to the people who paddled, ate and camped together throughout TTT. I refer to the island communities as the people who live on the islands visited by the TTT flotilla (Salt Spring, Mayne, Pender) and who participated in the on-shore events. Meeting minutes and the official schedule show that there was an effort to engage the local community of people who lived on these islands. Subcommittees formed on each of the islands to set up a welcome party and host food, speakers, music and workshops, which were open to the public. There was an extra day without paddling on Pender Island that was specifically added to the curriculum to offer more in-depth workshops and a larger community celebration. A third community I refer to is to the community of people that hold similar values and care

for progressive change in the world. This is the merging of anyone interested in protecting the environment and creating social change, and it is not limited to people who physically joined TTT.

**Building a community of solidarity and care.** Unfortunately in Canada, activists, civil society groups and NGOs are divided and pitted against each other. This is the result of a model of funding that requires them to compete with each other both for government contracts and for attention and support of the public. Organizations also generally fear government audits and police watch lists (for examples see Best and Nocella, 2004; Miller 2013; Patterson, 2014). One of the goals of TTT was to counter the isolation of groups and people by bringing them together in solidarity around a common cause. Kye clarifies the notion that TTT brought disparate groups together: “We all got to finally work together because we are all working on the same things just from different angles, which is really great because we are usually fighting for attention, and fighting for the same funding.” A concept that repeats itself in the interviews is the continual battle with a seemingly uncaring neoliberal society. Kristen explains that, “It can be pretty bleak sometimes working in community against dominant culture, and dominant ideas”. She describes TTT as a “sanctuary for people to be reinvigorated and be with other people who are in other various communities and for people to know that they are not actually alone.”

Many participants express surprise at just how extensive their communities are. Jay notes that he is “learning that there are a lot of people on the island that have the same mentality.” He feels this is hopeful because connecting with community “is what creates the energy to actually make change.” Doc also notes, “I know a lot of people who

live in the Gulf Islands, but most of the people I met through TTT I didn't know prior to TTT.”

Longevity of the event is also important for participants. Ben comments on the long-term vision: “Building that community of concerned citizens in the Salish Sea area over a sustained amount of time, year over year building and strengthening the capacity of the group, expanding the group, building the skill and strength of the individuals to function as a group is a pretty exciting project.” Ron explains, “In the long term we are building competency, community, relationships, a network. If we need to do something more, we will have connections.”

Participants feel that people around the Salish Sea, certainly in the environmental movement, are missing this sense of connectedness and craving it. Ben explains: “People want to be involved. They want to come on the paddle but they also want to become a part of something and sort of create a union”. Misty speaks to the Pender Island community when she suggests that TTT connects “people who are looking for their community and wanting to know who is like-minded and who is wanting to see things happen differently”.

The participants from the island communities especially expressed the strategic potential of the regional connections being formed. Kye explains, “So TTT has taken all of these groups in the Salish Sea area together, and given them all these ideas and they can take them home and execute them in different ways and at different times.” Sandra from Salt Spring feels that these are seeds for long-term conservation action: “The action for me is going to come from the connections. You know if we can tag into the groups on Pender, depending on what their strategy is for tanker traffic and pipelines.”

Based on these observations, it is clear that participants view building communities of care as an embryo to longer term sustainable organizing and activism in the Salish Sea region.

**Networking.** Participants in the study speak about cross-organizational networking in TTT. Kye comments on the diverse representation of organizations attending: “One of the first things I noticed was a big percentage of the people there were from so many different conservation foundations.” Ben explains that this is done explicitly by asking specific organizations to lead workshops and provide speakers: “This year the Raincoast Conservation Alliance was the most prominent. Last year it was the Wilderness Committee and the Sierra Club. Building the connections already developed and looking for new ones is a great way to proceed.” He feels that these connections have potential to reach a lot of people in the Salish Sea area: “TTT has the capacity and network of organizers that have the capacity to network and develop much bigger numbers”.

Connections and networks were developed not only between the larger organizations mentioned by Ben, such as the Sierra Club, but also among smaller groups and individuals. Annette notes a connection with a Masters student from a university in Finland who was on Mayne Island looking for participants in her study on the National Energy Board review of the Kinder Morgan process: “She has five names of people that she can interview for her thesis now. She is gathering information and really got a lot of knowledge from the experience.” Annette also references a filmmaker working at Emily Carr University who is interested in working on the tanker issue as a result of the networking on Mayne Island. For Annette this type of networking is an expected outcome

of mobilising communities: “These are the types of communication that come up when we do these actions.”

There are political elements as well. An MLA came to the events on Salt Spring, and upon hearing of the Unist’ot’en camp at one of the public speeches, gave a \$200 cash donation and vowed to address the issue in the legislative assembly. To give some background, the Unist’ot’en people (in Central British Columbia) have taken a stand against pipelines by not allowing pipeline crews to enter their sovereign land. This has resulted in significant confrontation with the province involving harassment and stand offs with the provincial police. Drawing the attention of a member of the legislative assembly of British Columbia to the circumstances of the Unist’ot’en people was valuable.

Additionally there were four municipal councillors from various regions of British Columbia who participated in the entire paddle. Ben also sees value for outreach about the message of TTT through having four municipal councillors participate in TTT: “Looking at the overlap of TTT with the electoral front-there were four elected officials participating”. This for Ben also signifies important public support in a movement against tankers.

TTT also built international relations as a result of having American students participate. Ryan explains the link with an organization from Washington State that is working to make the Salish Sea a marine-protected area. She notes that the representative “ended up there because he is working with one of the Redfish students who told him about TTT so he came up, so there is a transboundary connection that maybe came out of the Redfish School being transboundary.”

Participants note that networking in TTT involved concrete planning for actions. After one of the talks on Mayne Island that spoke about the Unist'ot'en camp there were several community members who sat down to organize a fundraiser and speaking tour for the Unist'ot'en camp. Ryan notes that you can't predict what emerges from actions like TTT because "it is such a fertile ground." For Ryan this example highlights the concrete, direct action and planning that result from networking in social actions of this type: "Imagine trying to have that conversation over email, people from different islands, it's not the same as having people sitting around a picnic table with music in the background, and you just say, okay, let's do it."

One of the key goals of TTT, according to both the website and participants, is to network and build stronger regional communities capable of working together strategically.

**Connecting the islands.** Participants reveal that forming regional connections was a TTT priority. As Kristen points out: "The mission is about building solidarity among coastal communities. I think this is the ultimate reason why we paddle." It is clear that the other participants identify with this mission as well. Doc explains that the benefit of connecting islanders is "showing that we are all people with similar concerns." It is not only about tanker traffic, in reality there are multiple issues that impact the Salish Sea, and other issues that are being reproduced on all the islands that require a larger, stronger community working together. Ben refers to the specific example of Grace Islet, a First Nations burial ground where the province gave a building permit. He suggests that the isolation of the islands can make it difficult to oppose development projects such as Grace Islet. Ron highlights multiple other examples: "We may not be common

geographically, but we are common in our values, and we are continually being threatened. There is an onslaught of population, development and logging. Now it's tanker traffic and oil spills.”

Connecting the islands is important for all organizers but it has particular significance among organizers from the islands. Misty explains: “It's not easy to get to the other islands. So we tend to be silos out here. All the islands are really different but in austerity people come together and what is common to all of these islands starts to stand out as we are thinking about the threats.” Ron, an organizer on Pender Island feels that it is “fascinating that there is this group of people that are willing to come to the islands to help educate and bring their experiences and ideas to these communities. It is important. It is bringing the communities together.”

Participants feel that the paddlers function as effective knowledge mobilisers, carrying ideas between the islands and sharing them through informal conversations with Islanders and also through public speeches. Islanders shared their island specific issues with paddlers who in turn shared them with the populations on other islands. Ron embraced these connections on Pender Island: “Look how many locals came to this event. Half the people were from the island and the other half were not. They were all there, eating the same food and listening to the same music.” He reflects on the learning experience being shared at this event: “Ideas that develop between the people who are visiting and the people who live here, the learning that comes out of it becomes something. I guess that needs to be recognized and acknowledged.”

Connections were also made between organizers on the different islands. Jan on Salt Spring, for example, notes that it “helped me connect with people in Victoria”. All

participants felt that this was effective because the Victoria representatives made an effort to travel out to the islands to meet people. Emily feels “What worked was going over and speaking to people in person.” Annette, on Mayne Island, also comments on the relationship that was developed when some organizers spent a weekend with her and her family, volunteering at the local national Aboriginal day and participating in a healing circle. Annette feels that this encouraged her to organize and gave her a better feeling for what the paddle was about.

All the organisers on the Gulf Islands feel that the inter-island connection between organizers needed to be stronger. Kye notes, “We know you are going to Salt Spring, we know you are going to Mayne, but we don’t know what you are doing there.” Jay feels the same, but suggests that the reason could be because he did not actually paddle: “That was me not being a participant and just more of an organizer”. Sandra proposes some form of inter-island meeting as a solution. Kye recommends that organizers all volunteer on a different island: “For example Mayne and Pender go to Salt Spring and help set up and then Salt Spring and Mayne come to Pender and then Pender and Salt Spring go to Mayne.”

All participants express that the importance of these connections and links cannot be overstated, as they lie at the centre of building a strong and coordinated movement that works together to counter common threats.

### **Connecting people and the planet**

The data in this category shows how the TTT campaign connects the Salish Sea to a broader movement of systemic change. There is evidence of a complex worldview that accounts for the interrelations between environmental and social injustices. The data is

presented in three sub categories: 1) connecting to a broader movement; 2) global connections; and 3) implications of colonization.

**Connecting to a broader movement.** Participants all feel that there is a strong connection between the paddle and building and connecting in solidarity to other issues.

Sasha, for example, feels that TTT is

nothing less than the emancipatory social project, which is a lot broader than just talking about one particular environmental or social issue whether it is reconciliation with First Nations or expanded resource extraction or tanker traffic. For me the idea is to lay the very preliminary groundwork for a democratically engaged citizenry that creates a new kind of political economic regime on the coast.

Connecting issues more generally was important for the participants in order to build a stronger movement. Emily, for example, voiced the importance of having multiple stands taken in the battle to fight off pipelines. “All of the actions that are taken to protest pipelines and stand in solidarity as a one-off would not have much of an impact but taken together they form a larger movement.” An example of this is the March event sponsored by TTT where organizers on Salt Spring aired a movie made about TTT (Monk, O’Connor, Wiebe, 2015) and included a talk from people who live in the Peace River valley that is being threatened by the Site C Dam. Jan from Salt Spring feels that this was an important part of TTT because “There are a zillion fronts that need to be addressed... We need to be doing all of them.” She feels that the movie event “was a really good learning activity. That was people learning about the Site C dam and TTT.”

Participants feel that part of building a broader movement through TTT is recognizing that environmental issues are deeply connected to social issues and hegemonic systems of power. Ben notes that TTT strives to, “apply to a labour union to develop a more environmental approach, or a single issue environmental group to embrace a social justice approach”. Misty sees “Energy policy, trade policy, democracy” as a few areas that need to be addressed in addition to environmental issues, and Jan speaks directly to shifting the economy: “We are thinking about what is happening in Greece and our economy is based on the same dynamic. We need to be learning about how we are all part of this, and how we can shift the whole economy.”

Participants also speak about the need to participate in the electoral process. The then-ruling Conservative party was seen to be at the heart of disgraceful environmental policy, trying to push through several oil pipelines using measures that included violence against people who were opposed to it.<sup>3</sup> There was consequently a strong feeling to push the Conservatives out of power in the federal election that was slated for a couple of months after the TTT campaign. Jan on Salt Spring worked hard to include singer/songwriter Bill Henderson in the Salt Spring cultural events to promote participation in the election. Referring to a his performance and TTT’s participation in his music video, she explains: “I would like to add the importance of having Bill Henderson there. That will hopefully get people thinking about the election.”

Sandra accentuates that activism requires multiple fronts to challenge power structures: “It is all about somehow breaking down that power structure that allows these

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<sup>3</sup> For example, in 2014 there was a major confrontation in the city of Burnaby, between protesters (including the mayor of Burnaby) using non violent direct action to oppose illegal drilling by Kinder Morgan, and RCMP (for a timeline see Gray, 2014). Which lead to Bill C-51 legislation labelling all protestors as security threats (see chapter 2 for a description of Bill C-51).

things to happen in the first place.... I keep thinking it has to be the political structure and maybe it isn't. You can't put all your eggs in one basket." For Ben, this means, "transitioning to something different than a capitalism profit world as a way of organizing human relationships and the relationships between humans and other species." He feels that TTT was bringing in these discussions through informal conversations, the workshops, and in the formal public speeches. Ben explains that he was, "pushing [his] agenda of social environmentalism from start to finish". He suggests that critiquing the current system is important, but that TTT also offers "a path towards something better."

**Global connections.** Participants in this study all acknowledge the connection to systemic problems on a larger, global scale, and discussed at length the relationship between the learning goals of TTT and these issues. Emily points this out: "Child care, Indigenous rights, protecting the Carmana Walbran, protecting the Salish Sea, we are not taking in refugees, challenging our international relations: Everything is connected". Ben explains that the global context was a prominent theme and is "discussed in terms of how different social systems should operate and in terms of more balanced relationships between people and ecological systems that sustain life." Participants speak in broad terms because the explicit focus of TTT was on protecting the Salish Sea. Sasha suggests that TTT reasserts a "localism or reterritorialization of a connection to particular spaces and places," and in doing so is an active challenge of global systemic inequality. It is worth quoting him at length here to catch the depth of his thought:

The global economic system has nodes of power and connection that exist around the world. They shift depending on where communication and supply lines shift. Right now on what we call the BC coast we are in an area of very strategic

importance. If we liquidate the tar sands we have more than enough carbon to permanently harm the climate on any human time scale. So we are strategically located here on the coast, and places like Unist'ot'en are even more on the spot. As diffuse and global the economic system is, it still has to do things in real space. There are actual materials that have to be transported. There are actual people and things that need to move and if we can act at those sites and create sites of resistance at those nodes, this is a way that we can fight this net war. We are connected to the global.

Participants generally share Sasha's stance of addressing global issues through local actions. Emily's strategy for global change is to focus on the specific actions she can control. She explains, "I need to not be overwhelmed, to know that the actions that I am taking are good and contribute to the movement in a specific way and if everyone contributes to the movement in a specific way then..." Emily feels that the specific learning goals of TTT should remain focused on the Salish Sea, and that understanding the global context will emerge through informal conversations.

Doc agrees with Emily that strategically TTT should address what we can and fight some of the longer injustice along the way. He views TTT as sowing seeds: "If you think in terms of the longer injustice we are not going to fix it by tackling social injustice by itself as a big chunk. We need to start fighting along the edges, and it is going to take generations. My daughter came along on this paddle, she was also at Burnaby Mountain, and both of those were immensely powerful experiences and those are the kinds of seeds I want to sow."

The general consensus is that these issues are addressed in TTT through informal conversations. By having people from various organizations and with various interests networking, these topics emerge and are addressed. Emily elaborates on informal learning:

There are so many amazing minds of people who are organizing and who are present throughout TTT, and with so many hours of sitting on the ocean my experience is that a lot of those conversations are going to be happening.

The extent of engagement is difficult to measure, however participants feel that global issues were spoken about consistently throughout the paddle. Ryan describes this: “I do think we addressed these topics informally in conversations.... It would be a hard thing to measure. I could see a lot of other things being talked about. I see opportunities that were created, where people could get up and talk about things.”

In terms of making a more direct physical connection to accompany the theoretical reflection of these broader issues so that terms such as “global poverty” and “global exploitation” or “system change” do not remain abstract concepts, this is not done in TTT to any great extent. However Sasha notes that, “there is something about the water that ties you to people across that ocean.”

Generally TTT is seen to build connections to a broader movement by developing communities that see the need for alternative ways of living. Creating a different way of thinking about one’s place, responsibility, and connection to the world opens spaces to break down privilege and act differently. Participants feel that TTT fits into a broader movement for democratic global change. Connecting the local to the global is important strategically but also, as Marie Battiste (2005) comments, change seekers need to be able

to understand the implications of local practice as well as the global because they are deeply connected. Battiste is speaking in the context of ongoing colonialism in Canada.

**Implications of Colonialism.** My research looked at how grassroots organizations catalyze change in society around social and environmental ills. Essentially the goal is to find a way to live authentically and well. Without a deep discussion and realization of the colonial history, this change cannot be achieved. In this sub category, I examine the role and extent that TTT pursues solidarity work and decolonisation. First I outline why participants felt it was important. Second I examine how participants felt this formed a part of TTT. Finally, I present a discourse that emerges from the data on the practice and authenticity in the struggle against colonisation.

**Importance.** Participants feel that the reconciliation process needs to be negotiated by environmental and social justice-oriented organizations and activists. Sasha explains: “A lot of the way that reconciliation is handled by the state, the federal government, the provincial government, First Nation government under the colonial system, that kind of nation to nation stuff is one thing but what really needs to happen is at the community level by organized democratic communities.” Participants agree at least in principle that relationships with First Nations and recognition of the unceded territory being paddled should be a priority for TTT. Doc elaborates: “If you go back to the core point of the project -- Stopping tankers and pipelines -- that is just an extension of the injustices that have been done against people that were inhabiting here before we came along.”

For some it was about understanding the connection to place, and learning about what it means to be a caretaker of the land. Annette on Mayne Island discusses this:

It was really important for me, learning that we are just caretakers of this land, and that we are not here necessarily, as in my family it could be sold next year. It is so different to actually have roots in a place rather than ownership. It is important that we establish from a paddler's point of view that First Nations would have seen the bays and the valleys and the islands for 15000 years.

Other participants reflect on the importance of understanding the history of the place. Ron from Pender Island explains: "People lived here thousands of years ago in the same place that we are. That piece of history adds a dimension of connection and understanding to the place." Jay expresses the need to learn to live sustainably from the Coast Salish people: "I have immense respect for Coast Salish peoples who lived here ... thousands of years, and there were a lot more people here then, and they lived sustainably. We need to learn from what they did to sustain themselves."

**Events.** Participants generally feel that TTT addresses issues of solidarity with First Nations. Kristen notes that at a very base level TTT organized a fundraiser to support First Nations legal funds: "We donated to the Pull Together campaign [for First Nations legal funds]." It was present throughout the TTT campaign. For Annette, the healing circle on Mayne Island was an important opportunity to initiate discussions among the entire Mayne Island community about colonialism: "It was a really great new opening for Mayne Island... It meant something me to have visitors including Mayne Islanders being part of that."

The connection to the struggle against the oil and gas industry served as an entry point to discussions about the resurgent leadership of First Peoples in Canada, and the need to decolonise. Solidarity with the Unist'ot'en camp is one such example. Personal

accounts of the camp were shared and TTT participants and island communities together then engaged in deeper conversations about how to support the camp. Jan, for instance, on Salt Spring comments: “Having other people who had been to Unist’ot’en was really important.” She explains that she heard of several community members who travelled to the camp after hearing about it at TTT. Ben suggests “the impromptu organizing meeting on Mayne with the islanders provided some direction for how that [Unist’ot’en] elders’ tour unfolded. TTT was effective in providing a framework for people to engage and organize around that specific issue.” For Kristen, TTT was respectful of the traditions of the land by “reducing our impact, making sure our trace on the land is very minimal. Our travel itself is fuelled by human power.”

Many of the participants demonstrated that they were actively struggling with their own identity as settlers and with the identity of the paddle itself, protesting and paddling on the unceded waters of the Coast Salish peoples. TTT was about fighting for the environment, but as Emily puts it, this is a questionable right: “I want the Salish sea to be protected because I like the Salish Sea. But it’s not my sea.” Sasha adds: “You always want to engage with First Nations, but it can be difficult because you don’t want to appear like a tokenistic white liberal”. Most participants expressed a desire to integrate more thoroughly with local First Nation communities. Doc explains: “First Nations have been paddling these waters long before any of us have and I would like to see us engage those folks and get some of them involved.” For Jay on Pender, it was a question of timing. He felt that connecting with First Nations was a number one priority, saying if he had started sooner: “I could have gone over and met them in the off season.”

Participants also brainstorm ways they can engage in solidarity work more thoroughly. Ron suggests the solution “is about being open, cooperative. It’s a delicate dance and you can ask and listen.” Misty is also wary of asking too much from already overburdened band offices: “there is not a lot of capacity within those communities to do something formally if it hasn’t come from inside that community.” She suggests building supportive and long term relationships is the work that needs to be done.

Sasha ponders the role of TTT in supporting First Nations initiatives for broader social change in the region: “Something I would like to pursue more involves economic alternatives that involve First Nations’ leadership on our coast. When I look for a way for BC to create this kind of new economy, it has to be led by First Nations. How can TTT plug into that and become catalysts?”

This section has demonstrated that central to the goals of TTT is an understanding of ongoing colonisation. Participants connect fighting for a different world with the ongoing oppression that is perpetuated by maintaining the status quo, and feel that TTT is facilitating this type of learning.

### **Broader community engagement**

This category looks at the impact and potential of TTT in terms of deepening engagement and broadening a base of support for systemic change. I present the data in five sub categories: 1) planting seeds; 2) increasing visibility; 3) shifting perspectives; 4) shifting what change means; and 5) inspiring community.

**Planting seeds.** Participants feel that TTT is sowing seeds of change through individual connections and conversations that are carried by people who participated. This is both in terms of the paddlers themselves and in terms of the all those who were

connected in some way to the paddle (i.e. through community events). Kristen explains this in terms of the paddler connection: “Participants go back inspired, energised and feeling connected and they spread that message with people.” Likewise Ben feels that, “working together with fellow paddlers and allies and family and friends in their home communities is how we are going to save, improve the world.” Misty elaborates on the power of individual commitments: “If you are in Victoria and your neighbours are getting in a kayak and paddling around the Salish Sea, that is powerful.”

Understanding that these connections also happen through participation in the island events is seen to be crucial to extending engagement to a large population around the Salish Sea. Kye explains “They are bringing their friends and families so they are all becoming part of this brainstorming and they are all telling two friends who told two friends and so things branch out.” Ben suggests engaging communities is significant for the expansion of the ideas TTT carries: “You need people year round, between the paddles. If we are going to be a force for people to transition from a capitalist system TTT would really need to broaden and deepen its work and how it orients in all the island communities.”

**Increasing visibility.** The participants saw value in engaging a broad public sphere, but did not feel that it was the primary goal or plan for engagement and change. Ben, for example, explains: “If we are going to do so much work, we should try and have as many people know about it as possible.” Many participants feel that making TTT as visible as possible is important for developing awareness about the tanker issue in the rest of Canada because, as Jay expresses, “There are a lot of in-landers who don’t know about the repercussions out here.” Annette feels that TTT should generate attention nationally

and internationally because, “climate is for everybody, but people in the middle and east of Canada don’t really get why we are trying to stop these things.” Misty explains that seeing 100 people kayaking for 5 days would have a meaningful impact because it sends a message that there are “a whole lot of people that are really concerned about this issue.” Sandra suggests that TTT also has potential to show other communities and groups who are working for change that they are not alone. She compares TTT with the climate change rallies in 2012 that united communities in similar actions across the country: “Every community was asked to take a picture and put it on the website and then they stitched the pictures together. It became something that came across Canada.”

Encouraging participation, especially among the island communities, to paddle and/or join the cultural events is discussed as another reason for greater media attention at a local level. Participants from the islands feel that there was not enough promotion of the event on the island and suggest that local press would improve the participation. Annette, for example, explains: “I think you would get more ownership if you had more people on Mayne Island participating in it, so promoting it sooner on social media and getting posters up”. The participants made a decision to focus largely on the internal experience and spread the word through personal conversations, but it is clear they feel that greater engagement would be beneficial in building a movement.

**Shifting Perspectives.** Participants feel that a big part of creating broader social change lies in shifting social perspectives. A good deal of discussion emerged about how to do this.

First, there is the consideration of people who are aware that tankers could be a problem, but who are not engaged or do not care. Jay suggests that people in the region

understand the danger of an oil spill in the Salish Sea, however they are not yet sure what to do. He feels that TTT can stir them to participate: “I think a lot of people don’t like the tanker traffic, but they don’t know what to do about it. So maybe TTT stirs their brainwaves and gets them thinking about it.” Ben wants to engage new people on the issue of tankers but he also suggests that TTT engage “someone who is just getting involved in a single issue, if they get involved in TTT maybe they learn on a five day paddle some more about systemic capitalism and some ideas about a role they can play in building something better.”

Ben explains why a complex understanding of the world is important for building a movement: “Ideologically to agree that a different system is needed there has to be a different way for organizing society. Once we have won them over that way we have converted them to the cause, and then it doesn’t matter what they read in the newspapers.” This demonstrates that participants are thinking about engaging or converting people to a different perspective. In taking this approach, the paddle was able to shift a little what exactly change means, and reach out to more than the regular crowd of protesters. In the next category, the data shows why this was important and how it played out in TTT.

**Shifting what change means: Not just a protest** In an effort to engage more people more deeply in the Salish Sea, participants felt that changing the message from a negative to a positive suggestion of what change can look like was really important. In many ways focusing on the internal experience created a tight group of paddlers that were close and clearly having fun. This changes the way that the action appears to other people looking on.

Ron explains that the most important part of TTT for him is sharing the message with everyone. He says he is “not interested in the part that is focused on the converted”. He recalls some people on Pender Island calling it a protest, and feels strongly opposed to this: “It is not a protest.... TTT is a different thing... It is an idea that is being brought around the Gulf Islands.” Ron explains that when people on Pender Island were exposed to the cultural events hosted by TTT they wanted to participate:

I felt that the local community wanted to share it with them. But there were certain parts of our local community that ignored it because it is scary, it is a protest, it is hippie or it is environmental. They are opposed to participating until they actually hear about it from friends who participated and said it was amazing, not radical. It was a magical several days of engaging, sharing food, sharing music and having presentations. Having First Nations representatives and politicians is good. Its own success validates it and makes it something people can get their head around. It is not just something they can easily toss off or dismiss. By being learning it engages people and more people will join next year.

For Kye it is important that TTT embodies principles of peace and care. She explains that ideas or change cannot be forced upon people. She reflects that TTT delivers a message of real change, which is telling people that there is a different way of doing things: “we are not here to fight because that isn’t going to help, we are just giving you another option and then the small fish do start to rise up.”

Kye also feels that TTT shows people that change is real and is in fact happening. It invites people to feel the change happening and to join in the movement:

It has been happening for a couple of years now and we are at this complete new

era, this turning point.... We are saying ‘listen lets talk through things it doesn’t have to be the way we are living now with the top 1% who are destroying all the things around us and there is nothing we can do about it. This whole movement is going to be bigger. Why not be part of it?’

The data in this section demonstrates that TTT brings a new meaning of change, one that is based in positive opportunity and in so doing is successful in engaging people in a new way. In the next subcategory the data shows the impact on the communities visited by TTT.

**Inspiring community.** TTT is seen to inspire and unite local communities, engaging non-participants to think about the Salish Sea and an alternative way of living. Ron continually refers to TTT as an entity, sharing ideas and connecting people. “It goes to all these different communities and sees all these different people...it is recognized as being an entity that you refer to.... People in the community are really activated and encouraged by TTT.” Likewise Ben feels that TTT has begun to catch on: “I think on the Gulf Islands it has created an impact where people know it is happening. It has created a bit of a buzz in those communities”. For Ben this shows that there is an appetite for change, that people are looking for it, and that through an annual event TTT has the potential to become a strong movement.

Participants on the Islands observe the impacts of TTT in their communities. They feel that islanders have embraced the paddle and taken ownership through hosting them. On Pender, Kye explains that the impact of the paddle was huge, inspiring projects like putting solar panels on the community hall.

When people see the boats coming, people watching say: ‘are you kidding me? They paddled from where?’ They want their kids to get out there and see it, and they want a picture with it, and they want to say our island helped with this. The impact is huge. They can see that what they are supporting is actually doing something.

On Mayne Island Annette says TTT “brings good medicine to our shores”. She elaborates:

There were a lot of people who stopped me on the road and said we waited on the dock for almost an hour and we didn’t see anybody coming and then we saw all these boats and colours come around the bend and it was just crazy. These were people who would never have come to our event, but they felt it was important to see it.

She feels that TTT is embedded in the island, and has really opened up discussions with people about climate change and the whole issue of tankers:

It is on the tip of people's tongues, and it gave an opening for me to talk with people... TTT has taken place and it feels like it is now embedded in the island somehow, and I think that is the most important part. It will take time for the learning to come out through conversations.

This idea of conversations and connections returns to the idea of change starting small and building momentum. TTT physically delivers a message of hope and solidarity in the Gulf Islands. Participants in the research feel this engages a broad group of people and has potential to inspire a movement for change.

**Chapter conclusion**

The data in this chapter suggests that change does not happen overnight. It is something that builds and is developed over a long period of time. Participants feel that TTT is beginning to build a movement by inspiring leaders, connecting community, and engaging people to look at the world in a different way. Participants in the research hope to open a dialogue that reveals the interconnectedness of inequality from a broader perspective. While empowering individuals and participants in the paddle was a key goal, TTT also hopes to influence a broader audience: shifting views, and extending and deepening engagement with people who otherwise might not engage. In the next chapter I analyse the data and reveal some themes that can be taken away.

## Chapter 7 Data Analysis

The data suggests that social movements and grassroots protest campaigns are inherently public learning campaigns that have potential to engage society in acting upon intersectional social and environmental injustices. This is synonymous with the goals of critical ecopedagogy, which unites critical theory with a deep ecological worldview (Gadotti, 2008). Additionally, protest campaigns have the potential (and strategic interest) to empower participants with confidence and critical skills to grow leadership in the movement. This requires concerted thought about learning programs and methods of instruction. Some examples and strategies have emerged from the study of Turning The Tide.

Turning The Tide is a campaign that aims to build capacity for systemic change to social and environmental problems in the Salish Sea region. The immediate goal is protecting the Salish Sea from the potential impact of an oil spill; however, organizers consider this goal relative to challenging systemic social and environmental injustice and hegemonic power rooted in global neoliberalism. This introduces a holistic learning vision that departs from the reductionist, phallogocentric, western-European and neoliberal model of formal learning and living based in compartmentalizing issues and positioning success as vanquishing others. Instead TTT assumes a complex lens more synonymous with Indigenous learning which decentres the individual and prioritizes peaceful coexistence. This model of learning builds capacity for hopeful, collective and meaningful change. To build this capacity, organizers see TTT as a way of networking individuals and organizations, developing and renewing participation and leadership,

encouraging responsibility to act ethically, and modelling an alternative and holistic way of living based on the complex interconnectivity of people and the planet. This grassroots learning campaign shifts conceptions of learning in social movements from incidental to a methodological model of learning and action that parallels the experiential, organic and critically empowering learning framework of critical ecopedagogy. Thus the themes identified in this chapter can be applied to both theory and action for social movements and grassroots organizing for change.

In this chapter I identify prominent themes that emerge from the data in response to the research questions concerning the role of grassroots organizing in catalyzing systemic change that confronts unequal power structures. The themes include: 1) Building regional capacity for social change: The TTT protest campaign demonstrates that building solidarity for social change is possible through a) networking individuals and organizations and encouraging them to work together; and b) presenting a vision of change rooted in hope which re-inspires already engaged activists, changes perceptions of what change looks like and entices more people to join the movement; 2) Informal and non-formal learning in activism: Building a social movement requires facilitating a deep learning experience. The participants in this research model how this can be done through their specific learning objectives based on a) critical reflection; b) ethical responsibility to act; and c) leading to an empowered and strategically connected citizenry that is capable of leading change in the region; and 3) Holistic vision for global change: This theme addresses the necessity for movements to address intersectional injustices and impact broad change through local and very specific action. This research demonstrates that local action has potential to impact provincial, national and global

solutions through a) impacts of climate change; b) focusing on a transition from neoliberal capitalism, towards a more egalitarian method of living rooted in a deep ecological axiology; and c) highlighting the interconnectedness of problems, especially colonialism. Addressing issues holistically does not mean diluting specific struggles, nor does it suggest co-opting them. Rather, as defended in critical ecopedagogy (Kahn, 2010) the focus is on awareness of multiple injustices, so as not to reproduce, for example, the issues associated with second wave feminism (see hooks, 1994), or the ongoing colonization of indigenous peoples in Canada. The difference is evident in the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement. A holistic social action would not seek to assume the position of “all lives matter” but rather it would seek a deeper engagement with, and accountability to, the “black lives matter” movement.

These themes are all interconnected and share the critical ecopedagogical emphasis on critical learning, praxis, reflection, diversity and cooperation. Thus the analysis of TTT suggests that critical ecopedagogy could be a possible model to inform social change through activist endeavours. As with the goals of organizing for change this model provides a pedagogical framework that differs from and thus challenges the traditional and exclusive practices of neoliberal, Eurocentric learning widespread in formal learning institutions. I address strategies for change through the themes identified in TTT and from the vantage point of the organizers of TTT in order to understand them within the context of TTT. However, the strategies are applicable to other social movements, and could be taken and adapted as necessary to fit other social actions.

I draw on the data from the previous chapter in order to emphasize the themes that emerge. I present and analyse the themes using the participants’ voices as much as

possible. Bogden and Bicklen (1992) suggested that qualitative research shares the stories and perspectives of the participants. This research seeks to illuminate the stories of the participants and value their understanding of the role and impact of grassroots organizing on societal change. Using PAR as a methodology is important for me precisely because it draws attention to the considerable expertise of the community research partners. Hall (1985) suggested that PAR represents the knowledge of the participants in the research. The participants in this study have guided the research with input on questions and methods and by directing me to specific literature, as in the case of Ryan who suggested reading Joanna Macy (1991, 2007). The participants consider themselves to be knowledgeable educators and activists; they have chosen to be represented by name in the study. I hope to honour their input by including their voices as knowledgeable and valid sources in this data analysis chapter. I therefore use their words extensively to elaborate on the themes that emerged in the data.

### **Building regional capacity as a learning campaign**

Chapter 6 shows that building a larger movement throughout the region is a key goal of the campaign and the central strategy for opposing tanker traffic and protecting the region. This illustrates a campaign that is different from the type of protests that take to the street in a one-off direct action with the immediate short-term goal of changing a specific policy (such as recent rallies opposing Bill C-51). While high profile direct actions have value in contesting power and injustice, TTT demonstrates a longer vision to shift public sentiment and encourage more people to organize and mobilise (and thus lead and participate in multiple and ongoing sites of protest). Ron explains that long-term strategy involves, “building competency and community.” For protests to achieve lasting

change they need to build an empowered community. This does not happen overnight by virtue of a single great leader, but rather it is longer-term collective work. Protest campaigns aimed at sustainable social change need to assume a longer-term strategic vision that includes public learning. Organizers of TTT understand the longer-term goals of social change. Ben, for example, refers to TTT as an “embryo of a social movement”. With this in mind, I have examined the strategies of TTT. TTT exemplifies two strategies for building capacity: 1) Networking people and organizations; and 2) presenting an alternative vision of change. These are directly related to the themes of learning and holistic vision, in that learning from diverse experiences expands understanding of the connection between issues and inspires collaborative solutions that address root problems. I distinguish networking and providing an alternative vision of change in this theme as connected but also distinctly important strategies for building a regional community of care.

**Learning campaign.** Protest campaigns are inherently public learning that fill a void in learning to be. TTT, organizers suggest, is a learning campaign that aims to inspire, connect, engage, strategize and encourage collective action for responsible stewardship of the environment in the region of the Salish Sea. As a learning campaign, TTT takes on what Horton and Freire (1990) describe as the fundamental relationship between organizing and learning, whereby popular learning for a conscious, active population should be a priority in grassroots organizing. Horton and Freire suggest that even if local protest campaigns are unsuccessful in changing the specific policy or initiative they are fighting for, ultimately if the protest builds a broader base of conscious, empowered citizens then the protest can be considered successful. This understanding of

a protest as building a movement can be interpreted together with the ideas of social movement scholars like Mann (2011), Brecher, Costello and Smith (2002), Bello (2016), and Hall (2009) who emphasize that social movements require a sustained effort by many people and build gradually with results manifesting over time. Mann (2010) uses the example of Rosa Parks who was an important figure in the United States civil rights movement, but behind here were many people working for many years to build awareness and fight for rights. He explains that a sustained effort built the conditions for Rosa to act and for society to support her. The idea of a long-term campaign is also important because it counters what Choudry (2015) describes as the “immaculate conception accounts of history”, and the “big book myth”(p.75). According to Choudry these conceptions reproduce neoliberal individualism by promoting a noble champion and reproduce the myth of meritocracy by suggesting that the movements emerged from an open and power free field of ideas. Thus, in terms of social movements, recognizing and building on the commitment and effort of the collective is a valuable lesson. TTT illustrates that framing a protest action as a learning campaign is an effective method of representing the collective nature of the struggle.

Organizers view TTT as a long-term campaign that aims to, in Ben’s words, “lay the groundwork for a democratically engaged citizenry that create a new kind of political economic regime on the coast.” In the recorded debrief after the paddle, Ben suggests a separate smaller paddle in front of a tanker as a tactic to garner media attention for the annual TTT campaign. The proposed tanker action, along with other lead up events such as concerts, movie showings and a fundraiser for First Nations lawsuits against pipelines all demonstrate the long term commitment of TTT.

Like Horton and Freire (1990), organizers consider learning in TTT as fundamental to building capacity for social change. The organizers emphasize what Kristen refers to as the “internal learning goal”. Emily suggests that if more numbers were accepted to paddle, the group would lose intimacy and quality of learning. Building capacity through learning in TTT involves creating an experience for the paddlers that helps them connect with and care for the ocean and be inspired and empowered by each other to continue to build on the ideals of TTT. This internal goal, expressed by Emily, reflects a tension within the organizing committee over the number of people allowed to paddle. There was much debate between an impact by increased visibility, or with greater numbers. Ultimately, the number of 100 is striking a balance, which limits paddlers but does not limit participation and engagement by with the island communities, which swells the numbers significantly at certain points while maintaining the close relationship of the group of paddlers.

For organizers, connections and personal development aim to return paddlers to their communities better informed about problems in the world, the interconnection of the issues and committed to contributing to a solution. Doc illustrates the value of personal empowerment that leads to concrete political action when he explains, “we need to reach people who can build in their own community,” he elaborates, “we have 100 people out, if 10 go back and do something, start a group, start an action, that is a success.” All of the organizers suggest that empowering a diverse group of individuals to make connections and become advocates for change in their communities is the key strategy in TTT for building regional capacity for change and Ben suggests that this sustained effort is “the nucleus for any project of system change.”

This active, experiential and durational approach to building capacity through learning reflects critical ecopedagogy, which advocates for an action-oriented approach to learning. This example of TTT shows that learning is a fundamental component of building capacity for exacting social change. This broader and long-term vision also necessarily recognizes connectivity of issues and opens space for reflection on root causes, and broader partnership to change them. This encourages a holistic and complex understanding of the world.

**Networking.** Networking emerges as a major strategy for building capacity of social movements. Building relationships across organizations can help social movements to build complex strategies and ensure that they work together rather than in opposition. In TTT, the goal is to build connections between the islands and develop solidarity for strategic regional environmental and social action. Ron summarizes this goal as “building relationships ... If we need to do something more we will have connections”. TTT builds relationships by networking a diverse group of individuals, organizations, and island communities from a broad range of social and environmental groups in the region. This reflects a deliberate strategy to subvert the isolating nature of hegemonic power and the neoliberal cult of the individual. The metaphorical islands of individual isolation, and the groups that have been traditionally isolated and divided against each other through funding competitions (see literature review for more detail) are being connected through networking in the same way that the physical islands are being connected and united around common cause.

Recent literature on grassroots organizing for change (e.g. Mathie and Gaventa, 2015; Almeida, 2014) highlights the value of building cross-sectoral partnerships, which

encourage a more holistic view of the problems that face our world, and can lead to creative and comprehensive solutions addressing the systemic structural issues that are causing the problems. Organizers of TTT feel that developing collaboration among diverse regional groups will lead to greater capacity for strategic change in the region. Ben explains that through networking, groups and individuals establish common goals, open communication and create opportunity to establish a common front capable of addressing multiple issues. He hopes diverse perspectives will facilitate “broad systems based learning...about systemic capitalism...and a role they [participants] can play in building something better.” This systems approach to learning is consistent with critical pedagogy, which recognizes and challenges root social structures that are used to maintain the status quo.

Connecting various people and groups facilitates opportunities for learning about diverse organizational goals and efforts in the region. Ben emphasizes the value of face-to-face relations to develop in order “to smooth over conflict and create opportunities”. He explains that “the business world figured this out a long time ago”, and social movements can learn from this. Ben describes the real potential is “getting people together to reconnect, have fun, but also share ideas and strategies and tactics.” Ryan uses the example of the Unist’ot’en camp alluded to in the previous chapter, which is blocking the passage of oil pipelines to illustrate how collaboration develops through face-to-face relationships. In this instance individuals from multiple groups came together and planned direct actions (including a fundraiser and an engagement campaign) in solidarity with the Unist’ot’en camp. Ryan explains that you “can’t predict what comes from these

things, they just happen. It is such a fertile ground... Conversation over email ... is not the same as sitting around a picnic table.”

Inviting specific organizations to present their work can create targeted networking opportunities. This is really emphasized in TTT. Misty delivered a workshop on her research and political action with the Raincoast Conservation Alliance<sup>4</sup>. Friends of Brooks Point facilitated a workshop on navigating the National Energy Board consultation process, based on their experience. The full curriculum is available in Appendix A. The workshops provided concrete opportunities for participants, both paddlers and community, to connect and discuss together issues affecting the region and strategies to address them. They also had an active component, with a final workshop that established working groups on a variety of issues based on common interests.

While many connections are incidental, TTT demonstrates that planning for the connections and creating the conditions for them to flourish is an important strategy for building stronger relationships. In TTT, connections and networking are organic and explicitly facilitated to emerge naturally. They start on the water and carry to the island communities. Organizers speak about connections made on the water, between paddlers, as Emily says, “so many hours sitting on the ocean” is the “most powerful experience”. There is a feeling that the power of the ocean and being vulnerable catalyzes reflection on self and relationship to the world, which in turn leads to conversations with other paddlers. Physical dependence on each other out on the water builds trust among the

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<sup>4</sup> “The Gulf Islands Alliance (GIA) is a non-profit, grassroots organization [in British Columbia] with members based on islands under the jurisdiction of the Islands Trust. They work cooperatively and collaboratively with a network of like-minded individuals and organizations throughout the Trust area on matters of inter-islands concern and with particular precedent-setting features. (<http://www.gulfislandsalliance.ca/>)

group, which, combined with a sense of acting together to protect the ocean, builds strong group cohesion.

Networking in TTT also occurs between paddlers and islanders who join in the island activities. For Ron the social aspect is important for networking. He exults that “half the people were from the island” joining the paddlers and “eating the same food and listening to the same music.” The value in facilitating connections in activism is reflected in the connections made between disparate local groups and individuals in TTT, many of whom work in close geographic proximity with each other but have not collaborated before. Kye points out that various organizations in TTT “finally work together, which is great because we are all working on the same things, just from different angles”. Jay explains that he is “learning that there are a lot of people on the island that have the same mentality as me”.

An important consideration that emerges around building capacity through networking and building relationships is seeking out intersections of interest. Kristen feels that building a community of shared values across the islands is central to TTT: “The mission is about building solidarity among coastal communities, that is the ultimate reason why we paddle”. Building a cooperative community of solidarity and care in the Salish sea region through TTT is particularly difficult because the region is international (Canada and the United States) and largely island based. Misty, a representative of the Gulf Islands Alliance, explains that connecting the island communities is a difficult task because “it is not easy to get to the other islands so we tend to be silos”. Ron and Misty who are from Pender Island both commend TTT for bringing the islands together around shared values and threats. Ron explains: “We may not be common geographically, but we

are common in our values, and that we are continually being threatened. There is an onslaught of population, development and logging. Now it is tanker traffic and oil spills.” The islands are connected in TTT primarily by networking among the paddlers who live on the different islands. Ron sees TTT as an entity physically connecting the islands. He thinks that it is “fascinating that there is this group of people that are willing to come to the islands to help educate and bring their experiences and ideas to these communities.” Activist organizations have a tendency to exist in islands. They often are divided by competition for funds, public attention, or ideology. Learning to network and support each other is important not only because it is more efficient, but because it encourages listening, dialogue and compromise across cultural boundaries. Learning to live together is really the social goal, and often activist organizations promote adversity and competition with each other even as they try to promote a better world in, what they are convinced is the best way. Networking, listening and working through difference ultimately builds stronger capacity to act and greater understanding of the world.

There is also a good deal of networking that occurs in the process of organizing, especially when organizing a regional campaign. The organizers of TTT highlighted the networking that takes place between the organizers and the value of the diverse backgrounds of the people with whom they were organizing. Jan and Sandra from Salt Spring Island, for example, value the inter-island connections made as a direct result of planning TTT together. Sandra: “If we can tap into the [environmental] groups on Pender [such as Pender Ocean Defenders], ... their strategy for tanker traffic and pipelines, that is the future.” In my own personal experience as I recruited, planned and publicised TTT, I developed deep ties with organizers on each of the islands and I

continue to work with them on local, regional and national initiatives. I also connected the various organizers and volunteers between islands. As a result of sharing and introducing contacts and group initiatives among the islands I have developed a stronger ethic of care for island issues and rootedness with these communities.

Participants in the research feel that in TTT, even more networking would have been beneficial. While connections at the regional level were effectively established through the paddlers mobilising ideas to the various communities, there was a missed opportunity to engage on a broader provincial and national level. Annette says: “It is really important to make waves locally but also nationally and internationally”. She explains “the big issue is trying to save the climate ... so it is important to engage all of Canada through the media”. Having 100 people kayak and swim through the region is a significant action, one that could have created an impact provincially, nationally and even internationally. Misty suggests that with more media TTT could inspire other organizations to act and this is important because every action contributes to greater awareness and a stronger movement.

The goal of connecting and networking groups more effectively is an important take away for community organizers in general. The face to face connections build relationships of trust and dependability. They help to better understand people’s backgrounds, experience and perspectives of the world in a way that simply cannot be achieved otherwise. Having informal spaces to connect, share food and sing together are invaluable to making these connections. TTT goes even further to encourage vulnerability among participants, which opens a space for even deeper connections. This is related directly to the learning goals of TTT as well. Living in the global age that we

do, it is also really important to seek out allies and build networks internationally as well. This is only achieved to a lesser degree in TTT. Neoliberalism functions through global partnerships, and to challenge it, it requires a global movement of grassroots organizations. Conferences such as the world social forum are a start to this movement, however there remains much to be done.

In addition to raising a broader base of support and a more cohesive body of people capable of working together to mobilise change, connecting people helps develop a more holistic understanding of the world and the intersection of issues that are in it. The close connections: 1) increase the ability to empathise with people and causes one might otherwise be ignorant of (and act on them); 2) increase ability to continually reflect on self positionality in relation to the world; and 3) the diverse backgrounds and approaches lead to more comprehensive and creative solutions and strategies. In the literature review I referenced Palacios et al.'s (2013) example of the Quebec student strikes to identify the risk that movements for social or environmental change often ignore intersectional oppressions and reinforce social inequities. Networking across organizations increases diverse input, recognizes intersectional oppressions and decreases the likelihood of doing harm to others.

Being in nature was an important part of networking as well. Participants were immersed in the ocean for significant periods of time, which was discussed in terms of opening up spaces of reflection and vulnerability in the data, however it is also likely that participants began to form a relationship with the entity. Abrams (1996) highlights the relationships and connections that are made by listening and communicating with other species. The value, in terms of learning from the rest of nature, is the development of a

complex worldview that opens up the possibility to empathize with the entire world and begins to decentre humans and self. This is a perspective of critical ecopedagogy which suggests that understanding self as being part of the world can begin to shift relationships with other species and between humans as well. Additionally, opening oneself up to diverse perspectives, including the very foreign and almost unimaginable perspective of other species, is a first step toward negotiating greater freedom from subjectivity, through broader conceptions of the world. Political philosopher James Tully (2008) suggests that diverse forms of knowing are important for negotiating living together. He accentuates that learning practices and approaches that are unfamiliar is essential to challenging hegemonic power that we are subject to and subject ourselves to.

Diversity is also an important element for learning and leads to creative “outside the box” outcomes. Networking involves listening to a variety of perspectives, and it is inevitable that greater learning and stronger strategy will emerge as a result. The experience of TTT was aimed at developing these connections as much as possible. The ocean created space for self-reflection and opened up channels of communication; there was an emphasis placed on everyone having a responsibility to contribute. The organic, open approach to learning from each other highlights the strategic value of working together as opposed to against each other. Building relationships and connecting with each other is something that is direly missing in our world today, and the potential to change the world lies, in my opinion, learning to live ethically well together through greater communication, genuine listening and connecting with self, each other, and with other species as well. This is an alternative vision to living and learning that is presented in the next section.

**Alternative vision: Active hope, inspired community.** A second key strategy for protest campaigns that are building regional capacity is presenting an alternative vision to a neoliberal worldview based on the exploitation of people and the planet. This vision aligns with Nuu chah nulth scholar Umeek (2011), who advocates that a transition to a more balanced way of life is essential for planetary survival and a more harmonious relationship among humans and between humans and other species. Umeek suggests this involves humans as a species collectively maturing. This means not only delivering a message of change, but also engaging a broader community by shifting perceptions of what the path to change looks like. Building community through cooperation, hope and inspiration presents an alternative to the fatalist, hope-less view of neoliberalism that suggests inadequacy by always demanding more. It also can build and re-inspire the activist community.

Khasnabish (2008), in his study on the Zapatista movement<sup>5</sup>, explains that imagining the possibility of a better world is the starting point for change and must embrace love, hope, creativity and listening. He suggests that these principles can “break the ideological and mythical encirclement of neoliberal capitalism and the cynicism it has so effectively generated.” (p. 277). hooks (1994) explains, “The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others. That action is the testimony of love as the practice of freedom” (p. 250). Likewise, Freire (1992) and Macy (1991) write about hope as liberatory and consider building both hope and love as fundamental to embracing humanity and taking action in the world. Hope,

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<sup>5</sup> The Zapatistas are an Indigenous group that lead a grassroots revolution in Mexico, to take back their land. They continue to have control of their land. For more about the movement see Khasnabish (2008).

like love and peace, is not an abstract concept. It stems from and flourishes in action and participation. Freire describes it as an ontological need.

Organizers of TTT demonstrate the potential and meaning of active hope in building a movement. They suggest that active hope dares people to engage in the movement by demonstrating that change is not only possible but also fun. For Kye, hope “shows that the small voice can say something... They see that the world is not only corporations ... No, we are not going to get swallowed up by them and yes we can stop them.” Ryan also describes the empowering nature of hope as “embodying and realizing the power that we have ... to move and create change.” She explains that people don’t have to “plod through somebody else’s script”, and encourages them to see that they are “human beings with valuable experience ... to share with the world”. Ben emphasizes working “collectively to ... empower and mobilise”. Active participation and connection with like-minded people contributes to people leaving TTT feeling, as Kristin describes it, “more loved, more connected, and more hopeful than when they came.”

Emily suggests that inspiration is an “antidote to despair”. Active hope as presented by Freire (1992) and Macy (1991), can be encouraged through a deeper engagement in meaningful conversations about social relations, physically and emotionally engaging with nature, and inspiring stories about care for the world. In TTT, two questions in the opening circle on Salt Spring on the first day of the paddle set the stage for conversations about caring for the region were: 1) Why are you paddling in TTT?; and 2) Why do you care about the Salish Sea? At this juncture participants had already paddled the first leg of the expedition and begun to open up a connection with the ocean and with themselves. The questions and answers take people beyond superficial

pleasure, to facilitate deeper thinking and care and open up emotions and opportunity to brainstorm pathways for change. Conversations that follow, along with targeted public speeches, set this same tone for community members to think about their care for the region, and become inspired and connected to various efforts to steward the region.

Active hope does not only apply to those on the outside, but it is extremely important for activists already involved in activism. Based on personal experience, TTT organizers suggest that activists experience despair when faced with seemingly unending problems. I return to quotes from the previous chapter here. Jan explains, “there are a zillion problems facing us and they all need to be addressed”. Kristen explains, “It can be pretty bleak sometimes working in community against dominant culture”. Likewise Annette admits, “Sometimes I feel a little defeated.” Gorski (2015) suggests that social justice activists often do not practice enough self-care and have a high burnout rate because they attempt to take on too much. He documents that this can have a negative impact on the sustainability of a movement. Freire (1992) and Macy (1991) also include despair in their discourse on hope. Both authors engage in detailed explanations about the deflating nature of despair, suggesting that it leads to apathy and inaction to the same extent that active hope can lead to engagement. This is a serious concern for Ryan who prioritizes self-care and mindfulness with her students. She views the joyful nature of TTT as an essential component in building capacity for a broad social movement, both to set an example of self care to people just getting involved, and also to keep regular activists hopeful and energised. Kristen describes TTT as a “sanctuary for people to be amongst kindred spirits and be reinvigorated...and for people to know that they are not alone”. This idea of a sanctuary comes up repeatedly in the data, and connects to the

discussion above around making informal and fun spaces for networking. Macy (1991) accentuates that building a utopia is a fun and exciting project. It is important that activists take the time to enjoy and live the change they hope to build. Music, food, playing sport and relaxing together are important elements to building and maintaining stronger relationships and collaboration.

Another goal that emerges from the data is extending beyond the ‘radical’ community of grassroots organizations and civil society groups, to engage people who do not normally participate in protest. This means engaging with people on their terms to entice them to join the vision for change. In some cases this involves, as Ben notes, reaching out to “people who are not currently engaged in the struggle”. This is not always as difficult as perceived. Just because people are not joining an action does not mean that they don’t care or they are not thinking about it. Annette points out that there are a lot of people, “who don’t like tanker traffic, but don’t know what to do about it”. She elaborates that “maybe TTT ... gets them thinking about it.” Likewise, Misty thinks a lot of people are aware of the issues and actually looking for “like minded community”. Doc noticed that in TTT there were quite a few participants “who are not super active”. He is confident that TTT “is a good example for them what social movements can be about, and what that community can build.” The implication to be drawn in activism is that you have to meet people where they are, and coax them into the movement, if the movement is going to grow. Finding ways to invite people to join a community means being open to listening to them, and encouraging them to share views. Reaching out to people outside the activist community requires reframing activism to make it seem less intimidating.

In her book, *Dancing in the Streets*, Barbara Ehrenreich (2006) documents the power of collective festivities to undermine social inequality and create change. TTT uses music, food and community festival, to engage people who perhaps otherwise would not be involved. Ben describes the TTT experience as unique because it combines “outdoor recreation with friends and family with social justice and ecology”. Ultimately the goal is to show that living together is better than living in opposition to each other. Ryan explains that TTT is a hopeful space that seeks to show that change is not only possible, but that it is fun: “We are swimming in the world, paddling in the rainstorms, playing Frisbee and laughing.” Kye feels that the Pender community want to be part of the event and that they “want their kids to get out there and see it, and they want a picture with it.” She explains that when community members participate in the festivities they are “thinking at the same time about the reason for it all.” Similarly, Annette speaks about a buzz on Mayne Island, and considers the paddle a “conversation starter” because everyone wants to know what it is about. The festive nature of TTT is powerful for building capacity because it shifts perspectives about what change can be about and in doing so attracts people to join the movement.

Shifting what change means from a negative protest perspective to a positive alternative vision is considered important not only to engage people with similar values, but also to shift perspectives of people who have radically different worldviews. This theme connects to the value of connecting and communicating with other people. At the end of the discussion on networking I suggested that connections are valuable because they build a complex perspective of the world and lead to diverse solutions that are not harmful to others. This can and must be extended beyond the realm of people who are

interested and active in social change. French sociologist Alain Touraine (2000) emphasized that communication is important for change because it opens up the possibility to dialogue and invites greater participation by valuing differing perspectives. Using force to push through a self-serving vision of the world, no matter what the vision, is unlikely to succeed. Touraine accentuated the value of learning to communicate and negotiate across interests and cultures. This requires making space for people to join who might not otherwise be inclined. Often learning campaigns like TTT can be seen as negative protests, and possibly violent. Demonstrating that democratic participation in society can be fun is really important if it is going to grow.

Organizers in TTT see this happening in TTT. Misty refers to it as “not preaching to the converted”. TTT organizers from the islands note that some community members were at first hesitant about the “protesters” coming to their island. Ron describes the Pender Island community as hesitant to get involved because it is a “protest, it is hippy”. Organizers explain that islanders come for the music and food and are subsequently exposed to the message of TTT. They document a changed perspective of TTT and the environmental movement. When community members realize the movement is positive, they are surprised and drawn to it. Ron explains that islanders “hear about it from friends who participated [in previous years] and said it was amazing”. He feels that TTT’s success “validates it”. Likewise, Misty is incredulous by the change in a very conservative group on Pender Island that not only showed up but financially supported the community events on Pender Island. Annette on Mayne describes TTT as being “on the tips of people’s tongues”, explaining that these are conservative people “who would never [normally] participate in our event.” Participants explain that TTT is a significant

factor in increasing environmental initiatives on the islands and building a greater sense of community. Kye refers to an initiative that put solar panels on the community centre on Pender Island as a result of TTT inspiration. The social aspect of the paddle and community events attracted participation and inspired a deeper level of care and connectedness. It also started a dialogue and initiated a different way of looking at the world, even among those who seemingly would not be open to this perspective.

Building capacity for sustained social change emerges as a fundamental strategy for catalyzing change. This theme shows that developing a network of caring and empowered individuals is a key strategy for building capacity. By sharing a message of active hope and collaboration protest campaigns demonstrate not only that change is possible, but also that it is enjoyable. This makes the movement much more than a protest. It becomes the embodiment of living together and represents a break from fatalist neoliberalism. It is a learning campaign that dares people to hope, revitalizes passion, and empowers action. The strategies for engagement and building capacity for sustained social change identified in this theme are specific to the TTT protest campaign. While the specific techniques (such as having people build relationships by paddling out on the ocean, or connecting isolated islands) may not be applicable to every social action, the story of TTT demonstrates the value of the broader theme and hopefully sparks ideas for networking and presenting an alternative vision of living. This could be applied to building a better world through formal learning as well.

### **Informal and non-formal learning**

This research shows that learning is continuous and binds together all of the other elements of social movements. The learning outcomes, or goals of the movement, depend

on the praxis of the movement or campaign. Learning in TTT demonstrates how closely connected methods of learning are to change. This study exemplifies what critical ecopedagogy advocates for: That a shift in how learning is done could lead significantly different learners, and change the way society functions. I suggest that educators who are interested in changing the world through formal learning could draw on some of the practices outlined in TTT to challenge the normative, fatalist, training exercises of traditional learning.

Learning in TTT relies on the various experiences and knowledge of the participants to build a holistic understanding of systemic problems in the region and mobilise practical solutions. TTT exemplifies good practice by: 1) facilitating organic, informal, non-formal learning, co-creating knowledge and valuing contributions from all participants; and 2) emphasizing ethical praxis as a responsibility through transformative experience. The format of learning in TTT is informal and non-formal, based on experiential and transformative learning. Social movement scholars such as Choudry (2015), Clover (2002), Foley (2002) and Hall (2012) write in detail about the nature and value of learning informally and non-formally in activist spaces through conversations, stories and participation. These scholars document that this type of learning invites collaboration, diversity and creativity while challenging neoliberal practices of knowledge hegemony and what Clover (2002b) refers to as “cultural homogenization”.

Framing a protest campaign as a learning endeavour, like Clover (1994) does with women’s ecological protests and movements, helps to focus on learning objectives and outcomes as the experience is crafted. Organizers who view themselves as educators can strive to create deep learning experiences. In TTT, Emily identifies her role in creating a

learning program with “intellectual” and “experiential” learning objectives. In order to build a movement, the TTT protest campaign begins on a small, personal level and grows outwards. Organizers consider TTT as a campaign that is, as Doc puts it, “planting seeds of change” in individuals communities. These seeds then can grow through conversations and shared actions to gradually pollinate deeper engagement throughout the region. The seeds planted represent the possibility of an egalitarian, hopeful and positive world, based in cooperative and considerate relations among humans and between humans and other species. Annette explains that it is impossible to measure just how far the TTT message will travel and whom it will impact.

**Organic learning.** This research shows that learning organically is directly linked to catalyzing change in society because it encourages diversity, and values individual participation for collective understanding. Organic learning departs from the traditional transmission model of teaching that does not value prior knowledge or experience. Instead organic learning emphasizes the value of integrating prior knowledge by creating circumstances for it to flourish. Another aspect of learning organically is the connections it allows between topics and knowledge, as opposed to compartmentalizing and confining learning to specific subjects. Participants in social movements learn informally and non formally. TTT provides a good example of facilitating learning organically. It is a conscious and planned approach to meet the learning goals behind the campaign.

Participants in TTT learn through networking and workshops to share issues they identify with, and strategize broad solutions. TTT emphasises learning as co-created and dependent on the diverse knowledge and experience of participants to emerge gradually through conversation. Creating the circumstances for this learning was intentional in

TTT. Ryan reflects on the importance of leaving space for conversations to emerge naturally and Ben speaks of “working the learning into the gatherings, the speeches, the music ... and also slipping in learning through the cultural stuff, the recreational yoga, the hiking, swimming.” Emily gives an example of the types of conversations that emerge informally: “Sasha was talking about social housing for an hour and a half on the beach. It wasn’t planned, but I learned a lot.” I personally engaged in conversations including decolonisation, a socially just economy, globalisation, LNG in the Saanich Inlet and environmental preservation among others throughout the paddle. I personally learned about new campaigns, speakers, and initiatives by hearing the stories of other activist campaigns. This added to my repertoire of strategies for organizing. It also helped me to consider what other people were concerned about as they were organizing, and helped me get perspective of the various lenses through which people viewed the world. What struck me as extraordinary were the diverse perspectives and approaches to life. People from all kinds of backgrounds joined the campaign and everyone had a unique reason for participating. There were some similarities, but the difference in age and backgrounds really were quite different.

The organisers highlighted this diversity as an integral component to learning organically and co-creating knowledge. Ryan suggests that diversity enables and encourages multiple ways of looking at the world, which leads to broader knowledge and creative solutions. She explains that the extent of learning is impossible to predict as a result. In addition to sharing knowledge, diverse experience in activism is important for increasing political participation. Sasha explains that TTTT wants, “to get people wherever they are at in terms of their consciousness, put them together and create a space

and work together and maybe move further along in whatever journey they are on politically.”

Organizers suggest that the experiential nature of paddling together in the ocean elicits these conversations. This is a function of being vulnerable on the ocean, immersion in nature, and building a community of trust. Ryan feels that opening up is in part a function of being physically vulnerable and dependant on each other for safety: “When we are travelling together in dangerous water and we as a community make it through times of discomfort and fear-that is how you build trust. Once you have trust built you can be vulnerable.” Exposing vulnerability is an important piece to transformative and empowering learning. It opens up space for conversations, but also by realizing it is okay to be vulnerable, people grow stronger and more capable to lead. There are a lot of ways to facilitate reflection on vulnerability. Organizers of TTT suggest that immersion in nature is a powerful method.

Doc suggests that connecting with the place we want to protect, “seeing the living breathing ocean, the wind, currents, the tides, the sea life, the people life”, naturally gets people thinking. Likewise Emily emphasizes that the connection with the ocean is “an emotional connection” that “creates solidarity with the entity we are trying to protect.” Jay comments that immersion in the ocean and learning about the threats to it develops a sense of urgency that leads to planning for action. There is a general consensus among organizers that being immersed in nature develops mindfulness through self-reflection, which eventually leads to meaningful conversations. Kristen explains: “When you get all these people on the water for five days, you create this opportunity for these organic conversations to happen.” People from diverse backgrounds begin to share their

experiences and perspectives on life and this is a powerful form of learning through storytelling.

Nuu chah nulth scholar Umeeek (2011) highlights storytelling as an important method for learning through shared experiences. He indicates that this is a very old learning tradition in Nuu Chah Nulth culture. One of the reasons he places value in storytelling is that the listener is engrossed in the story and becomes an equal participant. This method enables the listener to relate to the story and interpret it according to the listener's own experiences, thus building a sense of continuity and a relationship with the storyteller. Jan recalls the impact of sharing personal experiences of the Unist'ot'en camp. She explains that the story allowed her to identify with the camp experience. As a result of hearing the story she had changed her opinion of the camp and was making plans to go and visit. The other impact of story is that as Ben suggests it makes learning "different from a traditional classroom setting in terms of people being open to learning." The lines between teacher and student are blurred, and everyone feels that they have something of value to contribute. Ryan notes that participants "really feel they are part of the learning and can share their learning with everyone who is there". She goes on: "When you get to have conversations with people and feel their vulnerability, then it demystifies the idea that there are some people who know exactly what to do. Nobody knows exactly what to do, but we are trying and we are co-creating this movement." This learning strategy is really important, because it counters the "expert" or "champion" perspective in society and instead empowers everyone with the knowledge that they are capable and necessary for the movement.

Informal learning in protest campaigns can be augmented through a process of complementary non-formal learning, in workshops and public presentations for example. The non-formal aspects of the learning in TTT are planned to address specific issues threatening the Salish Sea and to build strategic plans to work together in the region. Sasha explains the workshops forge “deeper ecological knowledge” and “a deeper more meaningful connection to place”. Workshops that explicitly encourage reflection on the experience are essential to learning. Ryan feels that her workshop in TTT elicited “a lot of wisdom” around the question “how is change created”, a topic that continued to be addressed informally throughout the paddle. Ben reflects on his own position as one of the public speakers, where he pushed his “agenda of social environmentalism”. He suggests that his comments were structured to “instil in people the belief that a better world was necessary and possible and that they are an integral part of the solution.” Organizers referenced the closing circle, which included all participants, as a place that brought all the conversations and people together in a final group reflection on the meaning and projected outcomes of the paddle.

While a planned learning program is valuable, following along the lines of empowered learning, the data suggests that purposefully leaving spaces open has potential to fill them with unpredictable learning. The workshop topics and presenters in TTT were set in advance, however spaces were purposefully left open for unpredicted topics. An example of this was a workshop that a participant from the northern part of Vancouver Island proposed during the paddle. The participant was a professional facilitator and felt that her skills could be of used. The workshop focused on developing post-paddle action groups on issues that participants self identified as important. The

group I personally connected with committed to working on indigenous solidarity through learning and promoting local indigenous cultural knowledge. I continue to work with this group now one year later, and it has significantly impacted my worldview and activist organizing. This is just one example of many that illustrate the value of leaving open space for learning. It is also important to create an atmosphere where participants feel comfortable and welcome to share their skills.

The organic nature of learning in TTT is seen as an effective way of motivating people to participate and engage more deeply around a broad variety of issues. Including all participants' knowledge opens up a space for diverse perspectives and creative solutions. Organic learning is empowering and leads to greater commitment and accountability. It not only subverts the narrow ideological, expert-based model of neoliberal learning structures, but it is effective for learning and acting cooperatively. Additionally, the creativity that results in sharing diverse expertise and experience leads to a holistic and complex understanding of the world and how to live in it together. This approach to learning seems natural when considering the desired outcomes of active, empowered and knowledgeable participants who are empathetic and caring. The learning in TTT is not dissimilar to the methods and goals of critical ecopedagogy, and provides an excellent example for social movements, grassroots organizations and formal learning.

**Learning ethical action.** Addressing social and environmental injustices requires learning that encourages empathy, compassion, agency and action. Social movements and protest campaigns with these goals are an embodiment of learning and practicing ethical action. With explicit attention to this, learning in protest campaigns can extend the impact beyond the incidental learning that occurs by participation. Learning in TTT, for

example, focuses on building self aware and politically conscious individuals who are committed to healing the problems of the world. Ryan suggests the learning goal in TTT is to develop “caring human beings” capable of acting on “what lights them up” so that they can engage in “the conversation that is life”. The literature supports this view. Umeeek (2010) observed that more of this type of learning is needed, attributing the disharmony in the world to a deficiency of spiritual growth. Likewise Orr (2002) suggested the gap in contemporary learning is caused by a focus on cleverness over wisdom. Social movement scholars (i.e. Clover 2012; Hall, 2010; Mota and Esteves, 2014) have suggested that social movements provide an opportunity to learn about caring and acting in the world. Through an experiential, transformative process protest campaigns can facilitate critical self-reflection and encourage participants to become agents of change in their home communities.

This research suggests that one of the major considerations for learning ethical action is facilitating what Freire (1970) refers to as self-conscientization. Freire describes self-conscientization as a critical awareness of the political position of self within society, and the power that one wields. Kristen describes it as “getting people to think about themselves and how they live their lives.” Sasha feels that the aim is also “to teach people how to live together and how to work together.” Critical ecopedagogy emphasizes learning about hegemonic power and systemic social structures based in neoliberalism. Likewise, Ben identifies “the problems of systemic capitalism” as being the root of environmental and social destruction. Ben explains that participants are encouraged to realize their own position and collective power to challenge problematic policy and power structures.

As participants reflect and learn about the power structures, they are also learning that they have an ethical responsibility to act on their knowledge. Ryan accentuates that participants are learning that “creating change isn’t something that other people do.” This is consistent with Ecological transformative learning theory as discussed by O’Sullivan (1999) and Gadotti (2010), which identifies action as a key outcome of learning. In theory, after experiencing discomfort and reflecting on their position in the world, learners shift their perspective and become inclined to take action for social justice. In TTT this is manifested through the short term and urgent need to protect the Salish Sea from oil tankers. Ben explains that as participants learn about the problems associated with policy on oil tankers they hopefully recognize that these are common systemic issues that are not isolated to oil tankers and realize a different system of living together is necessary. For Ben, it is this shift in perspective that will lead to “the long term commitment of participants going back to their communities and having conversations with their neighbours, family and friends and finding opportunities to challenge the systemic problems of capitalism.” The active component of learning is thus linked to awareness.

This study demonstrates that learning experientially is at the heart of critical, transformative learning and action in this organisation. In TTT the experiential nature of the paddle is linked to the organic nature of learning, and opening up spaces for reflection, exposing vulnerability. Participants develop an ethical responsibility to act to protect the specific issue of the Salish Sea through as Emily notes “developing an emotional connection with the entity you are trying to protect”. The urgency to take action to protect the Sea is highlighted by what Doc describes as the visceral experience

of being “right there on the water, where the tankers are coming through, we stopped and pointed at where they would pass.” Likewise, Ben points out that “being immersed in the water that has potential impact of an oil spill makes the ideas that are discussed more relevant and more immediate.” The ethical responsibility to act translates naturally to the other interrelated issues that emerge through conversations, workshops and presentations throughout the paddle. The constant reminder of paddling and the specific issue of tankers encourage action on all the issues.

Participants learn about their own power and potential to create change by participating in the paddle. Ryan explains: “We are physically getting over paralysis because we are moving, we are getting in kayaks so we are embodying and realizing the power that we have. Then in an intellectual way, we are having conversations and realizing that we have power to move and create change.” Additionally, participants are developing a physical connection to the struggle against tankers. Doc believes that “some people probably had trouble completing the paddle. They probably had mental difficulties but then there was the momentum and the energy of other people...maybe they can carry that on into some other portion of the movement.” Doc feels that the difficulty of the paddle “leads to developing and participating in a wider change, leading to action”. Jan emphasizes that working through the difficulty with so many people “helps us realize that we are more powerful than we think we are.”

Kye notes that the passion and commitment of the paddlers influences onlookers to think about the issue of tanker traffic and reflect on the consequences of a tanker spill, and their own commitment and responsibility to protect it. She recalls telling people there is a “100 person paddle coming up and their eyes bulge open.” She explains that

the passion is contagious because “it means that people actually care to do something to protect what is going on around us.” These examples add to the literature of engagement in social movements. Mann (2011) pointed out the value of getting people to actively participate in a movement in order to increase the likelihood of future participation.

The experience of being in nature is seen to encourage critical reflection on self and position in society. Gadotti (2010) posits that understanding that our lives are deeply connected to each other and to the planet counters the narrow worldview of individualism and dominance over nature. This understanding encourages ethical behaviour and challenges the utilitarian nature of our society. The organic nature of learning through dialogue also shifts interaction in every day society. By emphasizing listening and learning from others, people are also learning to re-position their own understanding of self-acrued knowledge. In other words this method of learning will lead to greater questioning rather than blind assertions based in pride about being right. This encourages learning as a constant negotiation and leads to living genuinely that rather than hiding behind appearances.

In the case of TTT, the magnitude of the ocean shifts perspective on the position of self in reference to time and space as well. In TTT participants experience a deeper, slower sense of time as a result of being immersed in the seemingly timelessness of the ocean. Thinking in larger temporal frames is a central tendency of many belief systems, perhaps because it decentres self-importance, ego and immediate self gratification tendencies. Western science places the human species as occupying a millisecond of the 450 billion year evolution of the earth. Indigenous sciences also interpret human existence in terms of relationships within an ongoing conception of time much greater

than the individual, or the human. Monotheistic beliefs such as Islam, Judaism, and Christianity understand human existence in terms of life beyond death, as do Buddhist and Hindu beliefs. Common to all of these, is that they advance primarily an ethical perspective of living together that transcends the borders of our human life world. In contradiction to this, neoliberal learning, both tacit and explicit, encourages an ever-smaller conception of time. In our current society we measure time in nanoseconds; valuing speed and immediate gratification, whether it be from our phone, or for a service. We associate time with money, and we strive above everything else to obtain money. Macy (1991) suggests that that in our rush we have a tendency to compartmentalize our every day actions, a tendency that disassociates our actions from the impacts, “so we cut down an old growth forest and dump more tons of waste in our landfills to save ourselves ten or fifteen minutes” (p. 178). Living together requires building relationships, and understanding our interdependence in a complex world. Learning to live well in this world, I would suggest requires taking the time to reflect on self and build stable relationships.

Organizers of TTT allude to the shift in time experience out on the water, where one is immersed and surrounded by a vast entity that is seemingly timeless and makes one feel like a small part of something much greater. Ryan indicates that paddlers feel vulnerable out on the ocean and at the mercy of it. Doc explains that most people do not experience the vastness of the ocean from such a close perspective. He distinguishes the kayaking experience from taking a ferry, suggesting that when kayaking we interact more with the ocean and the other species living in it. Ryan values “unplugging” because it is the sense of timelessness that leads to deeper reflection and existential questions. This is

consistent with environmental educators Orr (2004) and Leopold (1949) who encourage a deeper engagement with nature in learning. Experiencing natural environments might not be an option for all movements or people especially when located in cities, where there tends to be limited access to the natural environment, especially for people with less money. Finding parks or taking time to practice reflection through meditation and unplugging from the busyness of everyday life could be alternatives.

Another impact brought on by unplugging from technology is a shift away from technological determinism, whereby people equate progress with technological advancement. This perspective encourages a narrow, utilitarian vision of the world, which is largely devoid of ethical thought. Saul (2001) clarifies that machines are not a substitute for human decision-making and judgement because they cannot feel and are not ethically minded. Unplugging and slowing down reminds participants that technology is not a silver bullet. It also reminds participants that humans occupy but a small part of a complex universe spanning hundreds of millions of years. This shifts worldviews away from anthropocentric perspectives to one where humans are dependent on the planet and other species. It encourages an ethical responsibility to participate in sharing the world rather than dominating it, a perspective that extends to human relationships as well.

The concept of learning to live ethically is directly connected to the methods of learning as discussed in the previous section. In TTT the experiential and organic methods of instruction are central to the longer-term learning campaign of developing empowered and caring people. For me, as with critical ecopedagogy, learning is inseparable from learning to be, as Umeeck (2010) puts it, harmonious. That is, learning to

live well together. Critical ecopedagogy suggests that this involves learning to think critically on self and self-positionality in the world. This necessarily means primarily listening to diverse perspectives of the world that help to liberate the self from self-subjectivity. Understanding and subverting power relationships in order to live well is an ongoing process of cultural learning through communication and dialogue in a continually changing world. Activist campaigns for social and ecological change, as in the case of TTT, are striving to build an ethical society that can live well together. This attempts to subvert traditional and dominant narratives of hierarchy and supremacy, with peace as an ultimate goal. Learning to live ethically well does not have to be reserved for grassroots learning. There are many formal educators leading their own social change by striving to prioritize ethical living in formal learning. There is lots of room for networking and connecting radical learning in grassroots and community organizations with formal school programs. The active experience of working for change, as TTT shows, could be very impactful on formal learning processes should they be united.

### **Systemic change: cultural learning and global connections**

This theme identifies links between injustices and makes links between local and global spaces of action. This research suggests that action in local campaigns fits directly into a complex global system for change. It highlights the need to address root power inequalities at a local level in order affect change at a global level. In other words, action locally is and should be acting globally as well. The research calls for a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the world and the links to the issues within it. As with the case of organic learning that seeks to decompartmentalize learning, so should be the case with action. One of these local issues is colonisation. In her chapter “You can’t be

the doctor if you are the colonial disease”, Marie Battiste (2005) argues that to address systemic problems in the world, it is essential to examine the Eurocentric monopoly of knowledge creation and validation used to maintain and justify ongoing colonialism. Colonialism as a root cause of a wide range of human problems is an issue that must be addressed locally and globally if real solutions are to be achieved. In this theme, I elaborate: 1) how grassroots campaigns can subvert the systemic problem of cultural homogenization by valuing and clarifying indigenous history and knowledge; and 2) the connection that TTT draws between building a local movement and affecting global change.

**Subverting cultural homogenization.** Using an alternative to the dominant knowledge paradigm of neoliberal ideology is important for subverting cultural homogenization. This requires consideration of the content that promotes a vision of interdependence, diversity and hope and also in the non-formal and informal learning techniques which are organic, experiential and challenge participants to reflect on themselves and on their ethical responsibility to act. This aligns with hooks (1994) who suggests that learning to act ethically involves unlearning hegemonic practices and developing alternative habits which contradict the subjectivity of dominant culture.

As Clover (2002b) argued, we need to tackle cultural homogenization because it is problematic. First, the dominant narrative is reproduced and reinforced tacitly to occupy and maintain power, as Gramsci (1971) points out, thus alienating and undermining anyone who is not part of the dominant norm. Battiste (2005) clarifies that “the dominators construct differences of the dominated as inferior and negative and those of the dominators as superior and positive.” (p. 128). Secondly, cultural homogenization

severely limits diversity and creativity in learning. The problems with both of these points are evident in the state of our environment and the massive social inequality in the world, where despite urgent problems, dominant powers are unable to find viable solutions.

Organizers in Canada must acknowledge the long repression of indigenous peoples in Canada through ongoing colonialism. Learning about this repression and acting on it is a central concern in order to build a movement based in social justice and environmental justice as well. The case of TTT offers space to problematize the relationships between settler activists and indigenous peoples. This discourse can be more widely generalized to other oppressor-oppressed relationships, albeit carefully and in context. Sasha explains, “The question of reconciliation with First Nations is central to the whole project.” Likewise Doc contextualizes the underlying injustice in the region in relation to indigenous rights: “If you go back to the core point of the project -- Stopping tankers and pipelines -- that is just an extension of the injustices that have been done against people that were inhabiting here before we came along.”

Organizers of TTT not only recognize the repression, but also genuinely identify with indigenous worldviews and leadership in developing a sustainable world. For example, Jay documents a need to learn from local Coast Salish First Nations: “I have immense respect for Coast Salish peoples who have lived here for tens of thousands of years, and they lived sustainably, and we are not doing that today. I think we need to learn from them, what they did to live here and sustain themselves.” Organizers acknowledge and respect indigenous leadership in the struggle to protect the planet. Sasha feels that grassroots organizations and local communities can exert influence on

provincial economic policy by supporting First Nations initiatives. He adds that grassroots organizations also need to work towards genuine reconciliation by finding ways for settlers and First Nations to live together that are “restorative, respectful and prosperous”.

Attempts to recognize and honour First Nations culture, learning and rights figured prominently throughout the paddle in multiple ways. Organizers feel it is important to request permission to paddle and acknowledge the unceded territory of the Coast Salish people where they are paddling. Organizers also respect the territory by being good stewards and by presenting an accurate portrayal of the history of the place. Kristen notes the importance of TTT “checking in with chiefs to see if we can paddle, reducing our impact and making sure our trace on the land is minimal ... stewardship of the land matters.” On Mayne Island, the planned cultural learning was a historical lesson in a circle in front of the recently carved welcoming figure. Annette feels that the learning circle was valuable “to establish how First Nations would have seen the bays and the valleys and the islands for the 5000 years before.” She feels that TTT encourages “learning that we are just caretakers of this land, my family could sell next year and move on. It is so different to actually have roots in a place rather than ownership.” Ron commented on the Pender Island events suggesting that learning the history “adds a dimension of connection and understanding of the place.”

Explicitly acknowledging unceded territory encouraged informal conversations about First Nations culture, solidarity and reconciliation. Organizers recall discomfort and uncertainty in the organizing process. Sasha worries about being genuine: “You always want to engage with First Nations, but you don’t want to appear tokenistic.”

Emily problematizes activism on unceded territory: “I want the Salish Sea to be protected because I like the Salish Sea. But it’s not my sea.” Xhopakelxhit (2014), an indigenous activist and blogger, explains that acting respectfully, but not expecting too much from indigenous peoples is the difficulty with addressing issues authentically and autonomously. Xhopakelxhit suggests that discomfort is a healthy sign for settlers opposing colonisation. Organizers feel that the solution is, as Misty suggests, “trying to build relationships”, by listening and finding opportunities to attend events and show solidarity with First Nations.

TTT promoted solidarity with indigenous efforts to defend territory in other parts of the province. Ben recalls the Unist’ot’en camp as an example: “A few days before TTT some activists asked TTT to raise awareness about Unist’ot’en camp and the issues around that pipeline and we were able to make Unist’ot’en a prominent theme.” A number of organizers suggest that TTT was oriented towards reconciliation in the form of ongoing learning and solidarity. TTT participated in challenges to proposed LNG plants in the Saanich Inlet and construction of a house on a local First Nations burial ground at Grace Islet. TTT also participated in a fundraising campaign for First Nations legal fees.

Despite these efforts the general feeling among organizers is that greater emphasis in TTT should be placed on learning about and working towards decolonisation and reconciliation, involves a continual process of building relationships of mutual trust and respect. It also requires an understanding of unequal social and political positions and distrust brought on by 500 years of oppression. Organizers hope that TTT catalyzes genuine and ongoing reflection, conversation, and action. Certainly at a bare minimum, any project looking to address social change absolutely must consider the holistic

framework in which they operate and make sure that they are contributing to the solution, or at least not reinforcing the problem -- by ignoring it, for example.

**Local capacity for global change.** This theme emerges in the context of environmental action, and therefore proves to be an excellent case study for addressing global human rights through climate change. This does not mean, however, that other actions do not have potential or responsibility to impact global injustice. TTT is an environmental movement to protect the west coast of Canada. However it goes beyond that to acknowledge that the structures that allow degradation of the environment need to be challenged and changed on both local and global scales and this requires a holistic understanding of the issues. Emily explains that neoliberal ideology has an impact on a wide range of social and environmental issues: “Child care, indigenous rights, protecting the Carmana-Walbran (old growth forest on Vancouver Island), protecting the Salish Sea, we are not taking in refugees, challenging our international relations-everything is connected.” Ben explains that TTT addresses the problems by pushing “environmental groups to be more socialist and pushing unions and social groups to be more ecologically minded”. Organizers also feel that global issues emerge as a result of building politically active and caring people. Sandra feels the strategy is learning to “break down the power structure”. Ben describes the first step as “converting them ideologically” so that they are ready to take action on any issue, and Kye explains that when people feel empowered they can stand up to “the army, racism, colonialism or whatever it is that they need to.”

While there is no explicit goal to connect global issues, both Emily and Ryan feel that a range of global topics arise organically because of the diverse interests of the participants. An example of this is a personal conversation that I recall with a participant

who was entering an internship in Malaysia working with UNIFEM, problematizing the role of NGO's and international aid. Sasha suggests "there is something about the water that ties you to people across that ocean." Ben feels that the "broader world view was introduced and discussed in terms of how we interact within the paddle, how different social systems should operate and more balanced relationships between people and ecological systems that sustain life." Ben's statement reflects the broad nature of the learning goals for global awareness in TTT, which they see as an extension to local social, economic and environmental concerns associated with neoliberalism.

Organizers feel that focusing on local action counters negative aspects of globalization. Sasha explains that "in the face of trends towards globalization.... there is a need to reassert a localism or re-territorialization of a connection to particular spaces and places." Doc suggests that the local focus is based on strategically concentrating on manageable change: "We need to address what we can and fight some of the longer term injustice along the way. We are not going to fix it by tackling social injustice itself as a big chunk. We need to start fighting along the edges." Likewise Emily feels that "I need to contribute to the movement in a specific way. Everyone contributes to the movement."

For organizers, acting locally to stop oil tankers has a major strategic impact on global change by disrupting the global economy and impacting climate change. Sasha highlights that TTT "is hyper local but has tremendous impact on the global economic system". The data taken from the website and from the organizers' personal accounts traces the story of the fossil fuel based economy from the oil tankers in the Salish Sea back to the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline, to extraction of the Canadian tar sands in Northern Alberta and its impact on the entire globe through climate change. Sasha

elaborates, “If we liquidate the tar sands, and spill all of that carbon into the atmosphere here and elsewhere, we have more than enough carbon to permanently harm the climate, at least on any human time scale.” For Jay, stopping tanker traffic is “just the tip of the iceberg”. He connects oil use to a major problem with consumption, explaining that “people rely on oil for everything in the world, and it is important that they realize what is involved with that process.”

Sasha considers global climate change to be directly related to the world economy, and feels that British Columbia is in “an area of very strategic importance” for resistance to global climate change fuelled by short term corporate interests because of the potential to block the transport of bitumen from the Alberta tar sands: “As diffuse and global the economic system is, it still has to do things in real space. There are actual materials that have to be transported. There are actual people and things that need to move and we can act at those sites and create sites of resistance at those nodes.” TTT’s local action reflects Battiste’s (2005) argument that you can’t be the doctor if you are the colonial disease. The major problems inflicted on the world start here in wealthy countries, and while NGOs and governments can go overseas and attempt to patch things up in the form of foreign aid, the effort does not to address root problems, which Bello (2002) notes, are ongoing imperialism, colonialism and the hegemony of neoliberal globalisation.

The organizers make reference to some global connections, however I think they require some elaboration. First, climate change and environmental degradation is a global issue caused primarily by unsustainable living practice. Elizabeth Kolbert (2014) has contextualized the extent of the damage humans are doing by comparing the causes

of five great mass extinctions in the earth's history to our present time. She explains that since the beginning of the industrial revolution humans have released 450 billion tons of carbon into the atmosphere. Each year we release about 9 billion more, a figure that is increasing by 6% annually. Carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere are at 400 parts per million. This is a 40% increase in 200 hundred years. Methane gasses, which are even more potent, have increased 50% in the same time period. The extent of the destruction has led to the self-labelling of a new age: the anthropocene. Kolbert (2014) compares this to the largest known mass extinction event in earth's history. 252 Million years ago the end of the Permian age was caused by a massive release of carbon into the air, causing temperatures to rise, increasing ocean acidification (oceans absorb 1/3 of carbon in the atmosphere) and causing the mass extinction of 90-96% of all marine species, 70% of all land species including vertebrates and nearly extinguished multi cellular life altogether. The recovery was 30 million years. Our current massive release of carbon in the past 200 hundred years is comparable to the end-Permian mass extinction. The difference is that the end-Permian extinction took several hundred thousand years, a feat geologists are unable to explain, while humans have managed to do the same in 200 hundred years. Kolbert (2014) explains that the rate at which we are dispelling carbon into the atmosphere is most alarming, because it gives little time for the earth to adapt and species disappearing. Kolbert suggests "we are running the geologic history not only in reverse but at warp speed." (p. 124). Expelling carbon, of course, is only one element of the destruction, over-fishing, agriculture practice that diminishes soil fertility, releasing toxic chemicals, plastics and other garbage into the water, deforestation and many other

practices are speeding up the rate of extinction and quite literally turning the entire planet into an unliveable garbage dump.

I intercede with this to make clear the connection between local action and global impact. Never-ending economic growth and a culture of wasteful mass consumption fuels increased resource extraction, the burning of fossil fuels and the degradation of the entire planet. This is almost entirely caused by lifestyles of wealthy (mostly western) societal practices. It is also vehemently denied to exist by many. Denial is evident in the remarkable ongoing practice of consumption, waste and even financial investments in fossil fuels by individuals and governments almost without exception of (mostly) western societies. An example of this is given by World Watch Institute (2017): “The 12 percent of the world’s population that lives in North America and Western Europe accounts for 60 percent of private consumption spending, while the one-third living in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa accounts for only 3.2 percent.”

Millions of people feel the impacts of climate change through famine, human conflict and displacement. Western consumption practices and eagerness to earn money of course are also connected to neoliberal economics and poor ethical standards, which were identified in chapter 2 of this research. This is why Gadotti (2008) emphasized that ecological learning must have a central focus on social justice and combating devastating environmental problems. Sasha and Jay, who connect the development of the tar sands and mass consumption locally, have hit on a very important point for both learning and action, namely, that the major problems in the world, especially those caused by neoliberalism and environmental degradation, generally start in the West. Canada plays a very large role both in contributing to climate change through resource extraction and

consumption, but also through very poor ethical relationships internationally. Much foreign aid and time is spent going abroad and telling people what to do from a paternalistic position, however, as Battiste (2005) suggests, to address the root of the problem, we need to change the root of the problem, and Canadians are a big part of that problem. TTT did not draw attention to this explicitly, and I think it is an area that could be developed further.

Organizers of TTT see the issue of tanker traffic as an opportunity to engage people living in the region of the Salish Sea in systemic social and environmental change with potential to become a social movement. Overall, the thematic analysis in this chapter identified several key learning strategies for building a movement and catalyzing systemic change in society: 1) Building capacity through networking; 2) Presenting a hopeful alternative vision; and 3) Including global and cultural injustices. Connecting all of these themes is the perspective that social movements and activist organizing not only simply involve learning; they are learning. They introduce a type of learning that focuses on what Umek (2010) describes as developing harmonious beings. Practically this requires building a broad community of empowered, active, compassionate and conscious people. The praxis of critical ecopedagogy provides a framework for this type of learning by embodying non-hierarchical and complex axiology and epistemology, critical awareness of neoliberalism, constant questioning of power relations, and advocating for action-based learning. TTT exemplifies a model of learning very similar to this approach, through learning organically, engaging in reflection for ethical action, encouraging critical thought on root problems, and realizing the complexity and connectedness of problems.

We live in a very unstable period of time in human history where there is growing disparity between rich and poor. Power is maintained by dividing people and convincing them that change from the current system is neither desirable nor even possible. Formal learning is a training process that encourages short-term, simplistic and self-centred thinking that separates ethics from daily life practice and prioritizes profit over the common good. Governments go so far as to restrict any critical learning efforts made in the private sphere by reducing their charitable status (ability to acquire income), reducing funding and forcing time consuming and costly audits. The use of military force is used to (often legally) crush any form of active dissent (i.e. taking to the streets). These tactics clearly do not work, as more and more citizens of the world are standing up in collective protest. Absent vision and practice in formal learning, grassroots organizations can and must provide a model of learning that develops critical thinking, compassion, communication and peaceful coexistence in this world. This requires explicit attention and ongoing reflection on learning goals and learning practice in protest campaigns. The themes in this chapter have identified, through the story of TTT, a model that can be adapted and used to this end.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

### Summary of the research

As I look around my very privileged world and reflect on my own political position, I cannot help but be filled with both despair and hope. Despair with the pain and suffering of the world. Hope in the love and care in the world. Despair with being part of a seemingly viral and destructive species. Hope that the human species is simply going through adolescence. Despair with the imminent destruction of billions of years of life on earth. Hope that it is not too late. Despair in killing. Hope in saving lives. Despair that someone every second is dying of hunger. Hope that they will find food. Despair in the social structures and systems that reproduce and maintain injustice. Hope that they can be adapted and changed. Despair with war. Hope for peace. Despair with the dystopia we live in. Hope for the negotiation of a utopia for all. Despair at my seemingly helplessness to solve the problems. Hope in the power of the millions who stand up to injustice. This research is full of both despair and hope. It is also filled with the determination of countless organizers determined to fight for a peacefully shared world.

The determination to live collectively has been the basis of life on earth and is therefore a natural process. Millions of species that have strived to live together for billions of years, right back to the first cooperation between some organelles with a eukaryotic cell, countering entropy, enabling stability and leading to rapid evolution. This smallest level of organic organization, cell equilibrium, favours cooperation. The basic template for all of life, including the functioning of our own human bodies at the cellular level is based on a complex relationship of working together. This counters the Hobbesian view of a violent state of humanness. We now face the same challenges of

entropy that wiped out prebiotic organelles over and over again. We also have the means to overcome these challenges, and an understanding of how to do it, we just seem to have lost our way a little. Given the anthropogenic state of affairs it will take a great effort and a shift in thought from a culture of fear to one of dialogue and cooperation.

Human fear and power-struggles are connected to a fear of death and the perceived vulnerability of not knowing what it is, or who we are, or why we are. In a struggle to erase the fear of death, humans appear to generally devise systems of knowledge that claim to know and understand death and therefore how to live life. These claims often exaggerate difference, neglect diversity and are maintained through force. War and domination of others (including other species) is nothing more than an attempt to hide and avoid addressing our own fear of death and consequent absent explanation for purpose and justification of life. At some point, however, everyone has to come to terms with death and consequently earnestly reflect on life. Learning to come to terms with death and our own vulnerability in life is therefore a very important task in the quest for peaceful coexistence. Reflecting on life requires practice and courage, but is ultimately very rewarding. Movements that focus on personal empowerment, self-awareness and valuing diverse knowledge and culture can have a big impact on social change. We need learning that builds critical thinkers able to self-question and make ethical decisions as part of a normative praxis in order to show that a different world is in fact possible. This takes learning and practice.

The goal of this research was to seek out a human example of learning that prioritizes learning to live together in peace. This is why I looked to social movements, and community, grass roots, activist organizations that have a mandate to engage the

public and catalyze social change through learning, with the utopian, but practical, goal of making this world a more equitable place. The research stemmed from a perceived need both in the literature, and by the activist organization being studied, to capture the role of grassroots organizations in driving change in our society. The questions and methods were developed in coordination with the participants in this study and the results suggest that creating protest campaigns can be interpreted synonymously with learning.

### **Learning to live in social movements**

TTT provides insight into the hopeful determination of activist organizations trying to make the world a better place. Ultimately protest campaigns are social learning projects aimed at shifting perspectives and improving conditions for living together. This is especially true when considered through a longitudinal lens that digs deep and connects issues to shift perspectives and policy over time. There is recognition in protest campaigns that knowing about the problems of the world is not enough. Learning in protest campaigns is teaching people to feel the world, to connect with the problems, recognize involvement and responsibility and act to solve them. Protest campaigns are about discarding our shackles of apathy and freeing our selves from our isolation cells of individualism. They are about building compassionate relationships and learning to love and live. They are about letting go of our vulnerability and realizing that we all have something important to share with the world. They value diversity and difference and the power of communication. They teach us that love and compassion is nourishment for our souls. They empower us to embrace the pain in the world, which gives strength to stand up for justice, stand up for life and stand up for the rights that all species have to live well.

Learning campaigns such as TTT centre ethics in decision-making, facilitate complex understanding of intersectional oppressions and challenge the hegemony of dominant power. By drawing attention to specific learning practices in TTT, this research offers a framework for learning in activist campaigns that will hopefully resonate with a wider community of activist organizations who can also learn from the generalization of the results. I hope the story that is this research draws attention to what I deem an important learning venture, inspires and connects activist organizers with the knowledge that what they are doing is valuable and necessary and provokes greater concern and study for a broader effort to live together peacefully.

There is a rich learning praxis revealed in TTT that could find application in formal learning practice as well. The learning aims to primarily facilitate empowered, confident and compassionate people capable of reading the world and listening to the world. By valuing individual experience, it teaches listening, reflection and interdependence. The learning recognizes that the unseen potentiality in each experience holds the key to our civilization's intelligent reconstruction. There is plenty of space for shift in traditional formal learning practice away from prioritizing job training to developing empowered, caring and curious people capable of living and working together. Valuing and encouraging learners to participate actively in knowledge construction could help to develop empowered individuals who recognize the complex interconnection and inter-reliance they share. Additionally, learning experientially from participation in the community could inspire an ongoing commitment to democratic participation in community. Teacher-activists who seek out change in the classroom have proposed this approach in formal learning. Sanford, Hopper and Starr (2015), for

example, have problematized mechanistic approaches to teacher learning, which “fails to recognize the complexity and richness of learning”. As Sanford, Hopper and Starr (2015) indicate, teachers generally reproduce in their future classrooms the methods of instruction they learn by in their programs. They describe a model for integrating a complex, organic, systems approach in teacher learning programs. This suggests that there is room for learning across activist spaces. Breaching the space between grassroots learning campaigns and formal learning activists who share a common goal of shifting the world would be extremely beneficial to present an alternative vision of the world and build a social movement together.

Breaking down the barriers of formal knowledge-making in academia is also about shifting research practice. In the methodology chapter I problematized formal learning and my own participation in relying on and thus validating, or at least buying into, knowledge hierarchy. I have been presented with the possibility, through PAR, to challenge accepted forms of knowledge, and knowledge production, and I hope this research has done just this. I see the participants in this research as my teachers and guides. They come from diverse backgrounds with some similar, but generally different perceptions of the world. Their backgrounds are in academia, the trades, community work, science, teaching, parenting, and governance. They are students, parents, and colleagues. They have different gender, sexual preferences, cultures and spiritual practices. Each one has brought different knowledge, experience and expertise to this research. By including their voices openly, I hope to credit this expertise and knowledge. My role as a researcher in this study has been to help shape and tell the collective stories of the participants. In doing so, I hope I can reinforce and validate the informal and non-

formal learning that drives change in society. Additionally, I hope that through this research I can be part of a changing culture in the academy of life which shares multiple spaces and relies on diverse learning practices and relationships to co-construct meaning in the world.

### **Implications**

There are several implications that have emerged and bear further discussion, all of which return to learning about the root problem of exploitative power. I would like to suggest that humans as a species are afflicted by an illness that has reduced our ability to think and act ethically. I believe that we are in need of a paradigm shift in worldview and social norms that encourages a complex questioning of planetary relationships over time and prioritizes ethics as the basis for all decisions. Recovering from our illness requires unlearning current norms where money and short term self interest dictates all decisions, and learning. We need to learn to be caring loving and empowered individuals that understand that our existence is dependant on other people and the planet. Turning the Tide provides an opportunity to reflect on how grassroots activism can fulfil this type of learning and contribute to broad change in the world. Here I further discuss the implications in terms of: 1) ethics; 2) activist campaigns as learning campaigns; 3) working towards decolonization in Canada; and 4) global implications.

**Ethics.** Umeeck (2011) suggests that our world is experiencing severe disharmony. He describes the root of this disharmony through the story of Raven whose tricks in his earlier years involve lusting and scheming for “an easy meal, the best deal, the fastest route, and the best advantage” (p.150). Umeeck suggests that Raven (who represents a

community learning together) needs to learn the basic principles of living, which he describes as:

The unity of creation, the primacy of the non- physical over the physical, the dependence of the physical on the non-physical, the superiority of the insignificant-leaf approach to the swelled-head approach, the need to allow for multidimensional human development, the need to strive for balance and harmony, the need to develop protocols with all life forms, the need to respect all life forms, and at the personal level, the need to be yourself. (p. 150)

The destruction that humans have wrought on the earth in the last several hundred years, since the beginning of the industrial revolution in particular, has reached a point that humans have self- labelled a new age as the anthropocene. Umeeck (2011) suggests that the condition of the earth and human treatment of it is a reflection of the disharmony that humans themselves experience inside. Like Raven as a young child, human behaviour appears to reflect a lack of self-respect and shows that humans are a little lost and afraid. Macy (2007) suggests that fear is a product of uncertainty and inability to come to terms with the temporal nature of human life. It is a struggle with identity and purpose in an uncertain world that causes the human condition of arrogance and domination. She posits that this is exacerbated by industrial growth society, which tells us that we are insufficient and inadequate. She elaborates that “the forces of late capitalism continually tell us that we need more-more stuff, more money more approval, more comfort, more entertainment.” (p.77). This paradigm of what is now represented by neoliberal ideology is a spiralling circle where we avoid confronting our fear, vulnerability and not-knowing and fill it with more and more things in an attempt to show

we are better, know more, and deserve more than others. This modern human condition has reached a tipping point that threatens all life on the planet. The structures and systems developed to control wealth and power among a few (mostly) white males through violence and imperialism are manifested in neoliberal ideology and are both insane and suicidal because they rely on the destruction of the very thing we depend on: our home, the earth. Human societies have tried the patriarchal model of competition and violence for quite some time with rather poor results. I suggest that it is time to try something entirely new. Both Umek (2011) and Macy (2007) suggest that deeper learning about self and planetary relationships are necessary to fill the ethical void in our social structures. This is similar to the ecozoic vision outlined by Berry (1988) that suggests humans are in need of a new story, which must include kinship with the whole universe. Berry suggests that this will happen when humans are able to develop an ecological consciousness and begin to feel the pain and destruction we are causing on the earth as an extension of our own pain. This research demonstrates the potential of activist organizations such as TTT to be spaces of learning that encourage reflection on self and ethical relationships with people and the planet. TTT is attempting to build a movement for change that subverts the neoliberal norms and lays the foundation for decision-making based on ethics.

Transformative learning theory as espoused by O'Sullivan (1992) suggests that a sudden shock can start a process of self-reflection that leads to shifted perspectives of self and the world, and an inclination to act. What I think we require is a form of transformation that takes place at a planetary level, a shift in thinking that we have not seen since Galileo's discovery that the earth is not flat. This is the type of community

growth depicted in the story of Raven. Umeeek (2011) explains that Raven's tricks represent the misbehaviour of an entire community that is growing and learning. I am hopeful that climate change, and the imminent destruction of the entire planet will be enough to shock the human community into a new stage of development guided by recognition of interdependence and resulting in ethical living. This will require guidance and learning a new way of living well in the world together, which is the type of learning that social movements can model.

**Learning.** This research suggests that grassroots protest campaigns are in fact large scale learning campaigns, which aim to change immediate policy through protest and exact long term change by building a broader base of social support and by coaching people to think and act ethically. Grassroots protest campaigns such as TTT attempt to build broader movements through inspirational, active embodied learning practice.

The message behind what is being taught is of course important, but it is the learning method employed by protest campaigns such as TTT which is perhaps more significant. Sermonizing is boring and ineffective practice. TTT exemplifies a different type of learning that is organic, experiential, collaborative, and empowering. TTT focuses on self-conscientization and liberation of self through realization of vulnerability and making peace with uncertainty. This is reinforced in TTT by connecting with nature and networking with caring individuals to build active hope for the future. People on the outside are drawn to the energy, hope and determination manifested by the participants in the campaign to Steward the Salish Sea. The TTT protest campaign represented hopeful change for the future through a celebration of life with food and music.

There are also lessons for progressive learning in formal public learning institutions as well. Critical learning scholars (Hyslop-Marginson, 1998; hooks, 1994; Giroux, 2007; Kahn, 2010) suggest that neoliberalism is manifested through our schools and public institutions. Indeed, the Redfish School of Change, which joined TTT as a component of their summer course, demonstrates uptake and compatibility. This does not mean there are not examples in our public institutions of a different kind of learning and learning methods, but rather that TTT can contribute to the existing efforts. Learning collaboratively, learning organically, learning vulnerability, as well as prioritizing learning to be and live well together are all examples that can be taken from learning in TTT.

Likewise, there is room for protest campaigns to learn from progressive learning techniques/strategies. Social movements and grassroots activism can become more effective if there is an understanding of long term learning goals. Bello (2016) suggests that social movements have not benefited from the work they have done in making injustice and social inequality more explicit. He suggests that while the public is now aware of the problems, right wing extremism (he uses Trump's popularity in the U.S. as an example) has co-opted the progress of social movements against austerity and the dominance of neoliberal policy. I would suggest that understanding and prioritizing learning for long term change as a strategy, as in the case with in TTT could channel momentum for a transition to peaceful coexistence.

**Reconciliation and decolonization.** Social movements and protest campaigns such as TTT challenge power and normalized neoliberalism, and are therefore well positioned to work towards reconciliation and decolonisation. TTT highlights that settler

activist movements can work towards reconciliation and decolonization by acknowledging, learning from, and following indigenous leadership. TTT accentuates that reconciliation involves building long-term relationships rather than issue specific collaboration solely around settler activist concerns-an area that organizers of TTT felt should be addressed with more depth. This requires unlearning the fallacy of white male and western European scientific superiority that is at the root of inequality and has brought the planet to the brink of collapse. Critical ecopedagogy and grassroots organizing could be a framework that could be used and adapted to accomplish this.

Building relationships places responsibility on settlers to genuinely learn indigenous culture, and respect and value non-western worldviews and ways of knowing, which have been suppressed for hundreds of years. Tsartlip Chief Don Tom, speaking about truth and reconciliation at a panel discussion in WSANEC in 2014, explained that a great deal of the work with reconciliation is placed on indigenous peoples speaking their stories and dealing with grief. He pointed out that indigenous peoples are doing this work, but it is time for settlers to begin to come to terms with themselves as oppressors, to deal with their grief and be liberated from it by genuinely working towards decolonization. For Chief Don Tom this means learning not just about oppression, but also learning to appreciate and value indigenous ways of knowing.

There is opportunity for reconciliation and decolonization work in Canada with communities and grassroots organizations. This is especially necessary as nation-to-nation relationships appear to be breaking down once again in face of the government of Canada's resource extraction agenda. Indigenous activist Xhopakelxhit (2014) warns that there is a long history of dishonesty in colonial relations and considers words without

action will merely contribute to further distrust and a new era of colonialism.

Xhopakelxhit is therefore wary of self-proclaimed allies who understand the decolonial lingua, speak it loudly but act differently. The current relationship between the government of Canada and indigenous peoples in Canada gives a good example of what Xhopakelxhit writes about. The Grand Chief of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, Stewart Philip (2016), published an open letter to the Prime Minister in the *Globe and Mail*, stating: “You [Justin Trudeau] failed in your sacred duty to respect the Title and Rights of the indigenous peoples that you share this land with. You knew you would irreparably harm a relationship that you publicly and repeatedly claimed is more important to you than any other.” This is problematic because reconciliation appears to be important only where it is convenient for our Prime Minister. Social and environmental activists are well placed to work towards reconciliation however need to also be careful to address reconciliation and decolonization broadly and genuinely so as not to fall into the same pattern as our Prime Minister. This means taking the time to learn and address all of the issues in the past and present, as well as learning and valuing the various cultures in order to communicate and build genuine relationships.

Protest campaigns such as TTT provide opportunity for further study of micro relationships but also a macro perspective of the global environmental movements. Local struggles in colonialism can inform global relationships which, as Choudry (2015) points out, also tend to reproduce colonialism. It is the same discourse; it simply takes place on a global scale.

**Addressing global exploitation.** There is an understanding in TTT that building a local movement contributes to global change, especially with consideration for climate

change. TTT stresses the need for a holistic complex understanding of the world, and emphasizes building a movement that has capacity for direct local change. Learning about self and the impact we have on the world is enormously important and often overlooked. Too often, NGOs and civil society organizations enter into development work with the premise that the problem with poverty is the poor. Andreotti (2015) explains that in the global context this tends to reproduce a “western saviour” model of development and promotes western-european supremacy. This model ignores the root of the problem, which in fact lies with the oppressor-power holders, not the oppressed-poor. Conscientization of the global effects of our behaviour is an area that requires more explicit attention especially if we are committed to changing the world. We live in an era of globalization and since we reap the benefits of globalization we cannot ignore its larger social and environmental impacts. This is integral to understanding local issues. Acting and thinking holistically necessarily involves reflection on our connection to others in the entire world, not only those close to us or in our imagined communities. Without this broader understanding, despite good intentions, we could in fact compromise or even reinforce oppression and inequality. An example of this is the saviour model of foreign aid, as discussed by Andreotti (2015) and Batiste (2005), where Eurocentric cultural superiority is reinforced.

If we are to really understand and address the complex nature of our world, we cannot detach ourselves from the almost unimaginable suffering happening every day all around the world. Our silence, our investments, and our consumption habits are a few direct examples of how we invest our personal wealth and future security in the impoverishment and insecure future of other people. Vandana Shiva (1992) suggests that

people in western countries have built barriers that protect us from seeing the destruction we cause. I ask, how else could anyone throw away a meal knowing that a child is starving? How else could we have and waste so much while others are suffering? We live in a state of extreme denial, but our ignorance will not save us. It is only when we acknowledge this and hold ourselves accountable that we can allow ourselves to be outraged and begin to work towards the political change needed. It is at once personal and global. We have to recognize that we are the problem, and that we need to change ourselves in order to save the world, and that we must change the world in order to save ourselves.

### **Research outcomes**

This research has contributed in itself to the very specific goals of TTT. It has provided direction for planning in the years following TTT. The organizers have expected me to report on my findings and we have used them to build on the strategy behind TTT. Organizers such as Jan and Sasha identified that the research has helped them to reflect more deeply about strategies for change in the region, and feel it is one of the elements that has connected the organizers themselves in different regions. This research positions grassroots protest campaigns primarily as spaces of learning. When interpreted in this way, protest campaigns can strategically take a broader perspective on connecting with other campaigns that together can build a movement in the long term. This necessarily involves broader collaboration among activist groups and an intricate understanding of the complexity of issues both locally and globally. I would suggest that acting locally is important, however organizations need to strategically connect with global struggles and take on powerful global forces. Often, local and global concerns are

pitched against each other, however I would ask the reader to reconsider this perspective given the global nature of our world. There is a need to address policy at all levels.

Finally, I think an area that requires a great deal more attention here in Canada is the relationship between settler-activists and indigenous peoples. Further research into this area could contribute to meaningful reconciliation here in Canada, and also in building global solidarity.

### **Conclusion**

There is such despair in the world that it almost seems insurmountable. Yet the world is also an incredibly wonderful place. It was not long ago that humans insisted the planet earth was the centre of the universe. We have given up on this claim, but not the claim that the earth is here for humans alone. The (ir)rationalization for our industrial terror is that we know how and that we know better. It is only fair to point out that we have devised the measurement for intelligence within which we excel. But even with this measurement it is becoming embarrassingly clear that we are not as intelligent as we thought. I frequently sit at the beach close to my house and look up at the stars and feel the vastness of the universe. The chemistry that has created the earth and human life is incredibly precise and the slightest change would mean having nothing at all. Is it chance? Is there a god? What is the meaning? I really don't know. Science tells us that gases swirling around the universe five billion years ago came into equilibrium to form planet earth and that miraculously our life has ensued. Macy (1991) condenses life on earth into 24 hours, and humans as a species make an appearance at just one second to midnight. Somehow, in the brief microseconds of industrial society our technologies have unleashed a power that destroys all life. We are measuring deaths on the planet not by

individuals but by entire species. It has almost reached the point whereby in the name of civilization and technological advancement, western civilization, lead by patriarchy, fear and greed has almost wiped out the diversity of life and erased the cultural knowledge that we require to survive. But it is not too late to recognize our interconnections and listen to the wisdom of those who have been silenced. This requires learning to come to terms with our fear and following our hearts.

There is a growing movement of indignation around the world that is calling out injustice and developing creative strategies to stand up to power and change the world. These are sparks that have flared up in the Arab spring, the occupy movement, massive strikes in South Africa, and environmental protests in Canada. These movements are growing broader and stronger, and they are beginning to win. They are not isolated instances, as the mainstream media would suggest, but a growing global movement. We are seeing people come together across issues and borders, as in the recent case of Standing Rock in North Dakota or marches against Donald Trump around the world. These are meaningful actions that demand a better world. Hall (2009) suggests that, “in every area of sociological analysis or political theorizing, the new frameworks for understanding power in relation to race, dis/ability, gender, the rest of nature or even spiritual life have originated in the movements of our times” (p. 67). Ursula Franklin (2005) reminds us that this is largely the result of the long and creative work that women have played in fighting for peace around the world. Certainly, all across Turtle Island now, it is evident that indigenous women are the leaders in the struggle for peace and justice. We would do well to embrace their wisdom and follow their leadership. Encouraging individuals to recognize their vulnerability, fear and interdependence is

fundamental to pursue the gruelling work of challenging the power structures that enable and maintain injustice and exploitation in the world.

Learning in activism coaxes people to reflect on the conditions of the world and personal responsibility to the world. This type of learning encourages liberation from fear. It is hopeful and provides a story with a meaningful context for living in the world. It is a type of learning to connect that is direly needed if any of us are to survive. The time to sit and let life happen to us has long past. A few years ago, I participated in a drum-making workshop facilitated by a local Coast Salish elder. He explained that the beating of the drum represented the beating of our hearts. He encouraged us to play our drums, pursue our heartbeat and find our song. We need to find our collective song and we need to sing it out loud and dance to it in the street. We need to follow our hearts and open up our souls and make this world a better place. For if we don't, then who will? The time has come, the time is now.

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## Appendix A

### Participant Consent Form

Project Title: Catalysts for democratic social change: The impact of grassroots organizations and social movements

You are invited to participate in a study entitled **Catalysts for democratic social change: The impact of grassroots organizations and social movements** that is being conducted by David Monk.

David Monk is a PHD candidate in the department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by email at [dfmonk@uvic.ca](mailto:dfmonk@uvic.ca) or by telephone at 250-580-7716.

As a GRADUATE student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a PHD in learning. It is being conducted under the supervision of Kathy Sanford. You may contact my supervisor by email at [ksanford@uvic.ca](mailto:ksanford@uvic.ca), or by telephone at 250-721-7804.

#### Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is The overarching question is: **How do grassroots movements and activist organizations with mandates for systemic and democratic change in society become catalysts of change, and how do they view their role as such?** Central to this is the question of how social movements can open up space to challenge the dominant culture and intersectional oppression. Specifically in Victoria, social movements cannot be addressed without the consideration of colonialism, and the relationship held between dominant, white organizers and indigenous peoples whose lands we occupy. I will examine these questions in the context of a small but active Victoria, British Columbia based grassroots organization, **Social Environmental Alliance (SEA)** with a mandate for public engagement and a history of organizing public actions for social and environmental justice. Specifically, I am focusing on a sub committee of this organization that is working to educate the public about tar sands, pipelines and increased tanker traffic. I will work with this organization to develop a series of questions that will help them to analyze the impact of their work, measure difficulties, and develop a framework for successful social change, including opening up discussions on colonialism.

#### Importance of this Research

This research is important because it will draw attention to the value of social movements and grassroots organizations in catalyzing change in society. It will analyze the impact of the work, measure difficulties, and develop a framework for successful

social change. It will also highlight the broader social reality of colonial relations and question if and how social movements can work to make this a public discussion.

### **Participants Selection**

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an organizing member of the social action Turning The Tide. Potential participants should not feel obligated to participate due to a relationship with David Monk and their decisions will not impact that relationship.

### **What is involved**

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will involve participating in an interview before and another interview after the action takes place. The interviews will be individual, be held in a place you feel comfortable, and they will be video recorded. In addition, meeting minutes and recordings from planning meetings, organizing, and promotion will be used both for analysis and dissemination of results. Personal notes from planning meetings will also be used. They will consider the process, goals, aims, process and methods of organizing. Transcriptions will be made available for your review and approval prior to analysis and dissemination. You will be reminded verbally of the research prior to each instance where data will be collected. Photos and videos of the event and for promotion of the event will also be used for analysis and possibly dissemination. Only Photos and videos that have the appropriate consent of the individual will be used.

### **Inconvenience**

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including the use of your valuable time.

### **Risks**

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research

### **Benefits**

The research will benefit the Social Environmental Alliance and Turning The Tide movement by promoting the work that it does (perhaps through video). It will suggest ways to improve the effectiveness of the work. It will be beneficial to a wider community of activist organizations who can also learn from the generalization of the results.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will only be used if you provide permission.

### **On-going Consent**

To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will verbally remind you of the consent form and your right to withdraw from the study at each meeting where research is conducted. In addition, at the time of both the pre and post

interviews, I will have you read and sign the consent form again. A copy of the written consent form will be included in the email along with transcripts of interviews that you are asked to verify prior to my use of them.

### **Anonymity**

In terms of protecting your anonymity you will be attributed a pseudonym and identifying personal information will be altered. Note that with your permission the dissemination of the material may include the use of video footage and/or photos. This could compromise your anonymity.

### **Confidentiality**

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by storage on secure, password protected servers by the university of Victoria. Note that because of the size of the organizing committee of Turning The Tide, other organizers may be able to discern who you are.

### **Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: My dissertation, (which will be available publicly on the web), conference presentations, and journal articles. A short film will possibly also be made.

### **Disposal of Data**

Data from this study will be disposed of upon completion of the research study.

### **Contacts**

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include myself or my supervisor Kathy Sanford. Our information is at the beginning of the contact form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or [ethics@uvic.ca](mailto:ethics@uvic.ca)).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

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*Name of Participant*

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*Signature*

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*Date*

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*Name of Participant*

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*Signature*

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*Date*

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*Name of Participant*

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*Signature*

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*Date*

**Visually Recorded Images/Data** Participant or parent/guardian to provide initials, *only if you consent:*

- Photos may be taken of me for:      Analysis \_\_\_\_\_ Dissemination\* \_\_\_\_\_
- Videos may be taken of me for:      Analysis \_\_\_\_\_ Dissemination\* \_\_\_\_\_

\*Even if no names are used, you may be recognizable if visual images are shown in the results.

[WAIVING CONFIDENTIALITY *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT only if you consent:*

I consent to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Participant to provide initials)

I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results:  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to provide initials)

**Future Use of Data** *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT:*

I consent to the use of my data in future research: \_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to provide initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Participant to provide initials)

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research:  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Participant to provide initials)

***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***

## Appendix B

### Interview Questions

#### Demographics

Please present yourself.

Why did you decide to join TTT?

What is your role?

What does TTT mean to you?

What is the mission of TTT?

What do you hope to accomplish in TTT?

How do you view your role in catalyzing change in society?

What do you hope to change?

Are there other places/ spaces that contribute to this change?

Who is your target audience?

#### First Nations

What are the implications of doing this on First Nations land?

What is the relationship you have with the First Nations peoples whose territory you are paddling in?

Do they support this action?

Is there First Nations participation?

How were they approached?

#### Learning

Are there learning goals?

What are they?

Have they been thought about explicitly?

Is there a learning goal of connecting social and environmental issues?

What and how?

Is there a broader learning goal focused on raising awareness about colonialism or other social inequality?

Is there a goal to make links to a global movement?

What is the role of place in TTT?

Is there a transformative learning element for participants?

#### Organizing

What were some difficulties in organizing?

What was effective?

Did you learn anything in the organizing process?

Do you have any tips for organizing similar events?

Reflecting on success

Do you feel the action was successful?

How?

Were there things that could have been changed?

Do you feel this event can catalyse change in: Community, provincially, nationally, internationally?

What is the relationship between TTT and other movements and actions around BC and the world?

Are they connected?

How will TTT be shared? (is sharing an important outcome?)

Were there any outcomes that you were not expecting?

Do you have anything to add?

## Appendix C

### Participant roles

Participant	Role	Background
Sasha	Chair, initiated idea of TTT	Carpenter, Coast Guard Volunteer
Kristen	Food, finance, registration	Manager AIDS Vancouver Island, UVic school of social work sessional instructor
Emily	Food, learning programming/ island liaison	Recent graduate from CYS UVic, political campaign organizer (municipal, provincial, Federal), works at TAPS
Doc “Flot Com”	On the water, safety	Owner/instructor Slipstream Wilderness First Aid
Ben	Logistics, outreach	City Councillor, CRD Director, Sessional Instructor History, UVic & Simon Fraser University
Ryan	Integrating Red Fish School of change	Director Redfish school of Change, Sessional Instructor Environmental Studies UVic
David	Food, learning programming/ Island liaison	PHD candidate learning, UVic
Sandra	Salt Spring Island	Retired Parks Canada employee

	Organizer	
Jan	Salt Spring Island Organizer	Teacher, Gulf Island Alliance representative
Misty	Pender Island Organizer	Marine Biologist, Raincoast Conservation Foundation, Gulf Island Alliance rep.
Ron	Pender Island Organizer	Owner Waste Removal, Recycling Centre Pender Island. Family owned Browning Marina where we stayed.
Jay	Pender Island Organizer	Owner Pender Island Kayaks
Kye	Pender Island Organizer	Owner Dog Mermaid Outdoor Excursions
Annette	Mayne Island Organizer	Teacher

## Appendix D

### Video Transcript of Route Plan

*We started down here at Swartz Bay. With most ocean crossings, you generally look for the shortest open water crossing. So we crossed over to Knap Island, and then over to Portland where we had a little break there at Shell Beach. The wind was picking up from the southeast. So we had a safety change, and we crossed at a different place to let Portland and Moresby be a break from the wind. As soon as we got out of the lee, wind-driven waves hammered us sideways. We ran around the corner and then were clear from the wind and got in safely and stayed here at Ruckle Park for the night. That was seven nautical miles, so about 12 kilometres or something like that.*

*The next day we put in, we had to cross Captain's Passage it was relatively calm so we took a bit of a longer crossing while it was safe, went through these islands and managed to pull up in an inlet for people to have a bathroom break, came around the corner to the national park on Prevost Island where we hung out for a bit and had some lunch. We then put in, we did have some wind again coming from the South East so this crossing was definitely a concern so tried to keep everyone together as much as we could until we get across to the shore at Galiano and make for Active Pass. Here is where things start to get very visceral in the sense because any spill out there in the Georgia Strait, because of the large amount of water that flows in and out of this big bath tub we call the sail see, any oil spill out there that oil is going to move in via these currents and is going to be sloshing in among all of the islands. You know it is a bathtub and that spill will leave a ring of oil around all of these islands. And the currents being what they are this helps you see where the oil is going to go, and you can't stop this moving body of water.*

*So we spoke to Victoria traffic control and when we got the go ahead we moved on to Active Pass. I thought we were quite lucky to have 3 ferries in Active Pass at the same time just because for publicity purposes and to show people the volume of wake from those big ferries. We stayed on Mayne Island.*

*Because of the volume of water that moves through Active Pass and the current, we departed early, because we had to catch the slack tide (the time in between tides). We stopped off at Village Bay to get the ferry because they were not adequately prepared and then made the crossing from Mayne to North Pender, and then we followed the coast down. Somewhere around Plumper Sound is where it started raining. There was a bit of wind but not too bad. We were with the current, but it was hard work with the wind around the point to Browning Marina. It was quiet except the bag piper, which was awesome.*

*We stayed two nights on Pender and then departed through the Pender Canal. We have to go through the canal when the current isn't bad so we entered the canal at slack tide, had a quick stop in Bedwell Harbour National Park for bathrooms and such. Then we went out by Wallace Island and Stewart Island. This is significant because we were at a place*

*called turn point. Stuart Island is in the US. This is the route that tanker traffic and big shipping take through the gulf islands. Big marine traffic that is heading for Vancouver is going to come right up harrow straight, past the San Juans, Sidney island and turn the corner here at turn point and head to the point off Saturna where they then head to Vancouver or Seattle. This is a high traffic area. This is a very big turn for a boat, for a big ship to make. It is a very busy area and we are talking about making it even busier. Tides and currents can be very significant in here. Currents in here can reach four knots, and if you look how wide that is, it's not that wide and it's a lot of moving water. If you add winds it can be pretty ugly. So that little stop off Wallace where we could look across and see Stewart and see Turn Point, it really does show you how close we are to this marine traffic that is going to be moving through these waters. And you can see all of these tide rips on this chart that are potential problems, you see these little islands all in here: Gooch and Rum. That is a beautiful little spot to camp if you ever get out to Rum Island. But these are places that a ship that loses propulsion could run aground and those are bad things.*

*After we took a break at turn point, we continued along Wallace and then started crossing early once the currents started working in our favour. The first hour we didn't move very much but once the current turned we crossed to Moresby where we had lunch, which by the way is a private island, luckily we didn't have any issues with the owners there, and then around the corner another quick stop at Portland, this was a bit choppy but not too bad, and then straight over to Dolphin Dock beside the ferry terminal.*

## Appendix E

### Learning and culture program

#### Saltspring Island Friday, July 24

Time	Event	TTT Lead	Elements
16:15	Participants opening circle	Sasha	One guiding question (e.g. “what does the Saalish Sea mean to you?”) and split participants into breakout groups for discussion.
17:00	Dinner	Kristen/ Emily	Salt Springers invited for Pot Luck
6:15	Speakers and Music	Dave/ Emily	Gary Holman (welcome) Gaia Soul Sistahs Bill Henderson (filming music video)

#### Mayne Island, Saturday, July 25

Time	Event	TTT Lead	Elements
16:30	Welcome	Dave	Annette will lead a welcome circle to the Island.
17:30	Dinner	Sasha	Menu: Basmati Rice Red Lentil Dahl with ginger and cilantro Summer squash, chick pea and tomato curry Naan Bread.  Supplemented by community potluck
18:30	Community Event	Dave	Annette has organized speakers and musicians.

**Pender Island Sunday, July 26**

Time	Event	TTT Lead	Elements
16:00	Dinner	Emily/ Dave	Burgers, salad greens, veggie chilli, and pasta salad for 100 people. Supplemented by community potluck
16:00 - 20:00	Community Event	Dave/ Emily	4:00 – 5:00 Dave Dandeneau and Kathy McIntyre  5:00 – 6:00 Dinner (no music)  6:00 – 7:00 Kevin and Holly (while people are finishing eating)  7:00 – 7:20 Intro (Sasha) and Jeremy Loveday (spoken word)  7:20 – 8:20 Gumboot Collective  8:20 – 9:30 Lester Quitzau and friends

**Pender Island, Monday, July 27**

Time	Event	TTT Lead	Elements
9:45	Group check in	Dave	Overview of the day, sign up for workshops
10:00	Welcome	Dave	Derek M (Island Trust)
10:30 - 12:00	Learning workshops	Dave/ Emily	Red Fish School of Change (What does change mean?) The Friends of Brooks Point (NEB intervention process) Raincoast conservation Alliance (Salmon research)
12-	“What	Dave/	Jessie (professional facilitator) facilitates session on

1:00	now?" facilitation	Emily	strategizing and taking action on issues in home communities
1:00 – 4:00	Recreation workshops	Dave/ Emily	Paddle Board Yoga-Kye Kayak paddling workshop -Jay Nature walk –Sasha and Ben
5:00 - 7:00	Dinner	Kristen	Volunteers will prepare food at the community hall.
7:00 – 8:00	Participants circle	Sasha	Check out/closing-what do you take away from TTT