

Running Head: MY JOURNEY OF PRAXIS

My Journey of Praxis:
A Proposal for Autoethnographic Study
Addressing Place-Based Education, Indigenous Knowledge, and Decolonization

by

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Abstract

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This project is a personal journey of praxis of an elementary school teacher and considers the question of: Where is my place teaching in a First Nations' school in the 21st century? The project has three main themes: (1) Place-Based Education; (2) Indigenous Knowledge; and (3) Decolonization of the Curriculum. The educator of twenty-five years is reflecting on lived experiences as an elementary teacher teaching as an elementary teaching in First Nations' schools in Canada. Reflections and research on these lived experiences through an autoethnographic guided study enabled a broader and richer view of the themes identified for the author.

Keywords: Praxis, place-based education, Indigenous Knowledge, colonization, decolonization, Lil'wat principles of learning

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Gilakas'la

Dedication

I dedicate this journey of reflection to my mom and dad, sister, brother, sister-in law, and my two nephews, whom have endured, and are still able to
“rise and shine and make a difference.”

A tribute to my brother,

David Lawrence Morse

1970 – 2012

Chapter 1: Introduction

Who am I?

Who am I?
I am a mother, partner/wife, daughter, sister, aunt, niece, and friend...
a learner...

Who am I?,
I am a teacher, motivator, councilor, listener, colleague,
creator, instructor, educator...
a learner...

Who am I?
I am a camper, hiker, kayaker, gardener, singer,
traveler, skier...
a learner...

Who am I?
I am a thinker, listener, mediator, questioner,
worker, adventurer,
animal whisperer, survivor,
reader, writer,
a learner...

Who am I?
I am Global Citizen, a Canadian,
a Nova Scotian...
but...
rooted in Harmony!

Written for Emerging Trends and Topics
in Curriculum Studies course - 2012

My Journey Begins

Adventures, people, places, land, culture, and relationships – ‘lived experiences’- have shaped me to be who I am today. These significant experiences of ‘place’ have embodied a diversity of stories, chronicles, narratives that have been joyful, educational, powerful, and puzzling learning experiences. My aspiration for this Master’s project in curriculum and instruction is to use autoethnography as a method to guide and seek understanding, wisdom and direction from the puzzling or perplexing treasury of my personal accounts. My hope for this journey of analysis is to help define patterns, issues, and key themes that will contribute and guide my future decision making opportunities, enhance my relationships, and focus - me for future tasks. I desire to seek understanding of why ‘place’ is so important to me as an educator and to unravel the journey of how I have come to need to know this philosophy of ‘place’. The beginning steps for this to happen, as Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) suggests, “the life story approach facilitates a deeper appreciation of an individual’s experience of the past, living with the present, and a means of facing and challenging the future” (p. 186) – the following introduction is a glimpse of my past happenings and my ‘position’ at the present time.

*“This kind of finding is a form of self-finding,
a finding of oneself in the things of the world,
indeed a finding of the world to be a place
where I can find myself to be truly at home.”*

(Donald Smith, 2009, p. 382)

An Inquiry - Who Am I?

Sounds like an easy question, but an arduous one. Putting words on paper describing who I am can be daunting, but a reflective process. Over the years I have been asked, “Who am I?” a

few times. I recall the first time was for a job interview. What were my interviewees seeking? Were they looking for whom I placed first on my list, my priorities? How long my list was? I must have said the correct response because I was successful in obtaining the position. The second time was for a Master's course. What was my instructor considering? Was she gathering information for her own knowledge of me as a student? Or was it for my own self-reflection? Now as I sit here in my kitchen table looking out at Storey's Beach, as the fog enveloping me, I again am asking the same question, who am I? I contemplate... have I changed? Will I be different from the last time I was asked to ponder this question? How does one change? Do we ever change deep inside our consciousness? If so, what are the forces that make that change? Is it education? Is it 'lived experiences'? Is it experiencing a death of a loved one or witnessing a birth of a child? Is it spending a year with a group of children watching them mature, change, and grow? Yes, all these experiences interacting with people and the environment, manipulates, molds and creates new thinking, feelings, energies, motivations and dreams. This also leads us to the questions Dwayne Donald (2003), an assistant professor at the University of Alberta expresses in his writing; "This shifts the focus from being asked by others who I am to asking myself "What am I and why am I that way?" (p. 70).

My Creation Story - In Harmony

I know where I come from. My roots, my beginning, and my foundation are in Harmony. Yes, that is correct, Harmony, a place, a small farming community on the South mountain in the Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia. Outsiders knew it as the Apple Capital of the World. The elders in the community once told me that when Harmony was created many people outside of Harmony said it was a place where no one was in harmony with each other, but I knew it as an exciting, adventurous, close-knit, and hard-working community. A place – a special place.

I was fortunate to be a part of a close-knit family of six, two brothers and one sister and a committed mom and dad. We all knew the value of hard work and we worked together to get jobs completed. We were all involved in many activities in the community, but the farm knitted us as a family. Many fun memories were made working together with our cousins, aunts and uncles, grandparents and community members.

The family farm, my playground, had dairy and beef cows, chickens, horses, and pigs as my playmates and with an abundance of wooded areas to explore. My essence is rooted in the earth, animals, seasons, weather and interactions with people. I was highly influenced in the efficient model of work ethics. One needed to be able to earn your keep in order to have a place on the farm. My actions, thoughts, emotions, mostly my life were influenced by the weather, by nature, by the rhythms of animals under our care. My life was driven, influenced and modeled by nature.

My Darkness – Early School Years

Curriculum of Difficulty...
As a Learner

There's a crack,
A crack in everything...

I was raised on a mixed farm in Harmony, Nova Scotia. A place where I felt I was in harmony
with my family, in harmony with the animals,
in harmony with the garden,
in harmony with nature,
in harmony with myself.

My memories of my first few years at school are few,
But they have been entrenched in my memory...

School where I was to learn. My only memory I have of kindergarten was peeing my pants and
having to sit, in class, in wet pants, in a wooden desk, in a row, waiting for someone to pick me
up and take me home,
a crack.

My only memory of my first year of learning...
at school.

My life on the farm was rich with stories, experiences, hands on amazements, freedom of exploring nature's wonders. I had questions, so many questions.

I had stories to share, so many stories, a crack.

My memories of my first few years at school are few
But they have been entrenched in my memory...

Reading in rows, Jack and Jill, workbooks,
phonics, slow, struggling, behind, hiding.
Writing, worksheets, answering questions, red marks,
no connection,
no comments on my life on the farm.

Finally,
one day, one day at school, I got to write about me, my farm, my life.
Patiently waiting for my teacher to call my name to check my work.
I was one of the last to be called.
I guess I was hiding well.

Dianne?...

I walked slowly and stood by my teacher's chair. I patiently wait, she is reading, then turns and looks at me and said,
"this paragraph needs
one more sentence to make it square, to make it even,
to make it complete."

Add one more sentence...

No mention of the rich life on the farm,
no mention of the amazing experiences I had lived,
no connection, no encouragement,
slowly I return to my seat to hide.

The end of the school day.
I walk on the bus that will take me home, my home,
my crack, my ray of sunshine in Harmony.

There is a crack,
A crack in everything...

Written for Emerging Trends and Topics
in Curriculum Studies course - 2012

My Ray of Hope – Learn to do by Doing

Even though solitude, bullying, feelings of inferiority shadowed my first five years of school, less than, not good enough, a sad time in my childhood, my rays of sunshine were found in my community. Close by were neighbours that I called my aunts even though they were no relations, Aunt Daisy and Aunt Norma. They helped our family through the good times and the not so good times. As I reached the age of ten I became involved in the youth organization 4-H. The motto is “learn to do by doing”. This organization is based on experiential learning, a term linked to John Dewey’s work (Enfield, Schmitt-McQuitty, & Smith, 2007, para 2). Growing vegetables, training and showing horses and cattle, sewing, arts and crafts were just a few of the activities I loved to participate in each year. Not only completing projects but also writing and presenting speeches, demonstrations and square dancing were also an annual event. My childhood was rich with activity, relationships and belonging.



Figure 1. Red Rose Tea cards. Retrieved from <http://www.teacard.com/images/collage/colage14.jpg>

My Connection to First Nation’s Culture – Red Rose Tea

At the present time I am a grade 4/5 teacher at the Gwa’sala’-‘Nakwaxda’xw’s First Nation’s school, on the Tsulquate reserve on Northern Vancouver Island. I have been involved with this school since 1991. Before moving to the North Island I had the unique opportunity to

teach in Canada's North in the hamlet of Arviat, Nunavut, for three years. As I reflect I wonder, why have I spent the majority of my teaching career teaching and learning with two of Canada's First Nations? Was it my need to feel needed and appreciated? Did I have similar experiences and could relate to their culture? Was it my connection to Nature that drew me to their culture that has close ties to the land?

My earliest recollection of being interested in First Nations was because of Red Rose Tea. During my childhood, my parents found comfort drinking Red Rose Tea. Included in each box was a little card depicting Indians (sic) in Canada (Figure 1). I was fascinated with these collector items. I even wrote away to get a booklet to collect these tiny cards at the age of eight. What drew me to collect these cards? Our community consisted on English, Scottish and German ancestry. We had no First Nations people in our community, or at our school that I knew of. My thoughts at this point in time was the fact that the cards showed First Nations people as resourceful, using items from the land to live, survive, and thrive using natural materials. But was it more than that?

My Passion – Holistic Teaching through Nature

Throughout my teaching career I have been extremely passionate about giving children what they, I feel, need to succeed in life. Being raised on a farm and teaching in two First Nations communities, I have learned that connecting to people, wildlife and the environment can provide valuable life lessons. It has become my passion to give my students opportunities to make this happen through camping trips to traditional First Nation's sites, learning about the land in the community through hiking, worm composting, school gardening and seaweed gathering excursions, to name a few. These experiences are ingrained in my personality and teaching methods.

My Purpose or Motivation – Rise and Shine and Make a Difference

January 12, 2012 life changed for my family, my community, and for many people in Nova Scotia. On this day in January my youngest brother, David, died in a ski accident. When planning for his celebration of life his two sons were asked what things did their father say that they would remember. They replied, Dad would wake us up in the morning saying “Rise and Shine and Make a Difference”. Many times growing up we heard, “rise and shine” but the added touch “and make a difference” are powerful words. I want to make a difference. I am hopeful that this inquiry will do just that, so I can make a difference in the lives I come in connect with and in the planning of effective, ethical, and holistic curriculum that will influence my students to be life long learners.

My Search - The Research Begins

Question: “Why did you decide to do graduate work?”

Answer: “I want to make a difference.”

*One implication being that something is stubbornly
resistant to becoming different.”*

(Smith, 2000, p. 17)

My stirrings. I have many rich memories and experiences in Indigenous cultures. Teaching in Canada’s North, West Coast and family trips to Indigenous cultures around the world have influenced me. I have witnessed since 1991 the rich First Nation’s culture of the Gwa’sala-‘Nakwaxda’xw Nation be revitalized. I watched the gamelagelow being carved right beside our school, from log to canoe. Just taking my class berry picking recently turned into an amazing learning experience for my students and myself and a few community members. However, there have been experiences that are all linked to my vision and passion of incorporating place-based education as part of my First Nation’s curriculum that were not so

enjoyable. Why did these occurrences happen? Where was the break down? Michael Foucault suggests, as cited in Donald's thesis (2003), "that a more intense, imaginative, and transformative investigation of the self would involve an ongoing praxis of self-discovery" (p. 69).

Since the beginning of my Master's study in curriculum and instruction, past and present curriculum issues have bubbled to the surface as unanswered questions, discomfort, and wonderings. I feel the need, the drive, and necessity to study, analyze, and research these questions, which in hopes give me vision, guidance and wisdom for future curriculum development. I have come to a few questions for this project which is to research to what extent does place-based education and Indigenous teachings help to decolonize me, my classroom, my life? To what extents can place-based education in conjunction with Indigenous teachings help develop the whole child? Where does place-based education and Indigenous teachings fit in? What are the ethnical implications or variables in designing and implementing place-based education for curriculum in First Nation's communities? In sum, where is my 'place' as an educator and curriculum practitioner in a First Nation's school in the 21st century?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

“When you are preparing for a journey, you own the journey. Once you’ve started the journey, the journey owns you” (Slope, 2006, p.165)

Introduction

The journey that I have embarked upon, and that now consumes much of my focus, is the pursuit of understanding my place as an educator and curriculum practitioner in a First Nations’ school in the 21st century. Reflecting on my practice as an educator, and understanding critical praxis as informed by autoethnographical techniques, has allowed me to explore the relevant literature to better understand key themes that have intrigued me throughout my career. Concepts such as placed based education, Indigenous knowledge, colonization and decolonization are key themes that I will explore in this literature review. A review of the literature has illuminated strategies for decolonization including curriculum of place and the “third space” for learning; each of which requires action. Through this literature review I am seeking to better understand and address my curiosities leading me to a clearer comprehension of my place as an educator.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography, or personal narratives, is one of many methods used in qualitative research. This approach is the one that I have chosen to inform my understanding of myself, or my place, as an educator. Ellis and Bochner (2000) define autoethnography as:

[a] genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. (p. 739)

As the name would suggest, there are three fundamental aspects of autoethnography; the research process – graphy, culture – ethnos and the self – auto. Authors vary in their emphasis on these aspects. My foci are on an understanding of self within unique cultural contexts. I examine myself by looking outward at the curriculum I have been teaching, and inwardly at the cultural milieu in which I have been teaching. This method of inquiry, Ellis and Bochner (2000) continue to explain, is “usually written in first-person voice, and autoethnographic texts appear in many forms – short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals” (p. 739).

The rewards and ramifications of this type of approach are many. Hayler (2011) explains in his book, *Autoethnography, Self-Narrative and Teacher Education*, “these methods and research focus upon the memories of events, feelings, thoughts and emotions which contribute through varying methods of recall, collection and analysis towards different types of systematic introspection in order to illuminate and to facilitate understanding” (p. 19). Understanding and comprehension are the key components for this process. However, to express personal stories, feelings and emotions can open oneself up to criticism. Ellis and Bochner (2000) express, “Vulnerability can be scary, but it also can be the source of growth and understanding” (p. 752). The outcomes of such a self-inquiry can create both excitement and apprehension.

Guiding myself through a process informed by autoethnography and personal narratives will bring reflective insights to my own experiences that will be key in my development and educational journey at this stage of my career. Further, I am seeking to move towards action, or the next step required in the journey of critical praxis as revealed in the literature.

Critical Praxis

Praxis, is defined by Paulo Freire (1995) in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, “Praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 33). As an educator for over

twenty years, many experiences, both rich and positive and not so rich and puzzling, are etched in my memory. Dwayne Donald (2003) articulates that “[t]he coalescing of contexts and the intermingling of experiences creates confusion for educators that can only be worked out through praxis” (p. 166). Taking time to reflect on my own journey, there are a number of puzzling experiences that have bubbled to the surface. Through the undertaking of praxis it is an opportunity to reflect on these situations, gain clarity and understanding, and to seek patterns or themes that need to be changed.

Praxis not only helps us to reflect on past practices but also takes us to the next step and encourages action. Arnold, Edwards, Hooley and Williams (2012), from Victoria University in Australia, introduce critical praxis. The authors express embracing a position that favours investigation in critical praxis. This has two central characteristics:

1. The critical praxis research is looked on as taking place within sociopolitical elements such that members are encouraged to act upon and change those circumstances.
2. The researcher embraces a position of critical praxis with themselves whereby their knowledge, biases and present methods are confronted and amended. (p. 291)

It is not just useful for me to reflect on the puzzles that have confronted me over the years, but actually to understand these puzzles and work towards taking action. Arnold et al., suggests a further step where even bigger changes can occur. In conducting an inquiry in this manner, the process opens up “new understandings of critique, knowledge and society, thereby relationally changing their position in the particular field of activity and changing the field itself” (p. 291).

Place-Based Education

Using autoethnography and critical praxis to guide my method of inquiry, I will explore key mysteries that have surfaced throughout my career. The significance of place is an important

part of who I am; both personally and professionally. To begin this search for clarity in my experiences, I start with the concept of place-based education. Sobel (2004) defines place-based education as, “the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subject across the curriculum” (para.18). There are many benefits to this type of teaching. Sobel continues, “emphasizing hands-on, real-world learning experiences, this approach to education increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances students’ appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens” (para 18). Place-based education is a substantial part of my identity as an educator and I have been perplexed to understand why it is not a much greater component of current curriculum.

Cynthia Chambers, an Education professor from the University of Lethbridge and Canadian curriculum scholar, has written numerous articles on curriculum as a place. She suggests Canadian curriculum theorists need to weave Canadian stories and places together to “create a curriculum theory that is written at home but works on behalf of everyone” (1999, p.137). Chambers uses Canadian literature to support her argument and concludes, “Canadian curriculum theorists must come to understand that the *topos* from which they write is the physical, imaginary, and sociopolitical landscape they share with the communities and children on behalf of whom they work and write” (p.148).

The literature provided by researchers and theorists such as Sobel and Chambers resonates with me strongly; with my life history and experiences. I spent three years in Canada’s North. Chambers worked with people from the community of Arviat, Nunavut where I too was a teacher. In the article, *Where are we? Finding Common Ground in a Curriculum of Place*,

Chambers (2008) gathered her research findings from personal experiences and a multitude of discussions with First Nation community members and found “with the experience of field trips to those places, experiencing the phenomenology of landscape and the pedagogy of *visiting* as a way of learning” (p. 114). She stresses four dimensions that place-based curriculum calls for: “a different sense of time” (p.115); “enskillment” (p.116); “education of attention” (p. 120); and “wayfinding” (p.122). These are powerful skills to develop and, “by learning to do what is appropriate in this place, and doing it together, perhaps we can find the common ground necessary to survive” (p. 125). I would add not only to ‘survive’ but also to ‘thrive’.

Chambers discusses the act of survival as a theme in writing curriculum in both her articles. This acknowledgement of shaping Canadian curriculum to encourage educators to teach survival skills to students is an argument that I strongly agree with whether in a large city or in a remote community in the north. Ideas discussed in her articles, particularly about survival, shed light on my own reasons to enable students’ learning about their surroundings; to learn the necessary skills to be connected and confident in the place they live. Through further investigation on this topic, the literature provides some perspectives as to why this place-based ideal is not as common a place as it could be in the curriculum of today.

Issues with Place-Based Education. There are important issues with trying to implement place-based type curriculum in the 21st century classroom. Chinn (2006) conducted a study where teachers and administrators from eight different countries discussed science and math curriculum in the area of culture, place, and personal experience. She raises issues in her report concerning the implementation of place-based education. Even though, “Hawaii’s students have a unique natural laboratory to explore...most [students] learn classroom and text-based science, perhaps becoming literate in school science but not issues relevant to their own lives and

communities” (p. 1248). There were concerns raised from the research about the lack of professional development, high stakes testing, and “disempowerment in the face of school policies that put scarce financial resources into textbooks unrelated to her elementary students’ lives and experiences” (p. 1249). All of these factors impaired place-based learning. Smith (2007) summarizes impairing issues for place-based education as, “school schedules, Carnegie units [strictly time-based references for measuring educational attainment], concerns about liability, access to parent volunteers, transportation costs – all of these nuts and bolts issues and others can also inhibit the implementation of place-based education” (p. 204). I was not surprised to find the concept of ‘time’ as an issue in the limitation of place-based education.

Gruenewald (2003) further addresses the role of assessment in his article and concludes, “the heavy emphasis in educational research on school and classroom practices reinforces institutional practices that keep teachers and students isolated from places outside of schools” (p. 10). He continues to explain:

Educational research that evaluates the efficacy of critical, place-based approaches to education also need to be developed, though the meaning of successful practice must challenge conventional notions of achievement; definitions of school achievement must begin to take account of the social and ecological quality of community. (p. 10)

Along with external matters there are also issues with the attitudes of educators with place-based education. Smith (2007) states, “[n]either are many educators willing to relinquish their limited control and authority to members of the community whose expertise may be essential to the completion of projects grounded in local problems and issues” (p. 204). Whether it is the nuts and bolts, measuring achievement, or relinquishing control to others, these issues make for less

and less place-based education in our current curriculum. Although I agree that these are issues and challenges for the 21st century educator, I agree with Richard Lovu, author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, in his evaluation, “If we hope to improve the quality of life for our children, and for generations to come, we need a larger vision. We can make changes now in our family lives, in classrooms, and in the organizations that serve children, but in the long run, such actions will not seal the bond between nature and future generations” (p. 272). Place-based education is not enough to be this bond and there needs to be something more.

First Nations Education in the 21st Century

First Nations’ education in Canada is a vital topic that has recently reached the national stage. The Assembly of First Nations produced a 2012 Report, *Cultural Competency* that describes critical reasons for the unsatisfactory educational achievement by First Nations communities across the country. It outlines issues such as poverty, inadequate housing, lack of employment opportunities, low family educational attainment, and lack of Internet access as being contributing factors (p. 11). An accord was struck back in 2010 with the Association of Canadian Deans of Education on Indigenous Education where the authors outlined a number of goals that are imperative for improving overall First Nation educational attainment. Some of the goals found in the Accord include: creating respectful and welcoming learning environments; including respectful and inclusive curricula; ensuring culturally responsive pedagogies; enabling culturally responsive assessment; affirming and revitalizing Indigenous languages; fostering Indigenous education leadership (p.14). Even with First Nations identifying the issues and providing important goals for improving the situation, Indigenous knowledge is still difficult to identify in the current curriculum. In Battiste’s (2002) report on *Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy in First Nations Education A Literature Review with Recommendations*, she states:

To affect reform, educators need to make a conscious decision to nurture Indigenous knowledge, dignity, identity, and integrity by making a direct change in school philosophy, pedagogy, and practice. They need to develop missions and purposes that carve out time and space to connect with the wisdom and traditions of Indigenous knowledge. (p. 30-31)

First Nations have recognized the colonization of the education system, which has suppressed Indigenous knowledge, but they are now making their voices heard at the various levels within the system.

Colonization of the Education System

Colonization is an immense topic. My specific interest in colonization, within the context of my journey as an educator, is related to how colonization has influenced Indigenous knowledge; especially how my experiences have impacted or influenced Indigenous knowledge. Archibald, Lundy, Reynolds and Williams (2010), co-authors of *The Accord on Indigenous Education* (2010) state, “The process of colonization has either outlawed or suppressed Indigenous knowledge systems, especially language and culture” (p. 2). There are few educational systems today that include Indigenous knowledge as a priority (Battiste and Henderson, 2009), and the remains of colonial, Eurocentric curriculum still continue to prevail. Iseke-Barnes (2008) suggests:

A step in the process of defeating colonial power is to recognize this power, how it is structured into an integrated system, and to begin to disrupt it through knowledge of how the system works. With this knowledge the system can be challenged and dismantled. (p.123-124)

She continues to encourage her students to ponder the efforts being played out that support oppressive motives including “to blame, deny, ignore, bash, stereotype, appropriate, minimize,

silence, project, and avoid” (p. 125). Adding to these points, Sanford, Williams, Hopper, and McGregor (2012) state, “Schools and teacher education have long been tools for colonizing, suppressing, oppressing, or objectifying learners, particularly Aboriginal peoples” (p. 31). To begin to partake in this journey of decolonizing the education system, one needs to take a look at the suggested strategies on how to implement such a process that would be beneficial to guide the change.

Decolonization Strategies. There is an abundance of literature surrounding the topic of decolonizing action. Iseke-Barnes (2008) and Batiste (2002) both outline key themes that are crucial in decolonizing academic conventions. Battiste proposes: amplifying the combined desires of Indigenous peoples; revealing the unfairness in our colonial past; analytically breaking down the social, political, economic and emotional objectives for muting Aboriginal voices; legitimizing the opinions and sophistication of Aboriginal people in the curriculum and identifying it as a powerful contextual relationship of wisdom and knowledge; and expressing the sensitive learning that one will experience during this process. Iseke-Barne’s adds to this list with emphasis to connect with the land and community-based pedagogy. Both Guenewald (2003) and Smith (2007) express that motivating the young to take responsibility for where they live unfastens the opportunities for decolonization. The combination of these strategies can give way to a place where decolonization can begin.

To continue on this path of action of decolonization Sanford, Williams, Hopper and McGregor (2012) have experienced decolonizing education and have published their findings in their article, *Indigenous Principles Decolonizing Teacher Education: What We Have Learned*. These scholars introduce the “Lil’wat principles” for learning and teaching to encourage teachers’ addressing the needs of all learners. The key beliefs in this framework are:

Kamucwkalha – acknowledging the felt energy indication group attunement and the emergence of a common group purpose; Celhcelh – each person being responsible for their own and others learning, always seeking learning opportunities; K’at’il’a - seeking spaces of stillness and quietness amidst our busyness and quest for knowledge; A7xekcal - valuing our own expertise and considering how it helps the entire community beyond ourselves; Cwelelep – recognizing the need to sometimes be in a place of dissonance and uncertainty, so as to be open to new learning; Emhaka7 – encouraging each of us to do the best we can at each task given to us. (p. 23-24)

[Principles in Lil’wat dialect of: <https://sites.google.com/site/lulwatprinciples/home>]

My acquaintance first hand in an educational setting with these principles has moved me to promote and acknowledge the power that these beliefs can have on one’s thinking and pedagogical practice.

The literature further explains other methods that are valuable to the decolonizing journey. Iseke (2013) articulates the awareness and importance of ceremony and spirituality to help understand decolonization. She states:

The work of the Elders is decolonizing as it reminds us of who we are, where we have come from, and helps us reestablish the connections to ourselves, our ancestors, our spiritual practices, our spirits, the ways of our people and the land. This decolonizing is no small task”. (p. 51-52)

Bringing in the spiritual connection to the world and the ceremonies that are derived from this place that I inhabit is something that I may need to learn more from the Elders and incorporate into my practice as an educator.

Another decolonization strategy that may be important in my journey is the concept of a “third space” (Bhabha, 1990 as cited in Donald, 2005, p. 539). This third space acknowledges both valid Indigenous society and Western curriculum ideas; weaving them together and proposing a different path to understanding and community learning (Sanford, Williams, Hopper, & McGregor, 2012; Lipka, Webster, Yanez, Adams, Clark, & Lacy, 2005; Lipka, Wong, Andrew-Ihrke, 2013; & Donald, 2011). Donald, however, raises warning flags of the utilization of the idea around the “third space”. Along with Chambers, he suggests a *metissage*, a weaving of Aboriginal and Canadian relationships, being a more appropriate way of connecting differing cultures. This idea requires further research and exploration. Acknowledging these various strategies is the beginning point of decolonization of the education system but there are complications, avoidances and struggles in implementing the types of strategies that are required.

Difficulties of Decolonization. To reflect back on myself as an educator and analyze where I situate myself in this process of decolonization has been a challenging undertaking. The literature through Wane (2006) and Reagan (2010), support this assessment and suggest that it is a difficult process to decolonize oneself. Iseke-Barnes (2008) and Tuck & Yang (2012) add to this conversation that within the process of decolonization spurs on the emotion of guilt which is compounded with confused feelings and reactions. Tuck and Yang propose that colonizers or settlers “move to innocence” (p. 10), a series of distractions or “positionings” that aim to mitigate this emotional response without having to alter or adjust at all, are shallow and exclusively benefit the settler. Tuck and Yang further assert that this discourse often triggers

distress and discomposure and we feel entangled. Their contribution offers a structure so one can be more diligent and aware of the motivation of our actions and insistence for action, which destabilize naiveté. Tuck and Yang conclude by saying decolonization is responsible to Indigenous “sovereignty and futurity” (p. 35). This information sheds light onto many of my puzzles, not only as an educator in a First Nations community, but also a member of a global community. Naiveté, incite, guilt and action have all been part of the challenge of decolonizing of myself.

My Place

Placed-based education, Indigenous knowledge and decolonization leave me pondering, overwhelmed and still wondering about my position as an educator. Scholars Clandinin, Downey and Huber (2009), and Sanford, Williams, Hopper, and McGregor (2012), refer to this atmosphere as a shifting of understanding of our topography and practices. A number of questions arise: How, as an educator, am I to cope with these new understandings? Where is my place to make changes? Do I have a place? Clandinin, Downey and Huber (2009) write that in order for educators and curriculum practitioners to carry on, they need to be aware of how to travel and reside on and in, changing environments. But they conclude that there is no assurances as to what the future holds, “only that it will be in dialogue, in wondering, in openness to stepping into liminal spaces - spaces of ambiguity and unCertainty - with teachers, children, youth and families that we can continue to compose educative lives” (p. 153). Exchanging of views, curiosities, and willingness to listen in uncomfortable circumstances is a ‘place’ that has been suggested for the survival of an educator and as Chambers (1999) expresses, “our first challenge will be to name where we are, and what it looks and feels like to be in this place, even when we feel “out of place” (p. 144). Although I do not feel I have gone far enough through my

journey to answer where is my place, reviewing the literature has opened my mind to taking action and making a difference.

Summary

For this literature review I have attempted to illuminate topics that relate to my journey through articles, discussion papers and discourses. Through reflection four main topics became apparent: praxis, place-based education, Indigenous knowledge, and decolonization. As one can witness I have chosen broad topics to research and there is an abundance of literature on each discourse. Finding information and studies that deal with the areas that resonate with my ‘lived experiences’ was challenging but resulted in many revelations. It was interesting to notice in the literature how each one of these topics often was woven together as if it was one large subject. All these topics are related, interconnected and significant to First Nations people. So why am I involved? I am involved from a point of critical praxis.

Throughout many of the articles written about place-based education there is a sense of frustration, which I have also experienced throughout my teaching career. The literature echoes my thoughts and I realize I am not alone. Chinn (2006) includes in her article a quote from a teacher who attended her professional development workshop, “If you look on a map, we’re the maritime country, but we don’t have curriculum to develop the student skills about how to hatch fish, how to plant algae, etc. What they have been learning at school is regular, high standards, biology, physics, chemistry” which is not unique to the place (p. 1261). This feeling of discontentment is evident in many educators’ voices around the world concerning our curriculum content and programs.

The impact from the studies on incorporating Indigenous knowledge and wisdom into curriculum is very powerful and demands our immediate attention. As I reflect on my question that guided this literature review, where is my ‘place’ as an educator in a First Nation’s school in

the 21st century? After this literature review, I have a clearer picture of the direction my professional inquiry should take. I need to determine the changes needed to my practice to insure First Nation's teaching and wisdom has a place in education in the 21st century. As Sanford, Williams, Hopper & McGregor (2012) affirms, "We believe we are moving in the right direction, but also know there are many steps to take as we deepen our understanding of why changes need to be made and how Indigenous principles can assist us to walk new paths" (p. 31). To walk these new paths means seeking knowledge, time, commitment and relationship building. Emekauxa (2004) expresses:

How powerful it would be if our education system could reach deeply into the cultures of our diverse society, honor their knowledge systems, and respect and integrate their ways of knowing in a manner that strengthens our communities, connects our children to their place in the universe, and helps them to meet and exceed rigorous standards all at the same time. (p. 9)

Lastly, the research on colonization and decolonization of education was emotionally difficult and complicated to comprehend all at the same time. To read various accounts about how humans mistreated other humans in the past and the present day is overwhelming. To be aware of the dominant forces of the Eurocentric education system and its impact on learning outcomes in Indigenous settings is the beginning. Now what to do next is critical praxis. As Sanford, Williams, Hopper, and McGrigor (2012) affirm, "We have had to resist the desire to return to the familiar and comfortable – both for our students and for ourselves - and have persisted in living in "Cwelelep" that place of uncertainty in which new learning emerges" (p.

30). The impact of researching this topic area has changed my thinking and has made me realize the magnitude of these issues and the implications on education curriculum today.

To help me on this final journey of critical praxis, which again is to act, confront and amended, elements of ones practice (Arnold, Edwards, Hooley and Williams, 2012), the succeeding chapter will outline a proposal for an autoethnographic study. This submission will express my reasons of inspiration, reflections from teaching experiences, insights from literature, and outline a plan that will guide and assist me in a professional deliberation and perhaps transformation.

*“And so we embark together on a new project,
a project with its own as yet not fully understood
cultural plots and cultural practices”*

(Yvonna S. Lincoln and Norman K Denzin, 2000, p. 1063)

Chapter 3

Part 1: Planning an Autoethnographic Journey

I am beginning to compile what seems to be “stories to leave by” (Clandinin, Downey & Huber, 2009, p. 149) as a teacher. I am sensing a need for a change. I am feeling out of place and I do not understand why. Clandinin, Downey and Huber (2009) parallel my present feelings by expressing:

“We wonder about how teachers’ stories to live by; that is, who they are becoming as teachers, can shift ever so slightly on these rapidly changing landscapes to become stories to leave by, stories teachers begin to tell themselves when they can no longer live out their personal practical knowledge in their stories to live by and that then allow them to leave teaching”. (p. 146)

I love teaching, well I did love teaching, however it has become uncomfortable and frustrating in what seems to be three facets (a) time restraints; (b) curriculum and instructional concerns; and (c) troubling interactions with colleagues and community members. My frustrations of feeling trapped, closed, and controlled seem to revolve around the element of time. I never feel I have enough time. My timetable is packed and there seems to be more and more programs to delivery, but the amount of time allocated to teach these remains the same. There are not more hours in a day to accommodate for these additional programs. After reading the British Columbia’s Education Plan (2011) one word stuck out for me, “more”. The authors used the word “more” eighteen times in the document. This has left me pondering...how do I fit “more” into my schedule?

As previously noted one of my passions is providing opportunities for students to learn from nature, their community, and their culture, which is also referred to as place-based education. A few examples are seaweed picking in the traditional territories, clam digging, and having students learn the traditional processes of preserving clams and salmon. I also try as much as possible to see what is taking place in the community so students can learn from community members. For example, during deer season a community member showed my students how to skin a deer. During salal berry season students picked berries, then made taka (dried berry cakes) with the cultural teachers. As Vizina (as cited in Battiste, 2010) states:

[f]amilies, communities, places, and ceremonies nurture the spirit in informal learning environments and in more formal environments, where it is expected that schools will validate the existing knowledge base of the students and provide an environment, experiences, and knowledge, where students may work toward fulfillment of their gifts and purposes in accordance with the laws of the Creator, passed down through the collective stories, traditions, customs, and identities of Aboriginal peoples. (p. 14)

When I am involved in these cultural and community activities I feel my students are getting the most valuable lessons possible and our learning spirits are being nourished.

Time

However, pressures to add more programs to my schedule is, I feel, preventing me from doing what I am passionate about and what I feel is so important for my students. For example, my timetable (Table 1) is broken into sections with many other staff members involved in my students' day.

9:00 – 9:30	P.E.	12:45 – 1:00	Language Arts
9:30 – 10:30	Language Arts	1:00 – 1:30	Reading Groups – 5 teachers and class assistants involved
10:30 – 10:45	Recess	1:30 – 1:55	Science/Socials
10:45 – 11:00	Language Arts	1:55 – 2:25	Culture Class
11:00 – 12:00	Math – combination of 3 classes	2:25 – 2:40	Daily Physical Activity
12:00 – 12:45	Lunch	2:40 – 3:00	Health/Career

Table 1. My Grade 4/5 Timetable 2013-2014 School Year

As can be seen in Table 1, planning learning experiences in the community or taking advantage of opportunities on the spur of the moment is difficult because of the constraints of my timetable, the addition and involvement of other staff members with my students, and my responsibilities that are not only with my class but also with other students from other classes. As I uncovered in my literature review, Smith (2007) states:

[t]ypical school schedules, Carnegie units [strictly time-based references for measuring educational attainment], concerns about liability, access to parent volunteers, transportation costs – all of these nuts and bolts issues and others can also inhibit the implementation of place-based education.
(p. 204)

To summarize Smith's (2007) ideas, not just my timetable, but testing, safety, and financial concerns also add to the list of reasons why I find implementing place-based education a challenge. Even though I realize there is a place for such support and structure of my timetable, my program design is presently limiting me when arranging place-based activities.

Curriculum and Instruction

Along with time issues, curriculum and instructional concerns are also in the limelight. Curriculum and instruction is an important aspect of teaching that has potential life changing affects on students. Designed curriculum that does not consider my students' community and culture is worrisome. The added pressure to improve my students' achievement scores and implementing programs designed in other places other than our classrooms, or without our students' culture in mind, is a concern for others and myself (Archibald, Ryenolds & Williams, 2010; Battiste, 2002; Battiste & Henderson, 2009; Iseke-Barnes, 2008).

For example, math, reading and spelling programs are designed with no links to my students' culture and community. An illustration of this is Marilyn Sprick's Read Well program (Sprick, Howard, & Fidanque as cited in Santoro, Jitendra, Starosta, & Sacks, 2006) and John Saxon's Saxon Math Program (Price, 2012). Both these programs are written in the United States and as a result, lessons and content have little to no relation to my students' community, culture, stories, and Indigenous knowledge. Kwaagley (1999), and Snively and Corsiglia (as cited in Chinn, 2006) in speaking of science programs specially, suggest that "[w]hen science curriculum is determined by concerns that reside outside of communities, especially those of nonmainstream or indigenous populations, the teaching of science tends to be separated from learners' experiences, local science issues, and traditional ecological knowledge" (p. 1248).

This brings me to ask the question, what are the affects of such curricular programs on my students' learning? George states in Battiste's (2010) section of her article, *The Erosion of Spirit*, "[s]ometimes, as has been the case for Aboriginal people, learning loses its meaningfulness and its wondrous moments" and "the effect has been an erosion of spirit, a downward spiraling and cyclical patterns that defeat their life purpose and create multiple blocks to learning" (p. 15).

Strained Relationships

Lastly, unpleasant interactions with colleagues, community members and with strangers in cultural settings are also an issue in creating my “stories to leave by.” For example, I asked a community member to come along on a field trip, which was to one of the communities traditional territories, as a guide to help lead the traditional teachings of survival and food gathering. On the day of departure the guide arrives with his daughter, who was not in my class, assuming she could come on the field trip. I disallowed her to come resulting in a very uncomfortable situation. I always thought I was a peaceful person, so how do I find myself in these dissensions? Many of these conflicts present themselves when I was planning or implementing culturally community experiences for my students or in cultural settings. Time and scheduling elements has often been an issue, for example, causing stress and frustrations by being late for pick up after a hiking adventure. Another issues such as offending a staff member over materials used for field trips. As I reflect on my experiences, these unpleasant interactions have been the realm that is the most difficult to understand. As I mentioned earlier, I feel I have a peaceful personality, but do I?

Due to these factors I feel there is something amiss, something is not right, something that is unsettling me. I feel my anxiousness with time constraints, curriculum and instructional concerns, and my relationships with others in educational and culturally settings is troubling. This feeling of uncertainty may be based upon the following themes that have the possibility to emerge from my experiences, reflections and research at the present time. These themes are place-based education, colonization, and decolonization. Based upon the reflections and readings from the first and second chapter of this project, I will be seeking to explore some level of change or re-engagement with my teaching and uncover what it is that is unsettling.

These potential themes may be the foundation of my prospective data. Analyzing these issues may shed light on my predicament in finding my place as an educator and propel me to some sort of conclusion, and hopefully have “stories to live by” as an educator. This is my inquiry for the subsequent journey, an expedition of an autoethnographical study.

Part 2: My Proposal

My Research Position

Before I begin to describe my proposal I would like to explain my philosophical composition of research. This entails examining the ontology and epistemology stances that I position myself at this time. Ontology, as defined by O’Leary (2014) is “the study of what exists, and how things that exist are understood and categorized” (p. 5). As a qualitative researcher I will encompass the idea of “multiple realities” in other words, examine and research through multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2012). O’Leary (2014) outlines epistemology as “how we come to have legitimate knowledge of the world; rules for knowing” (p. 5). My epistemology will be fixed in my subjective experience. I know knowledge as personal, individual, instinctive, emotional, and intuitive. I will, as a researcher, express a variety of ideas as themes that will take shape in my data (Creswell, 2012). My interpretive framework position is that of a postmodern theory which is explained by Creswell (2012) as “knowledge claims must be set within the conditions of the world today and in the multiple perspectives of class, race, gender, and other group affiliations” (p. 27). I understand it is important to be able to express my ontology and epistemology of research because it will give potential readers the understanding of where I situate myself in the “production of knowledge” (O’Leary, 2014, p. 4). This philosophical position has led me to the research methodology of autoethnography.

My Proposal

My proposal is to explore or unpack the following topics of place-based education, colonization, and decolonization, as an autoethnography. In this section I will define autoethnography, the benefits, and limitations of this type of methodology, how it relates to my research question, my rationale in choosing this form of methodology, and my design of explaining the modes of collecting materials, and a description of data approaches. I will use the methodology of autoethnography to move to some level of personal or critical praxis.

Defining my Methodology

Autoethnography. As mentioned in my literature review, autoethnography, is one of many methods used in qualitative research. Ellis and Bochner (2000) define autoethnography as:

[a] genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. (p. 739)

To further explain this term they suggest a model composing of three fundamental aspects of autoethnography; the research process – graphy, culture – ethnos and the self – auto, and that “[d]ifferent exemplars of autoethnography fall at different places along continuum of each of these three axes (p. 740). My interpretation of these definitions of autoethnography, in my case, is that I will reflect on my experiences that took place while teaching at a First Nations’ school and my experiences of being in other cultural settings. As I contemplate these occurrences I will be mindful of the social situation at the time and the ethnic tenor of my settings. Most importantly, I will be aware of my and others thoughts, feelings, and the positions that I place myself and I place others throughout these incidents.

Aims of Autoethnography. The objective of autoethnographical research is “[I]ike ethnography, autoethnography pursues the ultimate goal of cultural understanding underlying autobiographical experiences” (Chang, 2008, p. 4). Understanding and comprehension of the ‘self’ are the key components for this process. As stated in Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011), “[a] researcher uses tenets of *autobiography* and *ethnography* to *do* and *write* autoethnography” (p. 1). Hayler (2011) expresses this process of introspection as an effort “in order to illuminate and to facilitate understanding” (p.19). To make sense of one’s feelings, thoughts, and emotions in a cultural setting, with relationships and dialogue is the key reason for using autoethnographic methodology.

Benefits and Risks of Autoethnography. The rewards and ramifications of this type of approach are many. Chang (2008) suggests the benefits can be grouped into three categories: (1) provides an examination technique amiable to researchers and readers; (2) it strengthens cultural apprehension of self and others; and (3) it has the prospective to transform self and others in relation to the cross-cultural fabrication of partnerships. Ellis and Bochner (2000) state that autoethnography is “usually written in first-person voice, autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of form – short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals” (p. 739). The act of writing can have many advantages. It can be meaningful, allow exploring possibilities, provide a space to heal and/or be therapeutic, motivating, and aid in being in the present (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). The merits of the methodology of autoethnography are abundant and significant.

However, I realize there are hazards or warnings to be aware of. There are five perils to be conscious of while doing an autoethnographic study. They are: (1) focusing too much attention on self void of others (Chang, 2008, Hayler, 2011); (2) stress more importance on telling the

story instead of analyzing and interpreting the cultural setting (3) only depending on personal memory and recollections as data references; (4) failure to uphold social and moral principles; and (5) unsuitable delivery of the term “autoethnography” (Chang, 2008). In addition to this, as I stated in previous chapter, to express personal stories, feelings and emotions can open oneself up to criticism. Ellis and Bochner (2000) express, “[v]ulnerability can be scary, but it also can be the source of growth and understanding” (p. 752). The outcomes of such a self-inquiry can create both excitement and apprehension.

Rationale for Autoethnography. To express my motivation in choosing autoethnography as a research methodology for this Master’s project I will use Chang’s (2008) terminology of “understand, connect, and expand” (p. 19) to convey my rationale. First, I have been seeking understanding to my puzzles or my “discourses-in-practice” (Holstein & Gubruim, 2000, p. 94), and "epiphanies" (Bochner & Ellis, 1992; Couser, 1997; Denzin, 1989, as cited in Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011, para. 7) that have accumulated over the years as an educator of twenty-seven years. I desire for this process to shed light on the “culturally rooted reasons for our [my] comfort with others of similarity, discomfort with others of difference, and aversion with others of opposition” (Chang, 2008, p. 19). I feel that solving these puzzles will answer my inquiry question of where is my ‘place’ as an educator in a First Nation’s school in the 21st century?

Secondly, I hope that this method of research will help connect my childhood, my education, and my experiences to my present setting. For example, as expressed in chapter one, my passion and drive is to give my students opportunities to connect with their land and community linked to my relationship with my community as a child? Another question that may arise is why have I not learned about the effects of colonization of the education system? Was it my educational experiences or other deeper social issues? These potential associations with my

childhood, education and experiences may be partial or full reasons for these “discourses in practices” to occur.

Lastly, I aspire to expand this appreciation into culturally unexplored domains. I am hopeful that this autoethnographic approach will reveal significant life changing enlightenments such as decolonization of the education system that will lead and guide me to respectful and authentic relationships with my First Nations’ students, their parents and families, my colleagues, and community members. I seek to diminish discrimination, raise awareness, and encourage cultural change within the education system so that Indigenous voices are heard. Through this autoethnographic study I desire to gain confidence to be able to give voice to injustices that take place and as a result make a difference for those I teach and learn from. These are the reasons, my rationale, for this journey.

My Method of Data Collection

To obtain the goals of autoethnography researchers submit to the ethnographic research procedures. The initial step to this exercise is accumulating data. There are a variety of ways to accomplish collecting data such as “by participation, self-observation, [and] interview[ing]” (Chang, 2008, p. 4). In Ellis, Adams and Bochner’s (2011) article it is expressed, “[e]thnographers do this by becoming *participant observers* in the culture—that is, by taking *field notes* of cultural happenings as well as their part in and others’ engagement with these happenings” (para. 7). To help me remember these key stories from the past Chang (2008) suggests strategies to aid in this process. They include:

1. Illustrating or using graphic images such as “kinsgrams” and “culturegrams”
2. Listing people, special relics, personal and cultural words of wisdoms, significant teachers, ethnic occurrences, and preferred/distasteful activities
3. Recording the autoethnographer’s school experience

4. Observing and replying to other autoethnographies and self-narratives (p. 6)

There is a diversity of ways the data can be represented. Information can be in the form of narratives, storied poems, personal journals, field notes, letters, conversations, interviews, family stories, documents, photographs, memory boxes, personal-family-social artifacts, and life experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 101). As one can conclude, data collecting for an autoethnographic journey is time consuming and can be perplexing. I have written what I feel will be fundamental to begin my pilgrimage of assembling my puzzles, “epiphanies”, and “discourses in practice”.

Part 3: Analyzing Data and Exemplars

In this segment I plan to illuminate the process of analysis and interpreting the data. This will entail reviewing tactics for managing data and explaining the procedure of reflective analyzing data. Then I will share a collection of examples that has arisen from my themes. These themes that I think will emerge from this process are place-based education, colonization, and decolonization. I understand that other exemplars may arise during my analysis and interpreting stage.

Managing Data

To begin the analyzing and interpreting stage of this process O’Leary (2014) suggests it is extremely important to manage data well. She expresses six steps to help organize data collection. They are as follows:

1. Get to know suitable software such as NVivo or The Ethnograph – if you chose to use a computer program
2. Record your data – monitor of your data as it is collected – reminders to record source, collection procedures, and collection dates

3. Assemble data sources – categorize like sources and remove any data not related to the analysis
4. Scrutinize and record notes – read through data and take notes that may aid in categorizing the data
5. Compose data for analyzing – If you are using a computer program data will need to be scanned – if you plan to examine your data by hand then all data should be printed
6. Record data electronically or prepare analysis materials – index cards, whiteboards, sticky notes, and highlights maybe useful (p. 301-303)

Exploring and Reasoning with Data

With the above tips for data managing, and with the knowledge of knowing our data well, we must consider how we will explore the data. O’Leary (2014) expresses, “you may explore your data inductively from the ground up...without a predetermined theme or theory in mind” or deductively by having a “predetermined (*a priori*) themes or theory in mind – they might have come from engagement with literature; your prior experiences; the nature of your research question; or from insights you had while collecting data” (p. 305). It is possible to explore data using inductive reasoning, meaning a discovering process, or deductive reasoning, such as an uncovering procedure, or be involved in a rotation of both (O’Leary, 2014, p. 306).

Process of Analyzing and Interpreting Data

Now that the groundwork has been laid for analyzing data, I will begin by presenting Figure 2. from O’Leary’s (2014) book that I have found best illustrates the process of analyzing data. The diagram below shows the exercise in a simplistic representation of the process and as the scholar shows, it is crucial to always keep the inquiry investigation, goals, methodology guidelines, and pertinent opinions in focus.

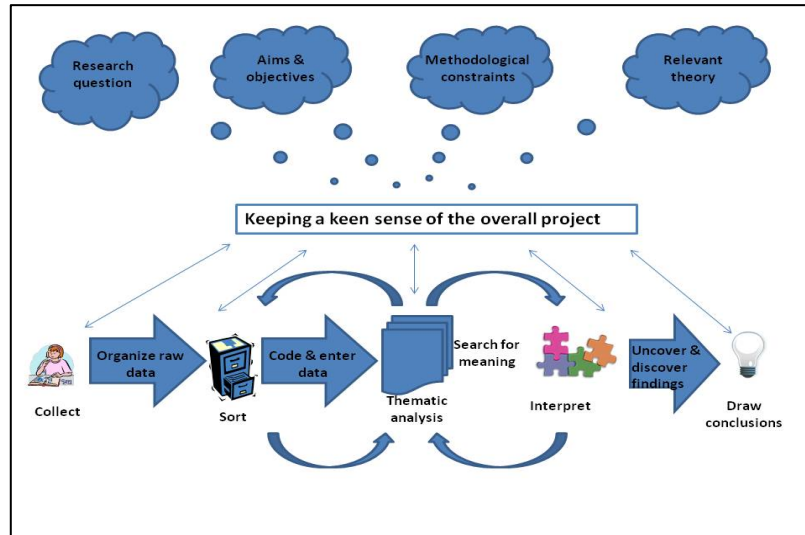


Figure 2. The process of reflective analysis. O’Leary, 2014, p. 300

As one can see this visual shows a linear movement, however, Chang (2008) warns researchers that when participating in autoethnography, “data collection is not always sequential to or separate from that of data analysis and interpretation” (p. 8). Data collection can be interlaced, woven, braided, and responsive with investigating and examining. Throughout this process researchers may find they fine-tune their inquiries, goals, and/or objectives. Chang also adds to these strategies by encouraging researchers to ask oneself, “Why does a self perceive, think, behave, and evaluate the way it does and how does the self relate to others in thoughts and actions?” (p. 9) and reminds us that “what makes autoethnography ethnographical is its ethnographic intent of gaining a cultural understanding of self that is intimately connected to others and society” (p. 9).

The next course of action after organizing and recording data would be to move from the raw data to portraying conclusions. To guide me in this process O’Leary (2014) has outlined six key initiatives: identify biases; decrease, arrange, and code data; look for themes; map and construct themes; assemble and confirm themes; and deduce conclusions (O’Leary, 2014, p. 306). The first step is to identify biases by expressing in writing as many presumptions as

possible that may need to be remembered while on this investigation. For example, my passion for getting students out in nature could be a bias if not acknowledged. Then rereading the data and taking notes of feelings and emotions and try to get an overall feeling of the data. Next, is to examine data even closer, line-by-line, and code significant findings into potential themes. There are a few strategies that may be helpful when coding your data such as: words used; consider concepts and meaning; look into linguistic tools such as “metaphors, analogies, and proverbs”; and lastly searching for non-verbal cues that go along with the words such as tone, pitch, volume, and pace of voice, facial expressions, and body language (p. 306). The third stage is to looking for patterns and relationships between the themes. A key strategy that perhaps is useful is to look for common words, emotions, non-verbal cues, metaphors, and people with the similar attributes. Mapping and building themes is the fourth step to analyzing the data. Using inductive or deductive approaches to the mapping process will depend on your data. The goal at this stage is to find meaning, relationships, and understanding in the themes. The fifth part of this exercise is fabricating and confirming theories. Creating the theme map may stimulate new ideas that might add to the knowledge of your topic. Finally, drawing conclusions is the occasion to bring in consequential discoveries and contemplate why and how they are impactful. Summarizing what the data discloses and connecting it back to my main question, aims and goals of this project will be the key component of this stage (p. 306).

The disposition of the data will be in the form of narratives. To help me choose which narratives I will collect Chambers (2004) advises, “I know something matters when it keeps me awake, or when I’m compelled to rise from my bed in the middle of the night or the early dawn to write” (p. 9). Van Maanen, as cited in Chang’s (2008) article organizes ethnographic writing into three different types such as, “realistic tales”, “confessional tales”, and “impressionist tales”

(p. 10). Keeping these types of writing in mind during this undertaking may be helpful. In order to accomplish this task of writing, one needs to set aside time, be dedicated to the process, keep an open mind and “not lose sight of the ultimate goal of autoethnography as a cultural study of self and others” (Chang, 2008, p. 11).

My Data Exemplars

Now that I have explained the process of managing, analyzing, and interpreting data the succeeding component of this chapter is sharing examples from my collection of data. These samples entitled, “Worms on the Road”, “Curriculum Concerns... Colonization Concerns”, and “Mending Cracks in the Canoe”, fall into the anticipated themes of place-based education, colonization, and decolonization that have the possibility of emerging as I begin my journey of autoethnographic study. I feel it is important to include illustrations of my data collection to help describe, express, and explicate my proposal at a personal level. Each of these examples falls under the methodology of autoethnography. These samples are inquiries into my personal experiences that I am seeking insight and understanding into the cultural, social and political realms of my teaching environment, which is the foundation of autoethnography. Preceding each exemplar will be my rationale for choosing the sample, how it fits into the identified theme, and concluding with a brief outline of my next steps. The following examples are distinctively my stories, my “lived experiences”, and my data, as an educator in cultural setting.

Where does Place-Based Education Fit? Worms on the Road is one of my examples of data that has been collection and ready for analyzing and interpreting that I have categorized under the theme of place-based education. This piece of information is composed of personal struggles of implementing place-based education as an educator at a First Nations’ elementary school. This collection of details is an example of autoethnography since it includes personal

experiences, quotes from literature, and poetry to express my situation. I seek to explore the question where does place-based education fit?

Worms on the Road. “The time is right for a concerted and cooperative effort that creates transformational education by rejecting the “status quo,” moving beyond “closing the gap” discourse, and contributing to the well-being of Indigenous peoples and their communities” (Archibald, Lundy, Reynolds & Williams, 2010, p. 2). Does “closing the gap,” mean more programs, testing, assessing daily? One of my passions is providing opportunities for students to learn from nature, their community, their culture, but pressures to add more programs to my schedule is preventing me from doing what I am passionate about. I feel it necessary for my students to have the opportunity to experience what community learning or place-based education has to offer. Battiste (2010) states, from an Indigenous perspective:

[a] struggle is to convince them [Eurocentric-educated White people] to acknowledge the unique knowledge and relationships that Indigenous people derive from place and from their homeland, which is central to their notions of humanity and science, and passed on in their own languages and ceremony”. (p. 17)

The following poem, “Worms on the Road”, encapsulates how I feel. Often, my students will tell me when the worms are on the road and their need to rescue them. I feel this gesture symbolizes the need to get outdoors, the need to interact with nature. However, I feel pressured to keep to rigid schedules, programs, and testing to insure my students are “learning” and this takes precedence resulting in the voices of my students growing faint.

worms on the road

“good morning!”

“there are worms on the road!!!”

programs, schedules
timetables, overviews, bells
at grade level?
...no time

“there are worms on the road!”

structure, rubrics
buzzers, deadlines, report cards
checklists, progress?
...no time

“there are worms on the road...”
no time...

Has teaching become a science in the 21st century? What are the implications of these programs, structure, and control? Robert V. Bullough Jr. (2008), a professor of teacher education quoted William James (1899), in his article, “The Writing of Teachers’ Lives – Where Personal Troubles and Social Issues Meet” which states:

I say moreover that you make a great, a very great mistake, if you think that psychology, being the science of the mind’s law, is something from which you can deduce definite programs and schemes and methods of instruction for immediate schoolroom use. Psychology is a science, and teaching is an art: and sciences never generate arts directly out of themselves. An intermediary inventive mind must make the application, by using its originality. (p. 14-15)

Many articles and books have been written declaring how beneficial it is to have students connect to the land (Archibald, Lundy, Reynolds & Williams, 2010; Battiste, 2010; Battiste & Henderson 2009; Gruenewald, 2003; Louv, 2008; McGregor, 2013; Smith, 2007). Reasons to

have this connection from the literature I reviewed was learning survival skills (Chambers, 2008), gaining an appreciation for the natural world (Sobel, 2004), and decolonizing the education system for Indigenous peoples (Battiste 2010; Guenewald, 2003; Iseke-Barnes, 2008; Smith, 2007). These findings coincide with my personal experience and passion to provide time for this bond to develop with my students and their community. But have I considered or thought about my students and the community's priorities? What does the community want education to look like for their children? Can I answer these questions? The Accord (2010) states, "[w]holism addresses spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual development in relation to oneself, family, community, and environment (p. 3). I recall a day my students and I spend in the community. I wrote a "storied poem" to capture the day. I wonder... will there be opportunities in education for this type of learning in the future? These are the debates that I am mulling over.

Carry on...

Blackberry picking, "why black? They should be purple!"...
 Thorns, tasting, purple tongues, escorted by dogs, red roses discovered, maybe for pies, maybe
 for taka,
 Treasures found, sunny, hugs from grannies driving by, laughing, beautiful berries
 carry on...

Granny M's Beehive
 Sharing of a story, where was it?, why was it there? How did it get down?
 Laughing, wasp nest, donating to the school, other beehive stories,
 Advise, Internet for information,
 Warnings, giving, hugs, happiness, connection
 carry on...

Walking the trail, came upon a dead dog, maggots, life cycle,
 disgust, plugging the nose, sadness, the whys, the how comes,
 carry on...

Park by the river, picnic, playing survivor, snacks, swings, I need to pee...,
 laughing, freedom, fun
 carry on...

Granny C's Shed - Uncle J's cutting fish
 totes, treasures, aging shed, a sea of salmon, cutting, cleaning, saving, chucking, stories,

joking, teasing, exploring, climbing, questions, good-bye hugs
carry on...

back up the hill to
“school”

carry on...

Colonization of Curriculum. Along with speculating where place-based education fits in today’s education system, another issue materialized. My concern for curriculum and programs lacking culturally responsive material led me to my second theme that seems to be emerging - is the concept of colonization. I was dumbfounded by the fact that the curriculum being designed, which does not include Indigenous knowledge, may be the result of colonization. Here are my stories, my thoughts, and my concerns.

Curriculum Concerns... Colonization Concerns. “Schools and teacher education have long been tools for colonizing, suppressing, oppressing, or objectifying learners, particularly Aboriginal peoples” (Sanford, Williams, Hopper & McGregor, 2012, p. 31). Colonizing, suppressing, oppressing! Have I been guilty of this? I am part of this colonization if I do not speak out? I do feel pressured to deliver programs that do not have Indigenous content and I feel I do not have time to search, ask questions, and plan to incorporate it into my lessons. Curriculum delivery was not always like that it seems. I remember when I first started my career in education there was freedom. I had the freedom to create lessons with Indigenous content, to construct, to make decisions about curriculum, on behalf of the learners in my classroom, our community. I do remember quite vividly a turning point for me. I was teaching grade two at the time, loving my position, loving the freedom and then a conversation happened that I believe changed my practice.

Derailment

Principal: I need to know what programs you are using?

Me: Well, I am not using anyone particular... I create my materials from a combination of sources...

My Colleague: Did the principal ask you what programs you used?

Me: Yes

My Colleague: What did you say?

Me: Well, I said I don't really have a set program. I use a combination of many programs... I create my own materials...

My Colleague: What did you say? I said the same as well.

no sharing of how we felt about the question with the rest of the staff,
no justification, no reasoning,
end of discussion,
why?

Why did our principal want to know what programs we were using? Were they worried we were not teaching the curriculum? Do you need programs to be an effective teacher? Why was it such a big deal to be asked this question?

Now, with the added pressure of achievement scores and a focus on implementing programs designed in other places other than our classrooms or without our students' culture in mind, uncertainty is seeping into my consciousness. The poem, "a seed of uncertainty planted..." came to me after a day of teaching.

a seed of uncertainly planted...

Am I doing my job?
Am I doing a good job?
Maybe I need programs?

turning point
feel the pressure
caved in... changed...

Reading Program Math Program
Writing Program Science Program

Social Studies Program
Spelling Program

pondering...

lessons, definite, ridged
benchmarking, improving, testing,
control, outcomes, objectives, meetings,
what about inquiry?

Who does the thinking?
What about the Community?
The Culture?
The Connection?
Progress?

My apprehensiveness with curriculum and programs being designed and recommended for application without taking my students' culture into consideration has also been discussed extensively in publications. Battiste (2010) states, "[i]n schools, we must engage in a critique of the curriculum and examine the connections between – and the framework of meanings behind – what is being taught, who is being excluded, and who is benefiting from public education" (p. 17). The Association of Canadian Deans of Education on Indigenous Education delineated goals in the document, *Accord on Indigenous Education* (2010). One goal that particularly resonates with this topic is "to promote the development of culturally responsive curricula and to infuse Indigenous content and ways of knowing into all curricula at all levels" (p. 6). To conclude, there is a strong voice in literature that fervently advocates that Indigenous teachings and knowledge have a place in curriculum of the 21st century and the urgency to be aware of the process of decolonization and how these two profound subjects have affected the relationships with Indigenous people is overwhelming.

Paulette Reagan's dissertation (2006) expressed her rationale for her research in this area, "is based on the premise that Settlers must confront our own duplicity and hypocrisy – our denial and guilt about the past that is not really past, but continues to define our relationship with

Indigenous people today” (p. 3). I was dumbfounded by the information on colonization and the urgency to be aware of the process of decolonization and how these two profound subjects have affected my relationships with Indigenous people.

A Move Towards Decolonization. Place-based education and colonization concerns led me to my third theme of decolonization. My learning experiences from courses for my Master’s study have been instrumental in understanding the process of decolonization. I have come to realize this topic is immense and complex, a topic that needs further examination. I am also shocked and questioning why this topic is so foreign to me. “Mending the Cracks in the Canoe” is an experience that occur with a community member while implementing a fieldtrip with my students. This incident left me puzzled and unsure of the outcome. The following is a story that I foresee has many layers, concepts, emotions, and non-verbal cues, and is one story that, I’m assuming, will impact my life.

Mending the Cracks in the Canoe. To begin, I would like to tell you a story; the beginning of what I think has been a powerful learning experience for me, and the beginning of my move towards decolonization. I was in my early years of teaching excited to be working at a First Nations’ school. I was teaching the older class, grade five/six at the time and was planning a field trip to the students’ traditional territory. Many hours were spent planning on my part, organizing transportation, chaperons, food, activities, and choosing a guide from the community to help with the camping trip, etc... On the day of our departure everything seemed to be going well until the community guide arrives with his daughter, who was in grade seven, prepared to go on the trip. Without any discussion, without any council, I said she was not allowed to go. The guide left with his daughter, without a word. Since that day on the dock, this incident has left me wondering. At the time I felt I did the right thing. I was upholding the school rules and

policies. Our class worked hard to raise money to go on this trip. It was not fair for other students to come along at the last minute. We did not plan for extra people. Even though I had reasons, the incident still festered.

It was not until I was introduced to the Lil'wat principles from the Mount Currie First Nations' culture that I began to understand how I might have handled the situation differently. Sanford, Williams, Hopper & McGregor (2012) have experienced decolonizing education and have published their findings in their article, *Indigenous Principles Decolonizing Teacher Education: What We Have Learned*. These scholars introduce the "Lil'wat principles" for learning and teaching to encourage teachers' addressing the needs of all learners. These principles were introduced to me during our Indigenous Teachings and Knowledge course, which took place in the summer of 2013. Dr. Lorna Williams introduced and modeled these values with our class.

"Lit'wat Principles" of Teaching and Learning

Kamucwkalha - acknowledging the felt energy indication group attunement and the emergence

of a common group purpose;

Celhcelh - each person being responsible for their own and others learning, always seeking

learning opportunities;

K'at'il'a - seeking spaces of stillness and quietness amidst our busyness and quest for

knowledge;

A7xekcal - valuing our own expertise and considering how it helps the entire community beyond

ourselves;

Cwelelep - recognizing the need to sometimes be in a place of dissonance and uncertainty, so as

to be open to new learning;

Emhaka7 – encouraging each of us to do the best we can at each task given to us;

Kwez'an'tsut – watchful listening, an openness to listen beyond our personal thoughts and assumptions (Sanford, Williams, Hopper & McGregor, 2012, p. 23-24)

[Principles in Lil'wat dialect of: <https://sites.google.com/site/lulwatprinciples/home>]

These principles provide a collaborative values system that I feel form a strong foundation for teaching and learning for all students and educators. These principles taught me that in the planning stages to include all voices, Kamucwkalha. If I had done this, perhaps I would have known that the guide wanted his daughter to accompany him on this journey. I neglected to do this and have learned. Also, I have learned that being uncomfortable may open oneself to learning, Cwelelep. When planning adventures it is important to be open to discomforts, and when discomforts arise, think collaboratively and collectively make decisions. These are all steps towards decolonization. As an educator, I did not realize how controlling and single minded I was, signs of colonization. I now realize the importance to work collaboratively, to be a watchful listener, Kwez'an'tsut, with my students, parents, colleagues, and the community. The Accord recommends, “[t]o encourage all students, teacher candidates, and graduate students to explore and question their own sense of power and privilege (or lack thereof) within Canadian society as compared with others in that society” (p. 8). Decolonizing oneself is no easy task and will this information be able to mend the cracks in the canoe?

Next Steps

The three exemplars above are samples of my data for this autoethnographic project. These examples have been categorized into three possible themes for this proposal. This collection of data has been recorded, copied, and ready for analyzing and interpretation. To summarize this process I will revisit my biases and assumptions, lessen, organize, and code my data, look for patterns and relationships between these patterns, create a map and construct

further themes, create and verify theories, and then draw conclusions (O’Leary, 2014). I am anxious and motivated to explore and unravel these exemplars.

Part 4: An Autoethnography – Report Writing

The final step to the process of an autoethnography is the report writing. Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011), explain, “[w]hen researchers write *autoethnographies*, they seek to produce aesthetic and evocative thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience” (para. 13). The researcher not only tries to create an artistic composition of cultural memories but also, “by producing accessible texts, she or he may be able to reach wider and more diverse mass audiences that traditional research usually disregards, a move that can make personal and social change possible for more people (Bochner, 1997; Ellis, 1995; Goodall, 2006; Hooks, 1994, as cited in Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011, para. 13). O’Leary (2014), explains that in qualitative data “[t]he power of qualitative data is in the actual words and images themselves – so my advice is to use them” (p. 316). It is my hope that which ever way I chose to present my autoethnography, my goal will be to not only I have “stories to live by” but for other educators as well. I would like to conclude this chapter with a quote from O’Leary (2014):

[i]t is the power to share the human condition in ways that simply cannot happen with statistical analysis of quantified experiences. So if you’ve collected it, use it, share it, and be true to the experiences. You may be surprised at how powerful your ‘reporting’ can become. (p. 319)

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