

Transforming perspectives:
The immersion of student teachers in indigenous ways of knowing

by

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B. A. University of California at Santa Cruz, 1982

M. A. Pacific Oaks College, 1987

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Abstract

In the increasingly diverse context of North American schools, cross-cultural understanding is of fundamental importance. Most teachers are mono-cultural – typically white, middle class women. To inform teaching practice, these educators draw primarily from personal cultural backgrounds often to the exclusion or detriment of other cultural ways of knowing brought to the classroom by students. Teacher education programs are challenged to interrupt the norms of their conventional practices in order to help dominant culture teachers become more sensitive and insightful towards issues of cross-cultural pedagogy. In particular, the needs of Canadian Aboriginal students require close attention. Indigenous ways of learning and teaching are rarely included in school curricula. This dissertation argues that not only is an indigenous pedagogy useful for Aboriginal students, it also serves to support learning for all students in a multicultural classroom.

This phenomenological narrative study looked at the experience of non-Aboriginal preservice teachers enrolled in a university course taught by instructors from several First Nations of Canada. The course took place on Lkwungen Coast Salish

territory and provided direct access to indigenous knowledge as the participants worked with earth fibre textiles. The wisdom keepers created a place for the preservice teachers to participate extensively in a cultural approach to learning that was quite different from their previous educational experiences. While engaging in the indigenous handwork, the preservice teachers carefully observed both their own processes as learners and the ways in which the wisdom keepers in the course acted as teachers. The insight gained through this reflexive work troubled the participants' deep-seated Eurocentric perspectives. Reflecting on personal shifts in attitudes, values and beliefs about the twinned processes of learning and teaching, the participants reported changes in their teaching practice with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Significant themes in the data revolve around issues of personal and social intent, reflective and reflexive practice, spirituality, the endogenous processes of the learner, learning in community, and teachers' faith in the learner. The data suggest that implementing an eco/social/spiritual framework is useful in cross-cultural learning and teaching environments as well as in the context of educational research.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the seven generations who have come before
and the seven generations yet to come.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

North American classrooms are increasingly multicultural, yet the majority of teachers in these classrooms are mono-cultural – typically white, middleclass women (Grant and Secada 1990; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter, 2001). My inquiry looks at how indigenous¹ ways of knowing alter previously unexamined assumptions and beliefs held by non-Aboriginal preservice teachers around the concepts of learning and teaching. I posit that engaging in the related activities of *deep listening across cultures* and *personal reflexivity* are key factors influencing teachers' ability to address cross-cultural issues in the classroom. The increased sensitivity and insight gained through these practices help teachers to change their knowledge of other cultures as well as their conceptual understanding of learning and teaching. Teachers then adopt a teaching disposition more supportive and encouraging of all students within the classroom, regardless of their particular cultural worldview.

In today's classrooms, teachers often privilege their own cultural ways of knowing over those with which they are less familiar (Apple, 1995; Gay, 2000). At its worst, this imbalance may lead to a deficit view of students, where the learner's potential is not allowed to thrive. Culturally different ways also can be tolerated as existing but with the (often unexamined) assumption that reproduction of the teacher's culture is the ultimate goal. It is challenging for teachers to carefully understand, support, draw from, and ultimately incorporate other cultural ways of knowing at a fundamental pedagogical level within a multicultural classroom.

¹ I use the term indigenous to refer generally to native people, pedagogies and/or ways of being that are embedded in a place-based, relational understanding of the earth. I also use the term Aboriginal, which in Canada refers to First Nations, Inuit and Métis. All quotes from sources are unaltered and include the original author's language.

This type of work may require teachers to expand what some educators refer to as a reflective stance (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983) to include a more *reflexive* practice. Reflection involves looking carefully at teaching practice and how that practice affects students' learning. Reflexivity is a deeper process that includes attention to ontological and epistemological understandings. In using the term reflexivity, I wish to accentuate a process in which “the subject/researcher sees simultaneously the object of her or his gaze and the means by which the object (which may include oneself as subject) is being constituted” (Davies, et. al, 2004, p. 360). As Dressman (1998) suggests, reflexivity is a process that goes beyond reflecting on the more mechanical aspects of practice to include deep attention to individual positioning within social and, I would argue, even ecological and spiritual contexts. Effective cross-cultural pedagogy appears to require both reflection and reflexivity on the part of the classroom teacher and so issues around both concepts are addressed throughout this paper.

My study looks at the experiences of student teachers who were enrolled in a course entitled, *Earth Fibres, Weaving Stories: Learning and Teaching in an Indigenous World*, (referred to as the “Earth Fibres course”). The course was designed and implemented by Dr. Lorna Williams, Lil’wat scholar and Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Knowledge and Learning, at the University of Victoria, British Columbia. A year before the Earth Fibres course was offered, Dr. Williams was concerned that the education building lacked an indigenous presence. After much effort, she designed and implemented a seminal course to the indigenous series entitled, *Learning and Teaching in an Indigenous World: Thunderbird/Whale Protection and Welcoming Pole* (referred to as the “Pole course”). One of the physical outcomes of the Pole course was a Lkwungen and

Laichwiltach house pole, carved from a 275-year-old cedar tree that now stands in the lobby of the education building. The carvers believe that the pole embodies male energy and is often referred to as the “Old Man” by course participants. One of the purposes of the mural created in the Earth Fibres course was to balance the male energy of the pole with a creation that embodied the feminine.

In addition, Dr. Williams’ intent with the Earth Fibres course was to explicitly leave behind academic discourses, theories, and frameworks typically found within teacher education programs, such as social justice philosophy and constructivist learning theory. Instead, Dr. Williams consciously shaped the course to be a space where indigenous pedagogy stood on its own, drawing from eons of generational knowledge within Aboriginal communities themselves, thus attempting a break from the typical previous educational experiences of the participants. As well, the course held the direct purpose of offering a different approach to teacher education within the context of the academy.

The course was guided by local T’Sou-ke artist and lead instructor, Charlene George and other wisdom keepers² (WKs), who shared their skills with indigenous traditions from their own cultures such as wool knitting, cedar bark weaving, buckskin beadwork and moccasin making, button blanket sewing, and Métis sash weaving (for further description of the course, see sections entitled, Description of the Course, and Appendix 1). Steeped in indigenous ways, the Earth Fibres course gave participants an opportunity to be immersed in a deep, hands-on experience. This presented distinctly different ways of knowing with the intention of interrupting the preservice teachers’

² The term “wisdom keepers” was used by Dr. Williams to refer to the instructors who were bringing the wisdom of their indigenous cultures into the course.

familiar and comfortable perceptions about learning and teaching. The course gave them a space within the existing university environment, providing opportunities to listen across worldviews as well as to think reflexively on their roles as both learners and teachers.

In light of the data gathered in this study, I argue that within the deeply indigenous context of the Earth Fibres course, the intertwined experiences of deep listening across cultures, and the heightened reflexivity on personal positioning as a teacher, invoked in the preservice teachers significant dispositional changes and influenced their conceptual understanding of learning and teaching towards a more indigenous perspective. This had implications in their ensuing final practica in public elementary school classrooms. Their altered conceptual understandings also have the potential to affect pedagogical efforts in the future multicultural classrooms of the preservice teachers.

In order to frame my inquiry around cross-cultural understanding, I employ the work of American Indian scholar Gregory Cajete who articulates the importance of an indigenous worldview within the classroom. Cajete (2009) states that the three most important challenges in modern education are:

1. How are we going to deal with the environmental crisis as it is today?
2. How are we going to live with each other?
3. How do we deal with our own souls?

Referencing environmental educator David Orr, Cajete adds a fourth concern:

4. What is education for?

Cajete's concerns resonate deeply with my focus as a teacher educator. Over the span of their careers, teachers have the privilege of affecting the lives of hundreds of children in

deep and formative ways. The earth and all the living beings that belong to it are in crisis. We fight and pillage each other and the planet, while often ignoring our spiritual essence and our shared interdependence. I believe that education is for exploring and implementing possible solutions to personal, social and environmental problems. These issues require content knowledge, nurturing the lifelong learning of each child, imagination and the ability to work cooperatively together towards how things might be different.

In my role as a teacher educator, I pay particular attention to three significant issues related to Cajete's concerns. They are recurrent themes in the context of today's positivist oriented educational contexts. First is that reductionist pedagogy casts the learner as primarily an intellectual project, at the expense of engaging the *learner as a whole human being*. Second is an overemphasis on the act of teaching (often to the test), as opposed to first and foremost *paying attention to the processes of learning*. Third is the issue of promoting a reductionist pedagogy that objectifies knowledge (and glorifies the accompanying test scores), at the expense of *relevancy and learner autonomy within the context of community*.

Cajete's concerns are complex, yet also very basic. This study serves to address his questions, as well as my own, within teacher education by highlighting an indigenous worldview that is intended to bring awareness of humankind's collective relationships to each other and to the Earth and to nourish the learning spirit of each child (Battiste, 2007). As the Sioux tradition says, *mitakuye oyasin – we are all related*.

Multiple Lifeworlds in the Classroom: Learning to Listen Deeply

At birth, throughout the world, each child enters into a particular setting – a unique combination of family, community, socio-economic status, physical environment and culture. Within the context of this particular *lifeworld* (Schutz & Luckman, 1973) the child grows and develops. Each child begins to form a sense of who they are and what is possible in life from their specific perspective, experiences and relationships. Within a lifeworld, identity is developed and movement through the broader world at large is shaped. Any given lifeworld influences a child's ways of imagining, knowing and learning. This pre-reflective state of being feels familiar to the child and gives each child a discourse – a way of speaking, thinking, acting on and moving through life (Feuerstein, Klein & Tannenbaum, 1991).

When young children enter school, they arrive steeped in their personal sense of understanding and identity. As students, they move from this place of familiarity, out into new discourses, exploring other ways of knowing and being in the world. Their ability to understand and make use of these secondary discourses is the basis of school success (Gee, 2001). For some students, the “jump” between discourses is wider and more treacherous than for others. In North America, the discourses of the dominant culture go hand in hand with the way learning and teaching happen in our schools. Students who come to school with primary familiarity in ways of knowing outside the dominant discourses are often at a disadvantage.

The notion of discourse goes beyond what is spoken in conversation or dialogue to encompass deeper, often pre-reflective, and interrelated attitudes, values, and beliefs about the world. In his book on Aboriginal justice in Canada, Rupert Ross (1996/2006)

discusses the importance of what lies underneath the spoken word. For example, he points out that Indigenous languages typically stay away from concrete labels due to “an understanding that all of life is a process, that every person is seen as a ‘thing-which-is-becoming,’ as opposed to a ‘thing-which-is’” (p. 104). This is a very different perspective, or way of knowing, than what he suggests to be underlying the language of North American dominant culture:

First, I never realized how “harsh” the English language is, or how judgmental and argumentative we become as we speak it. Second, I had no idea that people could – and do – live otherwise, without having to respond to everything around them in such combative and judgmental ways. (p. 105)

Ross’ realization that people can live otherwise is at the heart of this research. For teachers in multicultural classrooms, the task of listening deeply, not just to the spoken words, but to the underlying discourses across these lifeworlds (or cultures) is paramount because it is through this process that teachers get to know the deepest beliefs of their students and can act accordingly in their pedagogical intent.

In her book, *Listening: a framework for teaching across difference*, Schultz (2003) describes the pedagogical usefulness of incorporating a listening stance for teaching in multicultural classrooms. She states, “Rather than teaching prospective and experienced teachers how to follow prescriptions or blueprints” she suggests “that teachers learn how to attend and to respond with deep understanding to the students they teach” (p.2). Schultz lays out a framework that locates listening at the centre of teaching and suggests that teachers must listen to know particular students; listen to the rhythm and balance of specific classrooms; listen to the social, cultural and community contexts of students’ lives; and listen to silence and acts of silencing. It is just such a nuanced and

complex process I suggest as being necessary to address the complex issues of multicultural classrooms.

Aboriginal Students in Canada: Moving Away From a Deficit Approach

As Canadian classrooms become increasingly diverse, Aboriginal youth are one of the fastest growing populations in the country (Statistics Canada, 2005b). At the same time, a startling 44 percent of Aboriginal peoples aged 20-24 have obtained less than a high school education compared to 19 percent of the general population (Cowley & Easton, 2006). In the year 2005, Aboriginal youth aged 15-24 in western Canada had a 62 percent unemployment rate compared to 44 percent for non-Aboriginals (Statistics Canada, 2005a).

It is well documented that Aboriginal students struggle in classrooms throughout Canada. Yet I consciously refrain from citing too many studies, in an effort to choose a framework of inquiry other than a deficit approach to Aboriginal peoples. Years of colonization continue to reinforce a harmful model of Aboriginal existence, where educators erroneously view minority students as less than capable (Delpit, 1995/2006; Williams, 1997). In Canada, Aboriginal students are particularly vulnerable to a deficit framework (Moodley, 2001). Efforts to redefine how success is measured for Aboriginal learners are based in acknowledging key attributes of Aboriginal learning that describe learning as holistic, lifelong, experiential, rooted in language and culture, spiritually oriented, communal, and integrating both Aboriginal and Western knowledge (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; Cappon, 2008).

Teachers who rely on a deficit model of learners, often view education as primarily a technical issue where test scores become exclusive indicators of success

(Bartolomé, 1994; Nieto, 1992). Bartolomé suggests that this is often an unconscious assumption by teachers and that “the solution to the current underachievement of students from subordinated cultures is often reduced to finding the ‘right’ teaching methods, strategies, or prepackaged curricula that will work with students who do not respond to so-called ‘regular’ or ‘normal’ instruction” (p. 173). Her concern is that an overemphasis on methods glosses over the socio-political context of teaching and indicates “teachers must confront and challenge their own social biases so as to honestly begin to perceive their students as capable learners” (p. 179).

Reliance on a deficit theory too often places responsibility for failure on the children and their families instead of attending to the role of schools and teachers in the process (Nieto, 1992). This calls for educators to critically examine their attitudes so that they can begin, as Williams (1997) says, to change them “away from devaluing Aboriginal people and toward valuing their history, languages, cultures, beliefs and worldviews” (p. 55).

Bartolomé suggests a humanizing pedagogy that sees learners as “knowers” who actively participate in their own learning. Another response to the deficit model is for teachers to consciously change their attitudes in the classroom towards increased expectations and remove failure as an option for their students (Corbett, Wilson & Williams, 2005). Bailey and Pranskey (2005) suggest that educators must examine their own cultural beliefs in order to become skilled at listening to “other people’s children” (Delpit, 1995/2006), and thus co-construct learning environments that serve the needs of diverse classrooms.

In addition to the harmful use of a deficit model, there are other issues that impact Aboriginal learners in the classroom that are relevant to my project. There is evidence that children disconnected from their culture have difficulty learning to learn and often benefit from a teacher who is mindful of the role of culture in learning (Feuerstein, Klein, & Tannenbaum, 1991). At first glance, this might be perceived as another form of a deficit model approach. However, it can also be seen in a more hopeful light as expressed by Williams (1997) who points out that the trauma generated through separation from culture has a deep impact on learning, and that by acknowledging this, schools have a responsibility to include authentic indigenous cultural learning experiences for these students. In addition, non-Aboriginal preservice teachers are often so immersed in their own cultural beliefs they are unaware of their beliefs as being culturally based, and some see themselves as somehow being without a culture (Schmidt, 1999). This can hinder them from appreciating and engaging other cultural ways in their classrooms.

Another issue for Aboriginal students that needs attention is that of the gap between the discourse of home and that of school. Settings that focus on the learning needs of the whole child are especially helpful to students whose understandings are based in non-dominant forms of discourse (Gee, 2001). To help these students succeed, teachers must strive to strike a balance between discourses to suit the learning needs within their diverse classrooms (Miller, 1998).

The issues of differing lifeworlds, compounded by a tendency to use a deficit model approach, require careful attention from teacher educators. There are numerous ongoing efforts that attempt to improve the situation including Aboriginal control over education, the addition of indigenous curriculum within public schools, and the

indigenization throughout existing curriculum (Battiste & Barman, 1995; Cajete, 1994; Kanu, 2005). Another effort currently underway is to increase the number of Aboriginal educators in schools. Due to the limited numbers of Aboriginal students enrolled in university, as well as competitive factors that draw Aboriginal students to enter other fields of study, this endeavour will take time. In addition, there are efforts to help dominant culture teachers become more sensitive and insightful towards issues of cross-cultural pedagogy (Gay, 2000; hooks, 1994) based in the possibilities of Ross' notion that people can live otherwise. Shedding light on the practical implementation of these efforts is the focus of my research, specifically in the field of teacher education as educators move away from a deficit approach.

The current culture of schools encourages teachers to unconsciously assume goals of assimilation for their students. What happens when teachers listen more carefully across cultures and are open to ways of knowing that address the whole child? How can teachers begin to understand the multiple lifeworlds of their students? How can indigenous knowledge be useful in facilitating optimum learning environments, activities, and curriculum that empower students to work towards their best possible learning potential? These are some of the practical questions that my study addresses.

How I Came to this Inquiry

Teachers, of course, bring to the classroom their own lifeworld experiences, or stories, that shape their disposition toward learning and teaching, thus affecting how they interact with students in their classrooms. This inquiry is deeply embedded in my own teaching practice and so throughout the writing I refer to personal observations gathered over some twenty-five years of informal self-study as an educator. These narratives from

the field attempt to make sense of my personal practical knowledge gained through my teaching experience (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) and in many ways laid the foundation for my interest in my doctoral work. I tell my stories cautiously, however, because as Britzman (1990/2003) reminds: past school biography is too often privileged over theoretical knowledge, and somehow a balance must be found.

Strong-Wilson (2008) argues that the act of bringing memory forward is an important process for teachers who wish to think reflexively in cross cultural contexts. For me, this dissertation is deeply personal. It is a conscious reflexive act of my own practice, tied to my personal sense of positioning in my professional community, my home community, my place in the larger world context, and my relationships with my preservice teacher students. Ultimately, I am motivated by a deep sadness and concern over the blatant disrespect people show each other and the earth that sustains us.

I believe that in the context of my work, this emotional connection should be acknowledged rather than ignored by scholarly objectivity. Despite the tendency by many academics to separate emotion from academic work, passion is an integral and important part of scholarly work (Neumann, 2006). Therefore, I am intentional and unapologetic for including personal sentiment within the context of this academic writing. The role of emotion in learning has become increasingly clear (Artz, 1994; Brown, 2004) and is particularly important to acknowledge in teacher education (Bullough & Young, 2002; Hayes, 2003). If there is one thing that I have learned from my indigenous teachers, it is that we must bring together the intellectual (objective) knowing of the mind with the emotional (situated) knowing of the heart in order to bring wellness to ourselves, and

increased balance to the world. And so, I present here the story of my professional development.

As a teacher, for my pedagogical direction, I often connect back to the fundamentals of my initial undergraduate training as an early childhood educator in the western United States. Early childhood education is a field where the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of each child is readily acknowledged within a learning context, under the guiding notions of developmentally appropriate practices, experiential learning, and a belief that the child is a complex being with diverse and multi-faceted needs. For me, learning environments are shaped on the Piagetian constructivist notion (Piaget, 1960) that the learner is actively constructing knowledge of the world as they learn. There is a distinctly holistic view of the learner and the autonomy and self-direction of the learner is carefully attended to.

As a preschool teacher it was easy to appreciate that my job, whether at the sand table or during circle time, was to facilitate the next learning steps for each child, as an individual and within a group. Social-emotional growth was emphasized and cognitive expansion was seen as an almost taken-for-granted step in the natural progression of skill development. Creative processes such as art, music and movement were an integral part of the day. My job was to monitor the whole child and to act accordingly. Curriculum was designed around broad topics that were introduced and explored holistically.

As an early childhood educator I was expected to know more about the process of learning rather than to focus too heavily on a set, externally contrived, curriculum. Certainly, in my preschool classrooms, there were children who struggled, but the atmosphere was relaxed. As a teacher, I developed patience, flexibility, and an unspoken

sense of trust in each child's innate ability for growth and learning. The timing of learning was fluid. There was always a schedule of the day, but it was understood that such rules were made to be broken and if an unusual event was happening at the birdfeeder, then snack time would have to wait. Of course, the urgency invoked by exams and accountability was not present for my young charges.

This organic approach to learning is similar to what indigenous educational scholar, Marie Battiste (2007), describes as paying attention to the *learning spirit* of the child. In her work with the Canadian Council of Learning, she reminds us that nourishing the learning spirit is critical in developing lifelong learning habits and is particularly relevant to learners who struggle in school. In my experience, preschool teachers make a concerted effort to maintain learning environments that support learners in this way.

From my preschool focus, I moved on to teach as a reading teacher working with grade five students at a school district in the midwestern United States. It was here that I first became acutely aware of the deficit approach to student learning. My experience in that school was fraught with many socio-economic imbalances and concerns. About half of my students were African American, while the other half were of European descent. The majority of these children (from both cultural groups) were living in poverty.

Listening to my colleagues in the staffroom, I began to pay attention to how we, as mostly white, female, middle class teachers, perceived our students whose learning often did not match our formal predicted outcomes and expectations. What struck me was the degree to which we clung to our assumptions about how we should teach, despite the fact that so often we were unsuccessful. Too often, we saw the problem involving the students' inability to perform within the system, rather than our inability as teachers to

respond to the learning needs of students. I began to pay close attention to the underlying ontological and epistemological beliefs that shaped teachers' interactions with their students.

In my capacity as a reading teacher with these students who had a very different lifeworld from my own, I found myself struggling to understand what might be true for my students. Because of my feelings of uncertainty, I enrolled in a professional development directed study with a small group of primary teachers from my school. The goal was to better understand our students by exploring the culture of poverty through the work of Ruby Payne (2001). I acknowledge that this work is controversial in terms of possibly promoting a deficit view of learners (Gorskey, 2006), yet for me it was a tool that helped me begin my journey towards listening more deeply across cultures. I remember being struck by a deep realization that the children and families I worked with every day might actually see the world differently than I did: that they might live otherwise in a very basic ontological and epistemological sense. This became a *touchstone* experience for me in my role of teacher educator. It was an important formative event that I refer back to repeatedly so that I can orient myself to what I believe is true about learning and teaching across cultures.

The depth of my shift in awareness from the course on poverty needs to be emphasized. As an experienced teacher in a multi-cultural classroom, I had an existing intellectual understanding of poverty. For example, I knew that my students didn't always have enough to eat and many arrived at school early for the free breakfast provided. I knew that this hunger might affect their ability to concentrate and to learn to read. I also knew that this kind of hunger could lead, at times, to desperation and violence. What I

didn't know was the *emotional* lived experience of that hunger. Of how it feels to be forced to choose between personal needs and the needs of family members, or to be compelled to engage in behaviours such as purchasing meat that had passed its expiration date, or shopping at a thrift store out of necessity rather than desire. I didn't know how it felt to gather up the courage needed to walk into a school cafeteria to accept a free breakfast, knowing that it would invoke labels of "at-risk" or "needy" in the eyes of some teachers. For me, the course was the beginning of a deeper dialogue on poverty that led to a more graphic and felt experience of what it means to be economically poor. Through the stories told by Payne about the lived experiences of people in poverty, I was learning to listen more deeply to another culture, beyond the assumptions born of my own limited lifeworld.

Attending the course on poverty gave me pause as a teacher. I took time to stop my incessant process of intellectual knowing to find that I didn't know. In that unknowing, I came to be aware of the deeper possible experiences of poverty. It felt like I was developing understanding from a different, more embodied location – perhaps within my heart instead of my head. I began to grasp that my students had a fundamentally different ontological experience from my own. What followed for me as a teacher was a growing appreciation of other cultural ways of knowing and being in the world.

After deepening my understanding of poverty in this way, my teaching intent took a subtle shift. My increased attention to the lived experiences of being poor changed my beliefs about what was pedagogically sound for my students. It caused me to value different ways of knowing and changed my attitudes towards how my students might learn. These dispositional changes in myself created changes in my teaching practice that

were helpful to my students. Rather than continuing with a heavy focus on changing students to see the world in the ways I knew to be useful, I began to try and grasp how *they* knew the world. This was a constant challenge, often requiring me to deeply reflect on my practice and to reflexively position myself within it. I found the process to be quite useful in supporting my efforts towards strengthening reading practices as well as building a more positive community environment in the classroom.

My career journey took me to the Pacific Northwest in 2003, where I became involved in Canadian teacher education. While supervising student teachers, and later as an instructor, I began to think more carefully about how pre-service teachers conceptualize learning and teaching based on their personal and cultural worldviews. Concurrently, I was a research assistant working with high school youth from local First Nations who were focusing on issues of health and wellness (Riecken, Tanaka, & Scott, 2006). These experiences in Canada with Aboriginal learners were reminiscent of the struggles I had working with cultural differences as a reading teacher in the United States. My previous concerns about cross-cultural understandings in learning environments re-emerged in these local contexts where again mostly female, white, middle class teachers struggled to come to terms with useful ways of interacting with, in this case, students of Aboriginal descent.

As a graduate student I enrolled in the pole course, which gave me the opportunity to observe myself as well as the undergraduate students whom I worked with in a small group that focused on writing about the carving experience in the course. The writing process of the group highlighted how, in our experience, the course encouraged an increased understanding of other ways of learning and teaching, and how the

experience challenged our deep-seated pedagogical perspectives as teachers. As a group, and in conjunction with Dr. Williams, we have written about that topic elsewhere (Tanaka, Williams, Benoit, Duggan, Moir & Scarrow, 2007; Williams & Tanaka, 2007).



Figure 1: The Pole in Early Stages of Carving

I noticed that participation in the Pole course appeared to alter student teachers' pedagogical dispositions in significant ways. For some participants, this shift seemed to happen through a disruptive event that dramatically altered their foundational beliefs. For example, at the beginning of the course the students introduced themselves to the pole, causing disruptions in perceived ways of interacting with nature. Others expressed the process of shifting perspectives more as a gap being filled – a rounding out of understanding of what learning and teaching can be. I wanted then to take a closer look at how future offerings of this course might affect teachers' dispositional stance and pedagogical practices. And so my study was designed to take a phenomenological look at the experience of student teachers enrolled in the Earth Fibres course, following the year I was enrolled in the Pole course as a graduate student. I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to Dr. Williams and to the other wisdom keepers in the course for welcoming me into the Earth Fibres course to do this research.

Description of the Course

In the fall of 2005, Dr. Williams offered the first in a series of teacher education courses taught in partnership with elders from local First Nations. Now moving into its

fourth year, the course provides direct access to indigenous knowledge and holistically addresses issues of cross-cultural awareness and pedagogy. My dissertation research project focuses on the second iteration of the course offered during the Fall term of 2006 entitled, *Earth Fibres Weaving Stories: Learning and Teaching in an Indigenous World*.

The course description states:

In this course students will be engaged in an experiential educational practice. They will learn firsthand how teaching and learning occur in an Indigenous world. Undergraduate and graduate students will work alongside artists-in-residence and wisdom keeper/mentors to witness, experience, learn, and work with a variety of traditional Indigenous fabric and textile arts. The learning community will engage in hearing the traditional stories and songs associated with each of the textile pieces. The course will integrate hands-on practical activities with theoretical and academic goals. Students will experience the principles of traditional Indigenous ways of teaching and learning such as: mentorship and apprenticeship learning; learning by doing; learning by deeply observing; learning through listening and telling stories and singing songs; and learning as a member of a team; learning by sharing and providing service to the community. (Williams, 2006)

Course participants worked in a collaborative team environment of five smaller groups.

Each group worked with a local Aboriginal Wisdom Keeper on one of the following natural textile materials: cedar bark (Caroline and Fran Memnook, Hesqiaht Saddle Lake/Cree), wool (May Sam, Tsartlip), buckskin (Gay Williams, Lil'wat), button blankets (Gina Robertson, Laichwiltach/Kwakwilt), and sash weaving (Lynne Henry, Métis). There was a sixth short term group that worked on buckskin printing (Janet Rogers, Mohawk/Tuscarora).

Each group was responsible for creating a piece that was placed on a large mural, entitled, *Xaxe Siam Seetla* (see Figures 1 & 2). The piece was designed by Charlene George to create “theé lellum~honoured home for the other nations to come join us.”



Figure 2: Xaxe Siam Seetla, Side One



Figure 3: Xaxe Siam Seetla, Side Two

Charlene tells the story of the mural:

This mural was made to honor our sisters, to bring forward and recognize women's gifts that are often behind the scenes. The canvas that is the basis of the piece, honours Wakus~Frog who represents the time of change. The honoured Grandmothers welcome us as our mothers would, lifting up their hands to say Huy'ch'ca~thank you for all the gifts that we share. Flowing from the first Grandmother's hair is the home to keep us rooted in where we came from. The wolf is nearby to remind us of transformation. The 13 moons tell the story of the year and bring awareness of life cycles. The pieces on the first side were

beginner's pieces, humbly made by students in the course. On the other side, pieces have been gathered from across Turtle Island, including South America and the island of Borneo. The pieces look simple, but have been put together with incredible skill transferred through the generations. As we continue traditions and teaching from the past to nurture and enhance what we have today, we honour the next generation to bring that torch forward from the grandmothers. The process gives a concrete translation tool for new teachers so that they carry Indigenous women's wisdom into their teaching. The piece hangs from a spindle whorl to represent new turning, new twists that we are stepping into. Overall, the mural provides balance with the energy of the Old Man, the house welcoming pole who also resides in the education building. At the end is the canoe, to help us continue our journey with good hands full of intentions from our souls. With one heart, one mind, we move forward.

Along with the creation of their textile pieces, the entire group was responsible for planning, organizing and hosting the unveiling ceremony in accordance with the protocols of the local First Nations and the University of Victoria. All participants were required to keep a journal to record their learning about indigenous ways. Students were required to write a reflective paper at the end of the class that described how they would apply what they had learned in their future work or discipline. The course was un-graded and credit was given as either complete or incomplete. The finished piece now hangs in the education building at the university.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to shed light on the process of dispositional change within non-Aboriginal preservice teachers who were enrolled in the Earth Fibres course. Through a phenomenological lens, the study gives a conscious glimpse into what it looked like for student teachers to be immersed in a way of knowing that was atypical of their previous educational experiences. The research builds in a formalized and methodical way on the informal self-study of my own teaching practice, as well as on the informal observed experiences of the writing group in the Pole course.

While it is possible to categorize the Earth Fibres course as an intervention, it is important not to mistake the course for a model of pedagogy in any formal sense. As Oberg (1989) writes, “phenomenological research attempts to re-create for the reader key aspects of the experience they are studying and to expand and enrich their own and the readers’ understanding of it” (p. 3). This study then becomes one piece in a complicated and amorphous puzzle that could have different implications for each teacher, teacher educator, and teacher education program. The findings of this study will serve to inform teacher educators across Canada and the United States as they struggle to help preservice teachers create welcoming environments in their multicultural classrooms, particularly for Aboriginal students. The results of this study will be disseminated in ways that allow educators to intelligently and intuitively inform their practice through journal articles, conference presentations and other writing. There will also be a summary of the project given to all of the wisdom keepers in the course. My hope is that it will be a small step in understanding how dominant-culture teachers can listen more deeply across cultures as they concurrently explore their own cultural positioning, leading to useful conversations about epistemological issues in multicultural classrooms.

Statement of Research Questions

The following are the original questions that guided my inquiry:

1. What range of experiences did the pre-service teachers describe within the [Earth Fibres] course? Of those experiences, are there any that were transformative or life changing? If so, how were they described?

2. What self-reported changes in attitudes, values, and beliefs of teaching and learning occurred, if any?
3. The textiles that the course focused on were expressions of protocol, beliefs, history and other ways of knowing. How did learning through involvement in the experiential process of creating textiles affect the student teachers' experiences?
4. How did the pre-service teachers actualize their learning beyond the context of the course?
5. As these pre-service teachers went through a re-framing of their own learning what decisions were they making in the context of their practicum?

Underlying Assumptions About this Work

Before leaving the introduction, it is important for me to clarify some of the underlying assumptions of this work. First, I am aware of how easy it is to slip into a comparison mode that sets up a dichotomous view of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways of learning and teaching. Not only is this unproductive, it also goes against the important indigenous teaching of “non-judgment” (Ross, 1996/2006). My Western-influenced mind is comfortable making lists, drawing correlations and pinpointing differences. However, this type of approach will not serve the purpose of my study well. Instead as a write, I try to be conscious of my intent to describe the significant characteristics of the pre-service teachers' experiences as they were described to me in

the interviews, along with attempting to articulate my own experience in the Earth Fibres course as a participant observer.

Second, I do not intend to claim Aboriginal knowledge as my own (Battiste & Henderson, 2000). As a non-Aboriginal person, I am constantly in the position of learner as I participate in, become familiar with, write about, and contribute to indigenous knowledge experiences. I want to acknowledge those people who have walked with me and generously given me teachings in my journey towards understanding and engaging in a more indigenous way of being. Besides the wisdom keepers, Charlene, May, Gina, Lynne, Caroline, Fran, Gay and Janet, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Lorna Williams, Li'wat; Butch Dick, Lkwungen; Fabian Quocksister, Laichwiltach; Frank Conibear, Songhees; John Elliot, Tsartlip; Bluehawk, Cree (Sioux elder); Glenn Patterson, Mohawk; Dr. James Hemry, Celtic; and Dr. Larry Emerson, Diné. In addition, there were many guests and family members of the wisdom keepers who participated in the course.³ Without their willingness to share their ancestral stories and teachings with me, I would not be able to do this research. In keeping with local Coast Salish traditions, I lift up my hands and say "Huy'ch'ca," with deep gratitude I honour your spirit and the kindness of your ancestors.

Third, I would like to acknowledge that indigenous ways of learning and teaching are based in an oral tradition tied to the knowledge of the ancestors who have come before us. I cannot always cite a specific source for this knowledge in the accepted academic way. I have been told stories and later, these stories return to my consciousness,

³ Including Della (Rice) Sylvester, Trina (Joe) Rice and Richard Rice (Cowichan), Josie and Susie Sam (Tsartlip), Kyra, Aaron and Samira Memnook (Hesquit Saddle Lake/Cree), Julie Robertson (Laichwiltach/Kwakwuitl), Rob Nye (Cowichan), Ruth Lyall (Kwakwaka'wakw), and Virginia Thomas (Tsawout).

shedding light or making sense of something I have been pondering. I acknowledge that this more circular approach to learning is different from what Western thinking academics (myself included) are used to experiencing. I am beginning to understand and respect how knowledge can be transferred in deep and meaningful ways through oral storytelling (Archibald, 2008; Couture, 2000).

My fourth point is that I envision this dissertation as part of a larger conversation, not only with my committee, but also with my participants, my colleagues and the teacher education community at large. I frame this work overall as a type of “curriculum as conversation” (Applebee, 1996) based in a critical/theoretical dialogue (Pinar, 2004) that reflects a relational, integrative and global ecological awareness (Tanaka, 2006a).

Finally, I would like to share that some of the teachings I have received suggest that in essential ways, all people are indigenous (for example, see Aluli-Meyer, 2006). Dr. Emerson once told me that the English language can't see what needs to be seen. I am at a loss for words to describe what I have glimpsed in my heart. Dr. Williams gave me the image of being indigenous as an awareness of the umbilical cord that ties us to a certain place on the planet. It is about reciprocity and respect, a symbiotic relationship that both Aboriginal and Western people struggle to maintain. Chief Seattle said, “All things share the same breath - the beast, the tree, the man [sic]... the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports.” The Earth Fibres course gave me, and my participants a chance to glimpse with our hearts, what our relationship to each other might be.

All my relations.

Chapter 2 – Review of the Literature

The accounts of people's changing relationships to one another, to language and to power, may lead to new events in our own understanding. There is no final solution; there is no packageable remedy. There is only more and more critical reading of the texts of action, the texts of practice, the texts of learning to learn (Greene, in Britzman, 1990/2003 p. ix-x).

Before beginning the literature review, I will speak briefly about the methodological underpinnings of this work. As will be explained in more detail in the following chapter, this study is based in a combined phenomenological, narrative approach. It is important to acknowledge that in regard to literature reviews, there is an identified tension between narrative researchers and qualitative researchers who are more formalistic (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The latter expect a project to begin by tying it into the literature, typically after identifying a “gap” in the literature and proceeding from there (Boote & Beile, 2005). The motivation for my research extends from a type of gap as well. However, it comes not from the literature, but rather, from the process of my own inquiry rooted directly in the context of practice. It is a gap in my own professional knowing.

Boote and Beile (2005) suggest that for doctoral students, the literature review is central to research preparation, stating that it is “our foundation and inspiration” (p. 6). As useful as I believe the literature review to be, I respectfully disagree. Certainly, a thorough understanding of the field is invaluable, and I anticipate that my research can make an interesting contribution to the literature. At the same time, my “function and inspiration” is embedded in what I have come to know through my practice as a teacher, and my intent is to inform the practicing community of teacher educators. First and foremost, it is my aim to become both a better teacher, as well as to improve the work of

teacher education programs in meeting the needs of children and teachers in multicultural classrooms across North America. Therefore, I begin my inquiry with the everyday reality of practice and from there, move through the larger field of research available on the topic. For me, it is this recursive process, embedded in practice, that is exactly what is useful.

Boote and Beile (2005) hint at this recursive act when they say that doctoral candidates should “continually revisit their understanding of the literature throughout the dissertation experience” (p. 11). From this viewpoint, I use the literature not to predict, but to inform my interpretations (Oberg, 1989) and I intentionally include personal observations from practice within the body of the literature review. For me, it is a process of finding a storyline through the literature by having a type of conversation with it as I write. This narrative approach fits well with the intent of my inquiry. Greene (in Britzman, 1990/2003) reminds us in the opening quote, that by reading the work of others, our “horizons of understanding” can be transformed through a continuous recursive process. Similar to Clandinin and Connelly (2000) my intent is to create a text that might “offer readers a place to imagine their own uses and applications” (p. 42). As well, along with Freire (1996), I gravitate towards “knowledge that is forged and produced in the tension between practice and theory” (p. 85). And so, in the context of my personal text of action and in the spirit of usefulness in practice, I proceed.

It should be noted that my literature review looks at research in both teacher education as well as the field of education more broadly. The two are intricately intertwined in both practice and theory and much of the reviewed literature has to do with both. When necessary I will distinguish between them. In addition, I have reviewed

literature in both the Canadian and American context, although research on teacher education in Canada is sparse (Falkenberg 2008). While there are differences in the educational issues and challenges surrounding diverse classrooms across this border, there are also many similarities. The scope of this paper deals primarily with broad educational issues, and therefore distinctions will be made only when necessary.

Traditions in Teacher Education

While there are numerous interpretive frameworks from which to view the world (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), descriptions of modern educational traditions can be placed into three main paradigms (Wideen, Mayer-Smith and Moon, 1998). The first tradition, *positivism*, is the dominant paradigm across education in North America. The second and third, *progressivism* and *social critique*, are established paradigms that in many ways try to respond to the hegemonic presence of positivism. The chapter begins with a review of these three paradigms within the context of teacher education.

Building on this analysis I then explore *indigenous ways of knowing* as a fourth paradigm for educational contexts. This paradigm highlights an *eco/social/spiritual* perspective that extends beyond the learner, beyond culture, and even beyond society and community to include the physical environment and the spiritual realm. It earnestly addresses Cajete's seminal questions: How will we care for the earth? How will we live with each other? And how do we care for our own souls?

| <i>Paradigm</i> | <i>Philosophical Stance</i> | <i>Knowledge as:</i> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Positivist | Modernism | Object |
| Progressive | Post-modernism | Personally constructed |
| Social critique | Post-colonial | Socially constructed |
| Indigenous | Eco/social/spiritual | Relational |

Table 1: Traditions in teacher education

Alongside of Aboriginal experience, non-Aboriginal theorists have been developing an eco/social/spiritual paradigm that attempts to deepen and extend progressive and social critique paradigms, as will be described. In this light, the chapter continues by examining the purpose of education and teacher's roles. It concludes by drawing attention to research in the field of adult transformative learning in an effort to identify practices that appear to influence teacher capacity – the beliefs, values and attitudes teachers hold around issues about learning and teaching – congruent to eco/social/spiritual ways.

The Positivist Tradition

I think, therefore I am.
– Descartes

Hutchins (1936/1952), a contemporary of early educational theorist John Dewey, articulated one of the fundamental beliefs in the positivist tradition when he stated that “truth is everywhere the same.” From this viewpoint, education revolves around what social justice activist and educational scholar Paulo Freire (1970/2005) described as the “banking” model of education. In this approach, it is assumed that people learn primarily by an additive process of transferring curriculum content that is somehow detached from individual, social, political and situational contexts. Teacher control and management are central, and the flow of learning typically moves in one direction from the teacher to the learner. Accumulation of factual knowledge and fundamental skills is emphasized. The epistemological and ontological underpinnings of this tradition are atomistic and isolating, and the universe is separated into parts, examined and understood by removing experience from its larger natural context.

From the positivist worldview, “curricular content is best reduced into small, separate units of instruction that can be transmitted to students in an organized, efficient and piecemeal fashion” (Hutchison and Bosacki, 2000, p. 178). The tendency to separate learning into separate academic disciplines follows this line of thought. Grumet (2006) warns us however, that the disciplines cannot “capture the world and represent it to us” (p. 48). Instead, the disciplines offer symbolic re-presentations of the world. “They are an index pointing to its content (what we sometimes call objectivity) projected from human intentionality (what we sometimes call subjectivity)” (p. 48). The heavy focus on objectivity in the positivist tradition often leads us, as Grumet says, to “settle for someone else’s version of the world” (p. 50). Within teacher education, this raises questions of intent, as well as questions around whose view of learning is privileged in teacher education classes and to what end.

Within the positivist framework, effective teachers are seen as those who excel in content knowledge. This preference is sometimes pitted against a need for teachers to have pedagogic knowledge, such as knowledge of classroom management, learning styles, discipline, etc. (Kennedy, Ahn & Choi, 2008). A response to this tension is found in an approach that focuses on *pedagogical content knowledge* recognizing that the domains of subject matter and pedagogy are interrelated and must be addressed simultaneously (Howard and Aleman, 2008). It is clear that beginning teachers are faced with perplexing and multifaceted challenges (Berliner, 1992; Loughran, 2008) that require a complex and nuanced approach.

The positivist worldview leads to an approach to teaching that is highly transmissive in nature, which can be useful for some areas of learning, particularly those

that focus heavily on content specific knowledge. However, highly transmissive teaching is seen as problematic when used as an overarching philosophy for developing and implementing curriculum that is focused on process or relational learning that responds to the more holistic needs of the learner (Miller, 1998; Grauerholz, 2001).

Another significant issue with classroom teaching within the positivist paradigm has to do with meeting the pressures of increasingly high stakes testing and assessment (Valli & Buese, 2007). Transmissive teaching approaches that emphasize subject matter knowledge lend themselves to evaluation and assessment that provide teachers only a partial understanding of what a given student might know (Esteve, 2000). In addition, the recent expanding emphasis on testing encourages a dependency on the transmissive approach along with the misguided and potentially harmful approach of “teaching to the test” (Shepard, 1990).

Critics of the positivistic approach within teacher education are many (Apple, 1995; hooks, 1994; Kanu, 2003; Liston & Zeichner, 1991; Shor 1986) yet it is still the dominant tradition in teacher education despite calls for reform (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Futrell, 2008) as well as suggestions to that end (Wideen & Grimmert, 1995; Britzman, Dippo, Searle & Pitt, 1998). It is important to note the tenacity of this tradition within the overall educational context.

To summarize, the positivist approach is based in notions of an objective external truth where knowledge is seen more as an object than a process and hence, learning and teaching are bifurcated from each other. Cartesian beliefs that thought manifests beingness, place emphasis on thought as perception, rather than a more holistic view of the learner where other ways of knowing can be experienced. This description of the

positivist paradigm sets the background for understanding of three prominent issues I identified in the introduction as centrally important to my work as an educator within a school system dominated by positivist approaches. To reiterate, they are: engaging the learner as a whole human being; paying attention to the process of learning before the content or act of teaching; and promoting relevancy and autonomy within community.

The Progressive Tradition

The progressive tradition is embedded in the constructivist notion that knowledge and meaning are derived from experience (Piaget, 1969). Moving away from a view of the learner as a relatively inert vessel to be filled, individuals are seen instead as being able to engage personal prior knowledge and beliefs towards actively constructing meaning. This constructivist view has significant implications for teaching students of diverse cultures by acknowledging that each individual brings their own understanding, experience, and positioning to the learning environment (Villegas, 2008). Here, the learner's worldview stems from the learner's lifeworld. In this way, educators in the progressive tradition place diversity in a positive light and begin to step away from a deficit view of culturally diverse learners.

Teacher education research from a progressive viewpoint revolves around the belief that much can be learned from the practical knowledge and personal intentions of teachers themselves (Carter, 1990). Teachers' narratives of practice, become rich "field texts" for gaining understanding of what goes on in the classroom (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; van Manen, 1990) and teachers base their instruction on the direct knowledge they have gained from their students (Zeichner as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2001). Many studies on learning to teach fit within the

progressive paradigm and are in tension with positivist notions, as often isolated teacher educators try to take control over, and change the direction of, traditional teacher education programs (Wideen, Mayer-Smith and Moon, 1998).

Typically, teacher education programs focus on how to teach other people to teach, but Britzman, Dipbo, Searle and Pitt (1998) suggest it might be more appropriate to change the central academic question in teacher education to ask, “How do people learn?” (p. 15). Esteve (2000) writes that the “ultimate aim of teachers’ work is to be a teacher of humanity” and suggests that teachers switch from an emphasis on answers, to “recapture” the questions themselves. Esteve describes this as an uncomfortable process where teachers must move away from reliance on set answers, foster curiosity, and “turn our pupils’ attention towards the world around us and return to the original questions, forcing them to think” (p. 15). The issue of focusing on learning spills over into teacher education and influences both the content and format of professional programs. When it is not given the attention it needs, it can have negative effects on “teachers’ relationships with students, pedagogy, and sense of professional well-being” (Valli & Buese, 2007).

A key component in the progressive tradition is that of the reflective process. Since Dewey (1933) identified reflection as being essential to problem solving skills, many educators have acknowledged the importance of the role of thoughtfulness in teacher practice. Schön (1983) introduced the idea of “knowledge-in-action,” recognizing the tacit intuitive knowledge of the teacher practitioner. Schön (1987) hints at the messiness of the process, stating:

The practitioner must choose. Shall he [*sic*] remain on the high ground where he can solve relatively unimportant problems according to prevailing standards of rigor, or shall he descend to the swamp of important problems and nonrigorous inquiry? (p. 3).

Zeichner (1987) acknowledges this complexity and suggests that teachers need to reflect on a technical level, consider the contexts in which they teach (institutional, social, cultural, etc.), and lastly, reflect on moral and ethical issues. Pinar and Grumet (1976) suggest teachers use the autobiographical process of *carrere* as a deep reflective tool that can “counter the avoidance of lived experience in educational practice” (Grumet, 2006). And van Manen (1991) suggests pedagogical thoughtfulness through the notion of the “tact of teaching,” saying that “tact is the practice of being oriented to others” (p. 142.) or the “capacity for mindful action” (p. 122).

There is debate over the nature of reflection, as well as its effectiveness, and therefore clarity of both conceptualizations and intent in reflection are important (Grimmett, Ericson, Mackinnon & Riecken, 1990; Hyatt & Beigy, 1999). Richardson (1990) warns against “technologizing” the reflective process in a way that “operationalizes an abstract value... into a behavior that is generalizable, observable and teachable” (p. 14) as well as using overly positivist research paradigms to study reflection. Houston and Clift (1990) suggest that researchers must move from “rhetoric to active inquiry” to advance our understanding of reflection (p. 208). They state that current definitions are “strongly influenced by the Western cultural heritage” (p. 211) and suggest that inquiry on teacher reflection will be enhanced by cross-cultural studies. They also remind us that teaching can be an isolated profession within some North American schools, suggesting that reflective activity within community might be useful.

To summarize, the progressive tradition offers rich possibilities of knowing based in personal constructions of experience for both the teacher and the learner. Knowledge gained in practice can be a useful source of understanding for teachers. This practical

knowledge can be explored and informed by a reflective practice that can be done through a variety of practices. Progressive practitioners acknowledge the learner as a holistic being embedded in a social context and suggest that teachers' focus should be on learning rather than teaching. As will be brought out in later sections, this emphasis parallels an eco/social/spiritual perspective found in an indigenous pedagogy.

The Social Critique Tradition

The social critique tradition looks through a critical thinking lens at the social and political structures that are present in education, particularly around issues of power and privilege. Critical educational theorists point out the extent to which social structures and social practices are carried out in schools, emphasizing that schools are key contributors to ideological hegemony (Apple 1995; Giroux 1992) and that studies on educational practice often ignore the collective character of the institution in which they take place (Zeichner & Gore 1990). Within the field of teacher education, there is an established appreciation of the need for teachers to act as advocates of social justice (Freire, 1970/2005; Grant & Agosta, 2008; Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004; Hollins and Guzman, 2005; hooks, 1994). Teacher education has long been seen as a vehicle for democracy (Robertson, 2008) with the goal of preparing teachers for working with diverse populations (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). According to Giroux (1992), the role of teachers becomes that of transformative intellectuals working towards radical education that consciously changes education to be more socially just.

Social critique advocates believe that teacher education programs must be actively engaged in addressing the persistent inequality within schools. In addition, advocates such as Futrell (2008) call for a new paradigm within teacher education:

A key question is whether we are preparing educators, especially teachers, for the knowledge-based, global society in which we now live, or whether we are still preparing them for the industrial era that is long past? The model of schools as cubicles – in which teachers teach their classes in isolation using the didactic method, or where subjects are taught as though they, too, are isolated disciplines – is no longer the most practical nor effective way to teach and learn. (p. 536)

Cochran-Smith (2005) suggests that teacher education needs to be interrupted by drawing from research on teacher learning in communities that include multicultural perspectives.

Echoing Esteve's call for curiosity in the previous section, Leonardo (2004) states that the intent of social critique theorists is to "ask questions about common answers rather than to answer questions" around issues of power and privilege (p. 13, referencing Shor, 1993). This notion is based in Freire's pedagogy of the question which gives learners a language with which to challenge social-cultural constructs and moves away from a "pedagogy of the answer which, in [Freire's] view, lacks any profundity of thought and cannot stimulate and challenge learners to question, to doubt and to reject" (Bruss & Macedo, 1985, p. 8). In addition, social critique theorists promote sustained dialogue with community members on issues of social justice that lead to action (Gomez, 1994; Goodlad, 2008).

The term "social justice" is often used within the social critique paradigm and is difficult to define (Grant & Agosta, 2008). It is a contested and normative term that is used differently by different people (Goodlad, 2008). Bell (1997) defines social justice as both a collaborative process and a goal that includes a vision of society where "members are physically and psychologically safe and secure" (p. 3). Multicultural education is one avenue for social justice education and has been described by Sleeter (cited in Chávez & O'Donnell, 1998) as "a process of constructing engagement across boundaries of difference and power, for the purpose of constructing a social world that supports and

confirms all of us” (p. xii). Grant and Sleeter (in Grant & Tate, 2001) identify four themes common to multicultural education in the United States, including approaches that focus on assimilation, structural equity, cultural pluralism and cultural reconstructivism that engages K-12 students in the process of analyzing inequalities and oppression (p. 147). Moodley (2001) reports that multiculturalism in Canada “values the cultural mosaic, unlike the assimilationists of the United States” (p. 802) and that the two main approaches in this country are the “socio-pathological perspective” (the deficit view) and the “relativist model” that “stresses that all cultures warrant equal respect and values” (p. 807).

Social critique theorists argue that multicultural issues cannot be decontextualized from teacher education (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). And Zeichner (2006) points out that while many teacher education programs use the term social justice education, most of this work “seems to focus on the actions of individual teacher educators in their college and university classrooms and has not included the kind of proposals for structural changes in teaching as an occupation and teacher education” (p. 328). Grant and Agosto (2008) write that social justice is a “well-intended idea” in teacher education that is rarely well defined or “included in policy statements, practices, or the expectations for teacher candidates” (p. 194).

Nonetheless, teachers and teacher educators are offered an increasing array of approaches geared at addressing the multicultural classroom (Adams, Bell, Griffin 1997; Goodman, 2001; Hollins, King & Hayman, 1994; Irvine, 2003). One carefully thought out response to issues of social justice is *culturally responsive teaching* (Gay, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Proponents of this position maintain that familiarity with

subject matter is not adequate when teaching cross-culturally. They argue that knowing *how* to transfer that knowledge is of key importance for optimum learning. Gay describes the idea of culturally responsive teaching which “is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly” (p. 106). The approach “validates and affirms” the culture arising from the lifeworld of each student (p. 29). Situating learning in this way highlights the need for deep pedagogical content knowledge so that the teacher can help individual learners find their way through the subject along with a complex understanding of both culture and learning processes (Howard & Aleman, 2008).

As promising as Gay’s approach is, knowledge about culture and culturally responsive teaching may not be enough. In specific regard to Aboriginal students, Kanu (2006) suggests that to provide meaningful and long-term interventions, teachers need to learn “a holistic and comprehensive approach that also takes into account larger, social, economic and political variables affecting schools” (p. 1). In other words, teachers need ways in which to deal with issues of power and inequity as brought out in the social critique tradition. Ogbu (2001) suggests that within teacher education, multicultural approaches must include “a good understanding of the nature of the cultural diversity or cultural differences of minority groups” to have an impact on learning problems in schools (p. 582).

Because teacher education programs do not systematically consider and incorporate a focus on social justice issues, courses that give student teachers deep

critical and reflective skills are often viewed in a way that disconnects them from curriculum rather than embedding them throughout the program. To refer back to the work of Grumet (2006), this leaves few opportunities for teachers to critique and understand exactly which worldview they are being encouraged to go out to teach. As both a teacher and as a teacher educator, I have watched administrators and educators fight to keep a social justice focus within the realm of professional development curriculum.

Similar to progressive theorists, social critique theorists see the positivist tradition as being over reliant on test scores and content knowledge as primary indicators of success (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Social critique theorists suggest that relational thinking should be a key ingredient in preservice education, particularly in cross-cultural settings (Hollingsworth, Dybdahl & Minarik, 1993). Shor (1986) writes “sending future teachers to liberal arts courses where they are lectured at and made passive recipients of information socializes them into an inadequate model of learning and teaching” (p. 418).

Notions of reflection within the social critique paradigm highlight the “why” of teaching beyond the “what and how” in ways similar to those expressed in the progressive paradigm, giving specific attention to the socio-cultural context of education. Teachers then ask, why am I doing this? What vision of society do I have in mind? Brookfield (1995) writes that critical reflection holds the dual purpose of understanding power issues, while questioning the assumptions that underlie education. As well, Preece (2004) points out that critical thinking is significant and integral to the learning process in that it develops a sense of agency in the learner where “their actions matter and can make a difference” (p. 4). Further, a sense of agency is critical in encouraging educational

reform (Freire, 1970/2005; Shor, 1986) and critical reflection becomes a means towards that end (Leonardo, 2004).

Apple (2008) states that for teachers to reposition themselves to adopt a social justice stance there must be a deepened use of reflective and critical thinking skills.

Teachers may understand critical inquiry *as a process*, but they may not have the knowledge and critical social understanding that might enable them to reposition themselves to see the world through the eyes of those with least in this society. In my mind, it is this act of *repositioning* that is crucial for a more thorough understanding of social justice and of the role of education and teacher education in the struggles over it. (p. 106, emphasis in the original)

The depth of experience that Apple suggests is important to note here. He warns that promoting critical dispositions in teachers must be done carefully and in ways that don't romanticize the public sphere. For teachers to teach in meaningful ways in the midst of cultural difference, deep change is required but difficult, and linked to a deeper type of reflection (Sharp, 2003; Leonardo, 2004). Hoffman-Kipp, Artiles and López-Torres (2003) suggest that reflection needs to be critical as well as consciously situated in each teacher's own process of learning to "include both technical and political content and be based on a dialogic approach" (p. 248).

One issue around the effectiveness of reflection is that it can be a contentious practice amongst preservice teachers. As an instructor, I have experienced firsthand the reluctance of students who prefer not to reflect, especially when deeper processes of reflexivity on their own power and privilege are involved. Gore and Zeichner (1991) identify reasons for a lack of reflection amongst preservice teachers to include biographical, situational and cultural issues that are complex and interconnected. In her study on beginning teachers, Labosky (1994) identifies her participants as being either "commonsense thinkers," who often ask how, when and to what standard, or "reflective

thinkers,” who tend to ask the deeper “why” questions. Her study lays groundwork to explore the issues of whether reflection skills can be taught and if so, how.

Moving away from issues of reflection and reflexivity, it should be noted that the importance of including social justice issues within teacher education is accentuated by a growing awareness that teachers are largely mono-cultural (typically white, middle class women) yet serve an increasingly multicultural population. Sleeter (2008) identifies four important interrelated issues that are important for teachers to be aware of within diverse classrooms – an increased awareness of institutional racism, the formation of conceptual frameworks other than a deficit view, overcoming the fear and discomfort of facing racial difference, and finally, increasing a personal awareness of teachers as cultural beings who often hold privilege and power (see also Schmidt, 1999). This goes hand in hand with the need for teachers’ *development of dispositions* towards a willingness to engage in issues of social justice (McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008).

A review of studies examining the effects of multicultural education on gender and race (Banks, 2001) indicates that different kinds of interventions can help students change their attitudes, but that future studies have to have what Geertz (1973) calls “thick description” of the layers of detail that are present in effective approaches.

White preservice teachers often feel unprepared to teach students of cultures other than their own (Birrell, 1995) despite having altruistic intentions (Marx, 2003). These intentions are often limited by unexamined habits of privilege that leave them “to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work that will allow ‘them’ to be more like ‘us’” (McIntosh, 1990, p. 32). Howard (2004) discusses the unease white educators have about

dealing with race and suggests that white teachers must become “transformationists” who work through “humility and active engagement in one’s own continuing growth and reformation” to acknowledge and dismantle the “legacy of dominance” they hold (p. 52). This type of reflexive practice helps educators to realize that they are “seeing with a cultural eye” (Irvine, 2003) that is based in their own lifeworld beliefs.

Teaching for social justice is seen as being “dangerous work” (Ladson-Billings 1999, p. 240). Within teacher education there is reticence and at times hostility, towards the institutional and/or personal change required for socially just classrooms. In addition, “speaking the unpleasant” around issues of race is a difficult yet critical self-reflective process (Chávez & O’Donnell, 1998). Oberg (2004) suggests “being reflective is risky insofar as it entails calling into question what has been taken for granted and left unexamined, including the ways one’s subjectivity has been constituted” (p. 242). She goes on to hint at the benefits when she says “being open, paying attention, and not knowing, that is presuming as little as possible about others, is a deeply respectful way of relating” (p. 242).

To summarize, the tradition of social critique looks at education through a lens that takes into account the individual, social, political and situational contexts of people. There is a concerted effort towards critical reflection that explores issues of race, class, gender, power and ways of knowing. White privilege is seen as an important issue in multicultural classrooms, and educators must engage in both reflective and reflexive practices in order to change their dispositions to better serve the learning needs of students from other cultures. Indigenous perspectives are beginning to be included within social justice conversations, but there is a concern that the epistemological differences of

an indigenous perspective are being lost in the western ideology that dominates social critique as will be described in the following section. For example, there are concerns about how spirituality can be brought into conversations around social justice in fundamental and meaningful ways.

Indigenous Ways of Eco/Social/Spiritual Knowing

This section describes indigenous worldviews, not in an effort to conflate indigenous knowledge with an eco/social/spiritual perspective but to explore the possible areas of interdependency and convergence. Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) warn against a tendency to “lapse into essentialism” that universalizes indigenous knowledge. And so, as I am mindful of my position outside Aboriginal cultures, this section includes rather lengthy quotes so that more authentic indigenous voices are brought forward.

The ancient wisdom and traditions of indigenous ways of knowing have long held an enacted eco/social/spiritual perspective (Schaeffer, 2006). Cajete’s questions reflect this all-encompassing focus: How will we address the pressing environmental issues of our time? How can we learn to get along with each other? And, how do we care for our souls? His queries echo a focus on sustainability that has been, over time immemorial, at the root of an indigenous worldview.

Within the context of modern educational settings indigenous ways have long been marginalized or ignored. Battiste (2008) underscores the struggles that Aboriginal students and scholars face as they are “intertwined with Eurocentric systems and their knowledge.” She states that it is important to recognize indigenous knowledge “as a distinct knowledge system, with its own concepts of epistemology and scientific and logical validity, within contemporary education systems” (p. 85).

While each indigneous group has its own unique ontology and epistemology, there is general agreement among indigenous scholars that indigenous ways of learning and teaching have basic commonalities (Cajete, 1994; Fixico, 2003). Descriptive models of indigenous epistemology often take the shape of a circle or web and center on holistic understandings that incorporate physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual growth (Battiste & Barman, 1995; Hampton, 1995; Weenie, 1998). Brown (1976), an early non-Aboriginal scholar of Native American culture, describes for the non-indigenous reader some of the salient concepts of an indigenous worldview. These include: time as cyclical and rhythmic rather than as lineal and ‘progress’-oriented; the interrelated sacredness of time and place; nature as a site of indwelling spirits; a richly defined and enacted sense of relationships; and the use of oral transmission of knowledge.

Altamirano (cited in Alfred, 2005), a Zapotecan political scientist from southern Mexico, speaks of some of the aspects of this web of knowledge that she considers to be commonalities between various indigenous groups:

...indigenous people have a strong relationship with their land and territories: they see them as social space where they recreate themselves, so land and territory are not only commodities. To indigenous peoples, religion and culture are linked to their natural contexts. It is not rare to find animal representations being linked to human beings, as with the raven in cultures from the Pacific or the deer in Northern Mexico. The role of elder is something shared among indigenous peoples too. Elders are seen as those who have accumulated knowledge, who have answers, or who know how to do things according to tradition. (p. 142)

Toelken (1976), another early non-Aboriginal scholar, in an article about seeing with the “native eye,” attempts to identify other salient features of an indigenous worldview by drawing on experience with Navajo culture. These include: the idea that “there is probably *nothing* that can be called nonreligious” in an indigenous worldview; the usefulness of a thing is central; there is a “reciprocal relationship between people and the

sacred processes going on in the world”; health is understood as the act of “participating properly in the cycles of nature”; and the real world is not always the one that we can see in the physical sense. This attention to the spiritual is carefully described by Aluli-Meyer (2008) who writes that, “knowledge that endures is spirit driven. It is a life force connected to all other life forces. It is more of an extension than a thing to accumulate” (p. 218). Tying knowledge to spirit in this way is a very powerful stance that reverberates throughout indigenous ways of learning and teaching.

It is important for non-Aboriginal people to realize that the basic epistemology of an indigenous worldview is different from dominant perspectives in ways that are rarely acknowledged, in part because they need to be experienced through ways of knowing other than intellectual to be fully appreciated. One of these epistemological issues has to do with a deep lived relationship with nature. Scott Momaday (1976), a Kiowa novelist from the American Southwest, writes about “scientific training” and then articulates his experience of the “view of the landscape which characterizes the Indian world,” by stating:

[The Indian] view... is of a different and more imaginative kind. It is a more comprehensive view. When the Native American looks at nature, it isn't with the idea of training a glass upon it, or pushing it away so that he [sic] can focus on it from a distance. In his mind, nature is not something apart from him. He conceives of it, rather, as an element in which he exists. He has existence within that element much in the same way we think of having existence within the element of air. It would be unimaginable for him to think of it in the way the nineteenth century “nature poets” thought of looking at nature and writing about it. They employed a kind of “esthetic distance,” as it is sometimes called. This idea would be alien to the Indian. (p. 84)

An ecological perspective is central to the indigenous point of view, and ecological balance extends beyond mere physical environment. Alvord, a western trained Navajo doctor (in Alvord & Van Pelt, 1999), suggests that:

Everything in life is connected. Learn to understand the bonds between humans, spirit, and nature. Realize that our illness and our healing alike come from maintaining strong and healthy relationships in every aspect of our lives. In my culture – the Navajo culture – medicine is performed by a *hataalii*, someone who sees a person not simply as a body, but a whole being. Body, mind, and spirit are seen as connected to other people, to families, to communities, and even to the planet and universe. All of these relationships need to be in harmony in order to be healthy (p. 3).

Willie Ermine (1995/1996), Cree scholar from Canada, writes that within indigenous thought is a “capacity for holism” that invites “those who seek to understand the reality of existence and harmony with the environment” to turn “inward.” This is a very different focus than the Western scientific worldview based on the “fragmentation of the constituents of existence” through the “division of the universe into neatly packaged concepts” (p. 103).

Despite a growing awareness of the importance of indigenous ways of being and knowing (Snipp, 2001), these ideas are often discredited by dominant culture (Grande, 2004; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). Indigenous knowledge is rarely present in school curricula. When it is included, it is often tangentially as a special class or unit of study. While these efforts are not necessarily negative, they are not enough. Teachers who have been educated in typical Western schooling are challenged to expand and alter their colonial understandings of pedagogy to include indigenous ways of teaching and learning. In this way, they can serve the learning needs of their Aboriginal students more fully.

The significance of indigenous pedagogy extends beyond cross-cultural goals of inclusive classroom teaching however. Indigenous ways of teaching and learning *in their own right* have the potential to be important and successful pedagogies for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students alike. Indigenous pedagogy, for all its diversity amongst

various Nations, is a pedagogy that has great respect and appreciation for the delicate balance of our earth's ecology (Fixico, 2003). In addition, Cajete (1994) tells us that:

Indigenous education, at its innermost core, is education about the life and nature of the spirit that moves us. Spirituality evolves from exploring and coming to know and experience the nature of the living energy moving in each of us, through us, and around us. The ultimate goal of Indigenous education was [sic] to be fully knowledgeable about one's innate spirituality. This was considered completeness in its most profound form.

As mentioned in the introduction, Battiste (2007) identifies an important focus of indigenous pedagogy on that of "nourishing the learning spirit" saying:

Being able to connect consistently to the inner forces of the self is one way that learners can each seek to achieve optimally their life journey. It is about the ability to understand the capacities and lessons needed to learn on a life path. It is knowing of the self and the life journey that conditions certain skills, talents or propensities like what makes us an artist, singer, dancer, teacher, lawyer, architect, service provider, activist, ecologist, etc. The learning spirit then is an important, if not neglected, aspect of learning in the current mind-focused learning paradigm of education. We need then a refresher course in the learning spirit to enable us to balance the cognitive and physical world in which we live to the inner spiritual and emotional journey of our lives.

Maori scholar Russell Bishop (2008) states that the Indigenous education of the Maori:

Is an education where power is shared between self-determining individuals within nondominating relations of interdependence, where culture counts, and where learning is interactive, dialogic, and spirals and participants are connected and committed to one another through the establishment of a common vision for what constitutes educational excellence. (p. 445-446)

Building on the work of Gay (2000) who identified culturally responsive pedagogy as noted earlier, and Sidorkin (2002) and Cummins (1996) "who propose that relations ontologically precede all other concerns in education," Bishop states that "such a pattern might well be termed a *culturally responsive pedagogy of relations*" (p. 446). Indigenous pedagogy then, embraces and emanates the principle of what Cajete calls "unity in

diversity,” or what Aluli-Meyer (2008) refers to as the “specificity that leads to universality.”

While there are some overlaps, the stance of the social critique tradition is being troubled by indigenous scholars who are concerned that indigenous perspectives are being excluded from the social justice movement at an epistemological level (Denzin & Lincon, 2008; Donald & den Heyer, 2009; Grande, 2000). Grande (2000) writes that “while critical pedagogy may have propelled mainstream educational theory and practice along the path of social justice...it has muted and thus marginalized the distinctive concerns of American Indian⁴ intellectualism and education” (p. 467). And in the introduction to the recently published *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008), Denzin and Lincoln state that they “seek a productive dialogue between indigenous and critical scholars” that will involve a “re-visioning of critical pedagogy” (p. 2) which has mainly to do with social class and not the epistemological differences of race.

It is alarming however, that not a single article in the current edition of the *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education* (Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, McIntyre & Demers, 2008) is focused on either the issues around, or the potential of, indigenous pedagogy within the field – nor are there any articles included that are authored from an indigenous perspective. One reason this is significant is that many indigenous scholars raise important questions regarding the basic theoretical frameworks commonly used in education. In particular, these scholars acknowledge an eco/social perspective that serves to disrupt not only the ground of the positivist tradition, but the

⁴ Grande “uses the term *American Indians*, to refer to the tribal people of North America” (p. 493).

positioning of the traditions of progressivism and social critique as well. How will we care for each other and the earth?

As well, indigenous perspectives can support a less acknowledged side of social critique that includes a spiritual point of view. Issues of spirituality are problematic in this context as they quickly become conflated with issues of religion. In this writing, I make a clear distinction between the two, and focus only on the former. My definition of spirit is rooted in the original latin, *spiritus*, literally, “breath.” Spirit is that which animates us and gives us life. Spirit is mysterious, and perhaps impossible to know through intellectual effort alone. Spirituality (the act of attending to spirit) is touched on in the writing of some critical theorists (Delpit, 1995/2006; Grande, 2004; hooks, 1994), but within the field at large, it is present more as a footnote, while the focus stays on intellectual pursuit around inequality. I argue that spirituality is at the base of social justice issues. How do we care for each other and our souls?

Delpit (1995/2006), is one social critique scholar who includes spirituality in her writing. Her concerns are centered in the United States, but as she says, they have global implications:

Poor people and people of colour are clearly in trouble in this country. And this means that we as a country are in trouble. Our “trouble” cannot be resolved by the creation and administration of standardized tests. Our “trouble” cannot be resolved by “teacher-proof” curricula. The troubles of our country – indeed, the troubles of our world – can be addressed only if we help ourselves and our children touch the deep humanity of our collective spirit and regain the deep respect for the earth that spawned us. Perhaps we can learn from traditional African education, where the role of teachers is to appeal to the intellect, the humanity, *and* the spirituality of their students. (p. xviii)

This quote connects back with Bartolomé’s humanizing pedagogy, where the learner is an active knower. The introduction of spirituality, however, brings with it the assumption

that knowing is more than an understanding through intellect. This then, brings up the question, how does spirituality become a more integral focus within the highly intellectualized field of social critique?

The field of teacher education can learn much from attending to an indigenous view of the world. The complementary concepts of ecological connectivity, nourishing the learning spirit, and knowing through relationships can have significant impact within a multicultural classroom of diverse learners. Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) state that indigenous knowledge has a unique power and transformational possibilities that “promote rethinking our purpose as educators” (p. 147). But how does someone “learn” indigenous ways? Can Western-oriented preservice teachers change their views of teaching and learning to include an indigenous eco/social/spiritual perspective? Is it possible for a person’s attitudes, values and beliefs to change in such a fundamental way? If so, how would that happen? To begin to explore these questions, I step back and consider the broader purpose of education and the role of teachers. This is followed by a look to the literature on preservice teachers’ dispositional change as well as that on transformative learning theory.

The Purpose of Education and the Role of Teachers

Numerous leaders in the field of teacher education have called for significant change that focuses on more than shifting surface patterns of practice. Instead, they suggest a re-imagining of the deep conceptual structures within teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Tom, 1995; Wideen & Grimmert, 1995). It seems important then, to think carefully about the purpose of teacher education before addressing the role of teachers within the field (Cochran-Smith, et al., 2008).

In the most recent *Handbook of Teacher Education*, Hansen (2008) identifies the prominent values influencing the scope and structure of current teacher education as being the overlapping areas of academic learning, preparation for a productive life, individual human development and social justice. Keeping Hansen's assessment of the field in mind, I would like to return to Cajete's three questions around education. How will we care for the planet? How will we live with each other? How do we nourish our inner life? Cajete's view holds a strikingly different sentiment, and one that could serve teacher education well as a guiding framework. In my mind, by using Cajete's stance, the focus in teacher education could be shifted away from a narcissistic, "knowledge as commodity" attitude, towards an endeavour that honours relational knowing and interdependency. This eco/social/spiritual viewpoint can be put to the fore of conversations on teacher education purpose and focus.

What is education for? In conversations around that question, Hansen (2008) reminds us to distinguish between function and purpose, as function denotes "maintenance" while purpose encompasses the "possibility of transformation." He goes on to say that teacher educators need not "choose between an absolutist or relativist standpoint" (p.23) but that finding intellectual purpose is a recursive, dialogic process that includes both.

Dialogue about purpose embodies its own values, among them sustaining a sense of value (...as contrasted with becoming passive), a sense of community (which often translates into critical energy), a sense of individuality (as each person articulates her or his outlook), and a sense of hope (that values matter in the world precisely because human life is not predetermined or predestined). (p. 23)

What is education for? This is perhaps the most important question that teacher educators could be discussing today.

In the many hours, days, months and years teachers spend in schools, they are setting the tone of their classrooms (van Manen, 1986) and the direction of the learning that takes place within them. How do we take care of the planet, each other, and ourselves? These fundamental issues have to do with the health and wellness of students, families, communities and the earth. Obviously, these things matter, yet too often teachers are educated to thoughtlessly reproduce the hegemonic culture of schools without examining the very foundational tasks of clarifying values and purpose towards imagining new ways forward. In my work both as a teacher and as a teacher educator, I find my time and energy being caught up with the function of teaching – lesson plans, classroom management, etc. – while the transformational possibilities of knowing our collective purpose are overly neglected.

Along with becoming clearer on the purpose of education it is also necessary to problematize conceptualizations of learning itself. Building on the notion of focusing on learning rather than teaching, Wenger (1998) points out that as educators “our perspectives on learning matter: what we think about learning influences where we recognize learning, as well as what we do when we decide that we must do something about it” (p. 9). In addition, our notions about how we conceptualize childhood need to be challenged. The transmissive approach so prevalent within the traditional paradigm assumes that learners and teachers take on distinct roles of teacher as expert and learner as novice. In this line of thought, the teacher possesses a particular knowledge set, and can through various practices transfer this knowledge to the learner. This encourages a view of the child as being an underdeveloped adult, as described by early childhood educational scholar Cannella (1997):

Education... is dominated by the belief that the child is a whole and separate being, relying on adults for guidance for individual independence... Younger human beings, labeled as “children,” are viewed as a distinctly different group of people, a group who must have their decisions made for them, their actions carefully observed and monitored... We have created the ultimate “Other,” a group of human beings not considered able or mature enough to create themselves. (p. 19)

Cooper (2006) argues that the adult/child binary, is not often considered by educational theorists and that “the construction of childhood as fundamentally different from adults limits the learning potential of both” (p. 119). Her research with teachers suggest that learning in the child and learning in the adult might hold much in common and that when teachers return to school as learners they become aware of what is similar about learning at any age.

Tied closely to issues of purpose in education and conceptions of learning is the question what is the teacher’s role? Sockett (2008) suggests four models to describe teachers’ possible moral and epistemological orientations: the scholar-professional, the nurturer-professional, the clinician-professional, and the moral agent professional. As described, Sockett’s models of teaching appear to fit loosely into the educational traditions in the following way.

| <i>Paradigm</i> | <i>Philosophical Stance</i> | <i>Knowledge as:</i> | <i>Teacher as:</i> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Positivist | Modernism | Object | Scholar |
| Progressive | Post-modernism | Personally constructed | Nurturer |
| Social critique | Post-colonial | Socially constructed | Clinician |
| Indigenous | Eco/social/spiritual | Relational | Moral Agent |

Table 2: Sockett’s Roles for Teachers within the Paradigms

The idea of the teacher as moral agent is intriguing, but as Sockett points out, the ethical underpinnings of morality must be carefully considered. While the scope of that task is too large to be included in this writing, I want to suggest the possibility that morals

based in an eco/social/spiritual ontology and epistemology would hold in mind the work of Hawaiian indigenous scholar, Aluli-Meyer (2008) who reminds us that *specificity leads to universality*. From her perspective (on the sandy shores of an island), she believes that knowledge is spiritual, connects directly to physical place, engages all the senses, is based in relation with others, and is useful. Speaking to educational researchers, she writes about having a responsibility to pay attention to underlying intention, as well as to how the movement or “frequency” of that intent might in turn affect the world:

It’s not about how well you can quote theory; it’s whether those ideas affect how you *act*...How will you feel encouraged to go forth into the world to alter its frequency? How will you bring robustness to this flat land knowing literacy keeps undimensioned? How will you actualize these principles of being to expand what knowledge is at its core? Make your work useful by your meaning and truth. I know it sounds somehow ethereal, but this is the point: Knowledge that does not heal, bring together, challenge, surprise, encourage, or expand our awareness is not part of the consciousness the world needs now. This is the function we as indigenous people posit. And...*we are all indigenous*. (p. 221)

Aluli-Meyer’s eco/social/spiritual view of the world requires teachers to acknowledge the specificity and the universality present in every learning situation and suggests a morality that is non-hierarchical and non-judgmental. Her work introduces perspectives beyond the positivist, progressive, and social critique paradigms in important ways.

Henderson (1991) also writes about a new way of morality that extends the role of teachers by focusing on:

... a connected, caring, and dialogical way of functioning as a planetary citizen inspired by the beauty of life. Humanity may have a long way to go to make this statement a reality, but I think it’s a worthy educational challenge. I find the metaphor of [teacher as] “rainbow warrior” to be quite apt. (p. 134)

So what does this mean for the role of a teacher who is rooted in an eco/social/spiritual positioning? Is Socket’s notion of moral agent useful? I find myself hesitant to use that term, because “morality” too often implies judgment. For now, I suggest that from an

eco/social/spiritual viewpoint, teachers act by deepening their conscious awareness and understanding of both the local and the universal to facilitate and support their multicultural students as holistic lifelong learners within the context of community. Perhaps Henderson's (1991) image of the rainbow warrior, while not of Aboriginal origins, holds merit in that it suggests a morality that focuses on personal location within both social and ecological spheres.

| <i>Paradigm</i> | <i>Philosophical Stance</i> | <i>Knowledge as:</i> | <i>Teacher as:</i> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Positivist | Modernism | Object | Scholar |
| Progressive | Post-modernism | Personally constructed | Nurturer |
| Social critique | Post-colonial | Socially constructed | Clinician |
| Indigenous | Eco/social/spiritual | Relational | Rainbow Warrior? |

Table 3: Revised Roles for Teachers within the Paradigms

The philosophical underpinnings of an eco/social/spiritual paradigm utilize the knowledge of specificity as well as the knowledge of universality. It builds on the notion of schooling as the collection of domain-specific knowledge (positivist tradition), the individual as constructor of knowledge (progressive tradition), and schools as socially rich areas for cross-cultural awareness and where learning is socially mediated (social critique tradition).

To this rich history is added the eco-conscious idea that we are all related and that the planet (our communal source of life) is extremely stressed and in fact, may be damaged beyond repair. Our planetary situation calls for transformational actions within educational domains that emphasize an ecological perspective to knowledge (Barab & Roth, 2006; Stone and Barlow, 2005); that acknowledge and utilize relational thinking in a "deep ecology" sense (Capra, 1996); and that recognize the learner as being intimately tied to the natural ecology of the planet on a psycho-emotional level (Fisher, 2002;

Hutchison, 2002). Environmental educators tell us that our current trends towards rampant over-consumption of the earth's limited resources require curriculum embedded in ecological literacy – a global oriented literacy that addresses the significance of the relationships and interconnectivity of environmental systems (Orr, 2005; O'Sullivan, 2003).

What is the purpose of education? It is time for teacher educators to look long and hard at this question. An understanding of the historical paradigms is essential, as is an understanding of what has not been included.

Teacher Capacity in Complex Classrooms: Towards Reflexive Practice

Re-conceptualizing education to be about an eco/social/spiritual pedagogy that includes listening across cultures and reflexive practice requires that our *capacity* as teachers and as teacher educators must shift away from a positivist paradigm. Teacher education theorists from both the progressive and social critique traditions grapple with this issue. McDiarmid and Clevenger-Bright (2008) identify three broad and interrelated categories that are generally accepted as describing *teacher capacity* – those of knowledge (what teachers need to know about), skills (what teachers are able to do) and disposition (what teachers should believe and care about) (p. 134). Teacher preparation typically focuses on the more concrete processes of building content knowledge and practical skills, while the more ambiguous, yet equally important, issues of disposition are underdeveloped or even ignored. It is the latter category of *teacher disposition* (beliefs, values and attitudes) that is the focus of this research.

Freire (1998) describes dispositional qualities that he believes to be indispensable for progressive teachers involved in social justice as humility, lovingness, courage,

tolerance, decisiveness, security, the joy of living, and the tension between patience and impatience. He argues that these attributes are acquired gradually through practice, as well as in concurrence with “a political decision that the educator’s role is crucial” in issues of social justice. These are characteristics difficult to describe, let alone to measure, and report changes within a given teacher’s dispositional practice. It is no wonder that teacher educators tend to gravitate towards a positivist focus on skill and knowledge acquisition.

Freire, along with McDiarmid and Clevenger-Bright (2008), point out the fluid nature of teacher capacity. It is seen as a career-long process focused on a potential for growth rather than an ability to receive and/or obtain knowledge. The lifelong learning nature of the process begs for it to be included as a fundamental cornerstone within teacher education. But “teaching” hard-to-grasp attributes such as humility and tolerance is complicated and controversial. In his work on teachers’ ability to be tactful, Van Manen (1991) points out that tact may be easier to identify through its absence than trying to describes what it actually is. It is unclear to what degree teacher education is a useful intervention in affecting these types of conceptual change (Bramald, Hardman & Leat, 1995). The role of past experience comes into play as many teacher qualities are acquired unconsciously from observations of previous teachers (Lortie, 1975).

Learning to teach involves the multifaceted process of learning to think, know, feel, and act, like a teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2008). It is a “complex and personal” endeavour, fraught with tensions between such things as theory and practice, imitative and critical practice, and pragmatic and evidence based practice (Sinclair, Munns & Woodward, 2005). Teacher education has become, in the words of Britzman

(1990/2003), one of the “great anxieties” of the century (p.1). In his book, *The Courage to Teach*, Palmer (1998) discusses the frustration and despair teachers experience in the constant complexities of practice. He asks, “Is it possible to embody our best insights about teaching and learning in a social movement that might revitalize education?” (p. 163). Palmer’s question reflects a widespread concern for the direction of education overall and hence the programs that educate teachers.

The problem of teacher education is underscored by the current concerns over new teacher burnout and attrition with reports of twenty-two to thirty-three percent of new teachers leaving the profession within the first three years of practice (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2003). Brouwer and Korthagen (2005) suggest that for teacher education to make a difference programs must involve the “integration of practical experience and theoretical study” and preservice teachers must be given more opportunities for “reflecting on their experiences during student teaching and for reorganizing teaching plans” (p. 215). Britzman (2000) advocates “for a view of teacher education that can tolerate existential and ontological difficulties, psychological complexities, and learning from history” (p. 200). Rust (1994) states that student teachers need to be “coached...in the backstage behaviours of teaching: the delicate balancing of competing demands that beset teachers daily, even hourly” around issues of planning interactive learning, developing a network of professional support, and the subtleties of classroom management (p. 216). These hidden responsibilities of teaching practice require specific and concerted attention.

Britzman (1990/2003) points out that the structure of learning to teach is flawed in that it bases readiness to teach on simplistic notions of whether a student is “prepared”

or “ill-prepared,” and suggests that it would be more useful to develop deep reflection skills in preservice teachers. Cole and Knowles (1993) state that “most preservice programs concentrate almost entirely on teaching preservice teachers to teach; little attention is placed on helping them to become teachers” (p. 469) leaving them to have “shattered images” of what it means to teach. They report that new teachers often leave the profession or “merely survive” in it unless they can do the hard work of clarifying and upholding their beliefs. Clark (1988) suggests that teacher education can be improved by acknowledging the “dilemmas and uncertainty” of teacher practice.

One response to preparing preservice teachers for the complexities of practice is to engage them in the notion of *adaptive expertise* – the ability to be flexible, innovative and creative, as described by Hatano and Oura (2003):

Every change involves a choice: between the path to be taken and others to be passed by. Understanding the context, process and consequences of change helps us clarify and question these choices. Which choices we make will ultimately depend on the depth of understanding but also on the creativity of our strategies, the courage of our convictions, and the direction of our values. (p. 18)

The notion of adaptive expertise is a useful construct in the effort to reframe teacher education as being about preparing teachers to recognize the changeable nature of practice.

Another response emerging from post-positivist paradigms is to engage the notion of *teacher inquiry*, where teachers take on some of the inquisitive tenets of a researcher approach. There are many layers of teaching practice, and many layers of understanding the experiences of learners and teachers (Aoki, 2005). An inquiry-based approach could engage preservice teachers in meaningful ways to help them understand the complexities of student learning in practical ways (Ballenger, 2005; Grimmatt, 1995). But this inquiry

stance must go beyond traditional frameworks to include exploration and understanding of multiple epistemologies (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2008). As well, educators must recognize that learning involves embodied practices of “listening, speaking, seeing and feeling” that require teachers to think carefully about “the necessary difficult paths learning takes” (Smits, Towers, Panayotidis & Lund, 2008, p. 74).

An inquiry stance requires teachers to be reflective practitioners as well. Social critique theorists are particularly concerned that efforts to increase teacher capacity are inadequate in creating environments that serve the learning needs of diverse learners within the context of a community setting. They therefore advocate for teachers to engage in reflection as part of a “critical consciousness” where teachers attend to broader issues of multi-cultural classrooms (Howard & Aleman, 2008). The inescapable political nature of education requires teachers to have clarity around their ideology and an understanding of their socio-cultural positioning in the world in relation to others (Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005).

Gillette and Schutz (2008) state that for teachers to respond to issues of social justice, preservice teachers must “develop a content-knowledge base that is multicultural, come to see themselves as cultural beings with a plurality of identities, develop the type of critical thinking and analytic skills necessary for problem posing, critical inquiry, and reflective thinking, and acquire the skills necessary to help...students succeed” (p. 233). There are dangers in dichotomizing issues of subject matter and social justice, and effective teacher education programs need to embed both in courses on teacher preparation (Grossman, McDonald, Hammerness & Ronfeldt, 2008). Grossman, et.al, suggest that teacher education programs must prepare student teachers for the existing

state of classroom and school communities, as well as presenting them with “opportunities to consider what they could become” (p. 246). How do we live with each other?

There is little academic work that elucidates the relationship between teacher capacity and matters of social justice, particularly around the issues of white teachers teaching non-white students (Grant, 2008), despite suggestions that future research on teacher capacity should take a closer look at the effectiveness of teachers who participated in social justice oriented programs (Howard and Aleman, 2008). The role of teacher disposition seems extremely important to explore in this regard. One study by Kanu (2006) on integrating indigenous culture and knowledge perspectives into high school curriculum suggests that teachers must value indigenous pedagogical strategies in order to integrate them successfully in their classrooms. This work highlights a gap in understanding about teacher capacity. Teaching across cultures requires understanding (knowledge) and strategies (skills), but Kanu points out that there also has to be a dispositional shift brought on by a deeper examination of beliefs, values and attitudes, thus leading to changes in practice.

In the endeavour to increase teacher capacity, the concepts of adaptive expertise, taking an inquiry stance, and critical reflection can be employed in useful ways. However, the focus on building teacher capacity is too often placed only on knowledge and skills and does not fully address the messy issues of changing deep-seated dispositions. To effectively change teacher beliefs, attitudes and values, notions of teacher capacity must be expanded upon. Many researchers recommend that beginning teachers examine their prior beliefs as an essential first step in learning to teach well

(Wideen, et.al 1998). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) propose that teachers' theories are "sets of interrelated conceptual frameworks grounded in practice" (p. 7). And Richardson (1996) describes an interactive relationship between beliefs and teacher action suggesting reflection on action "may lead to changes in and/or additions to beliefs" (p. 104).

However, Richardson's extensive survey of research on teacher beliefs sheds doubt on the overall efficacy of teacher education coursework in affecting dispositional change given the influential forces of previous life experience and experience within their practicum and other teaching situations. This raises the question of what might happen when life and teaching experience are embedded more fully within a specific teacher education class.

On a similar note, the increasing appreciation by educators of how social contexts influence teaching knowledge and practice has significance for how teacher educators work with changing teacher capacity. The increased understanding of practice as being socially mediated, suggests "changing the social contexts in which teachers learn and develop may be necessary for real changes in their understanding of their roles, the purposes of schooling, and core educational concepts and skills" (McDiarmid and Clevenger-Bright, 2008, p. 145). Teaching and teacher education then become a spontaneous, unpredictable and sometimes dangerous process of teacher-led *collaborative cultures* as teachers work together for educational change (Hargreaves, 1996). Challenging the dominant positivist paradigm is risky for individual teachers (as their ontological and epistemological beliefs are challenged) and to children and school communities (as new ways of proceeding are explored).

Reflective practices are often incorporated in teacher education courses in the hopes that they will affect change in teacher beliefs, yet this response might only be a partial solution. Dressman (1998) points out the limits of reflective thinking through an examination of his own teaching practice. He illustrates how there is a misperception that the mirroring action of reflection is enough:

[Teachers assume] that as rational beings our minds control our bodies and that our thoughts control our actions, so that a change of mind must lead to a change of action; ergo, change is an interior, intellectual process. Theories – at least the ones that are homegrown through reflection – do little more than rationalize actions we've taken or would like to take; they are the images of our action, not its source. (p. 120)

Dressman suggests that teacher educators replace the common emphasis on reflection with the deeper practice of reflexivity as described in the introduction.

As well, teacher candidates must engage in a paradoxical process of knowing and not knowing. As Kumashiro (2008) states they:

need certain knowledge, but also need to know the limits of their knowledge. They need certain skills, but also need the skill of troubling whatever they do. They need certain dispositions, but also need to be disposed to uncomfortable changes in these very dispositions.” (p. 239)

Kumashiro goes on to say that within teacher education programs, spaces are rarely opened up for this type of uncomfortable but essential process to occur, and that “teachers need to come to view discomfort as a part of learning that is not only unavoidable, but also potentially productive” (p. 240). This type of social learning is key in understanding how we are going to live together.

Examining beliefs is both a reflective and deeply reflexive experience for educators. It is a difficult process that can cause uneasiness amongst preservice teachers and teacher educators. As Delpit (1988) states, “we must learn to be vulnerable enough to

allow our world to turn upside down in order to allow the realities of others to edge themselves into our consciousness” (p. 298). White, middle class teachers must “reflect on their own autobiographies” (Traudt, 2002). This can be a difficult process of “excavation and relocation” (Wilson, 2002) that eventually shifts our horizons of understanding as described by Greene (1978). Hart (2001) suggests that educators have to find their own location as well as the location of others in the “topography of power” within the classroom in order to be “seeing myself in the other and the other in myself” (p. 178). This is a process that asks of her as a teacher “to be silent, to listen and observe, to open myself up for critique, and to make myself vulnerable” (p. 181).

Thomas King (2003), Cherokee/Greek writer and storyteller, suggests in his book, *The Truth About Stories*, that “it’s turtles all the way down,” that is to say, our beliefs are built on story, over story, over story. King agrees with Nigerian storyteller Ben Okri (1997), who says:

In a fractured age, when cynicism is god, here is a possible heresy: we live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted – knowingly or unknowingly – in ourselves. We live by stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives. (p. 46)

If educators want to rise to the challenge of incorporating Cajete’s framework questions, we must look closely at our stories and consider how they might change, particularly in the context of increasingly overlapping cultural communities. This is work that is done on a personal level, but it also can be done communally in conversation with others. To understand this process more fully, I step outside of teacher education literature to the realm of adult transformative learning theory for a different perspective on how adult learners may change their dispositional stances.

Changing Teacher Dispositions by Engaging Transformative Reflexivity

The current field of transformative learning has its roots in the area of adult education and began with a study by Mezirow (1978) that discussed the experiences of women returning to community college. Over the past decades, Mezirow (1997) has come to describe transformative learning as a process of effecting change in a personal ‘frame of reference’ through discourse, critical reflection on our assumptions, and the development of autonomous thinking. The theory has evolved “into a comprehensive and complex description of how learners construe, validate and reformulate the meaning of their experience” (Cranton, 1994, p. 22). Others in the field move away from a personal orientation and see transformative learning as a tool for social change. This latter application has its roots in Freire’s notion of *conscientization*, which he introduced in his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2005). This merging of critical reflection and social action is fundamental to the idea of *reflective teaching* (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983; van Manen, 1977; and Zeichner, 1987). It is also tied to the ideas of radical teacher education (Gore, 1993).

Overlaying the debate between personal and social orientations towards transformative learning is a discussion as to whether transformative learning is a process of rational reflection or engagement on a more affective/emotional level. An emphasis of transformative learning based in analytical psychology emphasizes the role of receptivity, recognition and grieving in the transformative process (Boyd & Myers, 1988, p. 277). Tisdell (2001) offers a concrete example of how rational reflection in conjunction with “an open exchange of vulnerability” leads to transforming dispositions within a group of

master's level students as they read and discussed bell hook's book, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994):

I do not think it is possible to have a transformational experience by merely “critically reflecting” on experience. Further, an overreliance on rationality can *prevent* a transformational learning experience from happening.... The affective component – the sharing of our vulnerability – along with the critical analysis was what made the experience transformational. (Tisdell, 2001, p.160)

Thus, both the engagement of “emotions and passion” along with reciprocal interactions within a shared learning community are significant factors in changing deep seated beliefs, values and attitudes across cultures to gain a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the other. Oosterheert and Vermunt (2003) echo this opinion when they write that the “ability or readiness” of preservice teachers to implement deeper level knowledge construction, “may depend largely on how emotionally risky it is for them to change their perception of reality” (p. 2003). Engaging in community with affect and passion while reflecting turns that reflection into a reflexive act.

Tisdell (2001) states, “I think what was most powerful was that this open exchange of vulnerability among many participants *offered hope*” (p. 154, italics in original). Generett and Hicks (2004) discuss the “symbiotic relationship between hope and action” (p. 187) stating that:

...inspiring teachers to dream their world as it could be otherwise requires a theory of hope-filled action that leads to change...we conclude that a professional development curriculum that seeks to both transform and respond to the anesthetizing quality of schooling must enable teacher-students to not only reflect deeply about their craft but consciously, audaciously work to bring that change to bear. (p. 188)

While definitions of transformative learning are to some extent diverse and contested, Shugurensky (2002) suggests that holistic understandings that include both personal and social perspectives, through both rational and emotional connection, are

worthy of further exploration in the area of teacher transformation to “build a better world” (p. 63). Sounds like specificity in universality to me. He writes that this process cannot be done in isolation, and instead must occur through:

Constructive discourse in which participants deliberate about the reasons for their actions and get insights from the meanings, experiences, and opinions expressed by others. Thus one of the main goals of transformative learning is the development of more autonomous thinkers who can justify their choices or reasons, but this development can take place only in relation to others, which makes it a collective, relational process. (p. 63)

By embedding Mezirow’s autonomous perspective of transformative learning into the larger interdependent social context, a fuller picture of the potential this process begins to emerge.

The definition of transformative learning can be taken to yet another level – that of an eco-centric or cosmological perspective (O’Sullivan, 2001). In this view, not only is the autonomous embedded in the social, but the social is embedded in the overall global and even universal ecosystem that is our human environment. Here, O’Sullivan points out the necessity of defining the transformative process against the backdrop of a constantly in process, “formative grand narrative” that moves us beyond globalization and its compounded effects. This idea ties into the indigenous pedagogy perspective of global interconnectivity.

O’Sullivan’s notion of learning connected to a cosmic awareness is a far cry from the positivist worldview that tends towards separateness rather than interrelationships. According to Kremer (1997), decolonization “boggles the mind” as consciousness flows between indigenous and dominant discourse (Kremer, 1997). It is an iterative practice of “struggling to be true to a process of consciousness, a process of community and of beingknowing that is a potential for all humans” (p. 9). Decolonization then calls for “no

certainty of knowledge and self, but the assurances of conversations that nurture” (Kremer, 2003). In this way, social interaction combined with personal reflexivity leads to transformation.

When I was enrolled in the Pole course as a member of the writing group, I noticed that many of us expressed an experience of our minds being boggled. For me personally, this uncomfortable sense of disconnect required that I stay mindful/conscious of my experience as a member of a group that was transforming in this recursive way. In the end, new understandings of teaching and learning began to be understood through the co-construction of the article that we wrote on our personal pedagogical beliefs (Tanaka, et. al, 2007). This sense of knowledge construction through interdependency is in tune with an eco/social/spiritual approach.

The very nature of transformative learning is that it is in constant motion. Nevertheless, it is useful to bring forward the definition of integral transformative learning presented by O’Sullivan, Morrell and O’Conner (2002), which is embedded in eco/social/spiritual perspective:

Transformational learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premise of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and the natural world; our understandings of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body-awarenesses, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (p.11)

This shift is not always sudden or dramatic but it is deeply felt. It is the type of change that teacher educators concerned with Cajete’s questions might look for in their preservice teachers. How do we nourish the planet? How do we live with each other? How do we care for our own souls? If the purpose of education is to address these

questions, it could be that the purpose of teacher education is to open spaces that explore, support, and model transformative learning in the teacher candidates that are leaving our programs to influence the future generation of children. The next section explores how immersive experiences within teacher education might lead in this direction.

The Need for Immersive Experience Towards Conceptual Change

A woman who wanted to learn about the Navajo culture was invited by a Navajo man to live in his community. She settled in, learning that their custom was for women to stay in one house and the men in another. The grandparents of her host resided in a third. On the first morning, the woman woke up to find that everyone had left to gather at the grandparents for breakfast. They returned happy and fed, but the woman felt left out. The next morning the same thing took place, and the next. After a number of mornings like this, the woman became distraught and she packed her things, ready to leave. Her host asked her, “Why are you going?” And she replied, “You went for breakfast each morning at the grandparents. I felt so left out. You never invited me!” The man turned to her and said, “We did go for breakfast each morning. Why couldn’t you just come?” (story told by Dr. Williams in a personal conversation, March 2005)

The above story has an important teaching in it for cross-cultural work, especially for those of us who are of the dominant culture. What I learned from keeping this story in my heart is that sometimes, I need to go out of my way. I need to take the initiative. I need to find a way to walk beside people I don’t know. It is often a subtle thing, and takes time and patience.

Hirsh (2005) suggests that to close the achievement gap amongst multicultural students in schools, teachers must not only examine their assumptions and beliefs but they must have “courageous conversations” across cultures. In the previous section, Tisdell demonstrated one way that dialogue can play a role in sorting out cultural beliefs within the university environment. An extensive review of journal articles dealing with social justice in teacher education shows that dialogue is central to building community across cultures (Grant and Agosto, 2008) and suggested dialogue as being an important

“indication of learning, reflection, and social-consciousness” (p. 193). Unfortunately, the dialogic act was rarely made explicit in these studies, suggesting that future research which explains more clearly how dialogue helps build community, would be useful. It also leads to questions of what contexts are possible and/or desirable for such conversation to occur.

The Navajo story is about more than dialogue however. It is about what I often call “choosing to come.” Sometimes it is about leaving my comfortable and familiar ways. Sometimes it is about leaving the university, or the school and being in the community. The importance of community-based experiences within teacher preparation for learning to work in diverse classrooms is beginning to be recognized within the realm of teacher education (Sleeter, 2008). But finding the time, space and funding for these types of exchanges to occur is difficult and teacher educators are often unprepared to support these experiences (Chou & Sakash, 2008). More research is needed to show how immersive cultural experiences can be included in teacher education programs.

We are in the midst of an important time in teacher education. Learning to take better care of the planet, get along with each other, and know our inner selves has perhaps never been so crucial. Teachers are in the position to make a difference in the lives of the many children with whom they share their school days.

Curriculum scholar Prawat (1992) writes that teachers need to think carefully on how they view education and conceptualize schooling, writing that:

If teachers are to rethink teaching and learning...they must have the opportunities to participate in a learning community with other teachers and educators similar to the one they are trying to provide for their students. (p. 389)

As a teacher educator I ask myself, what type of schools do I want to see for today's children? Do my courses reflect those values and beliefs? What are the reasons I can't practice what I preach? When is the learning environment authentic for my preservice students? How am I providing opportunities for dialogue across culture? When do I walk alongside my students?

The questions go on, but the point is that what I care about, and what I want my students to leave university caring about are Cajete's questions. How will we care for the planet? How will we live with each other? And how do we deal with our own souls? It is the purpose of this study then, to examine and report on the type of learning community that Prawat suggests – one that behaves in the way we hope they will behave as teachers. The Earth Fibres course immersed young educators into a lived cross-cultural experience, giving them space to imagine new possibilities for the children of their future classrooms. My study looks at how the course provided eco/social/spiritual-oriented opportunities for dialogue, reflection, reflexivity, and community interactions that went beyond positivist sensibilities. It gives a sense of what we might learn from incorporating an indigenous pedagogy within our classrooms.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

The Combined and Emergent Use of Narrative and Phenomenology

Assumptions are largely utilitarian in that they are necessary to all human investigative endeavour, serving as points of departure and later as reference points. Their ‘truth’ is mainly a function of their usefulness. Assumptions are like a map – a matrix of conceptual and experiential indices that provide a sense of direction; the searching mind can use them to methodically explore, and thereby incrementally build up human knowledge. (Couture, 2000, p. 160)

The process of examining methodologies seems to be long and arduous for many graduate students. The confusion about the terms “methods” and “methodologies” is partly to blame, but I think the real difficulty is in pinning down and clarifying one’s basic assumptions and beliefs. I agree with Couture that assumptions guide our way as we move through our research question, whether consciously or not. I also believe that assumptions to some degree are “living” in the sense that they change shape along with their ability to be useful. This perspective leaves me with one assumption that ironically remains permanent: the belief that life and all its complex ways of being, is based in a continuous process of struggle and change.

As a researcher, this belief in the fluid nature of reality requires me to be continuously reflexive and to engage in methodologies that are able to accommodate change in fundamental ways. Examining my research question through the combined methodological lenses of phenomenology and narrative inquiry served this goal well. My interwoven topics of indigenous pedagogy, teacher education and transformative learning were all fundamentally about change – although I would point out, the field of teacher education may be a bit reticent towards exploring these issues.

In any qualitative research project it is important to be grounded in a methodology appropriate to the topic, and to be conscious of what the underlying tenets of that methodology are. Working from the ground of a specific methodology gives the researcher a language and framework within which to work – a discourse of perspective and understanding. For this project, my research questions aligned most closely with narrative and phenomenological methodologies. As well, I kept a careful eye throughout the project to be sure that my methodology honoured an indigenous perspective as much as possible (Smith, 1999).

In the context of this study, I use the word “design” as a verb, not as a pre-determined plan. This allowed for an emerging research design that drew from the potentiality of patterns discovered during the data collection and analysis process. Those patterns were affected by and interpreted through, my changing perceptions and understandings. In this sense my work is what Cajete (2009) calls “research as story.” It is work that reflected the process of coming to know. Further, as he suggests, my study was about knowledge creation towards an increase in wellbeing of the community at large, in this case the community of teacher educators and preservice teachers.

Narrative Methodology

What can we gain by sailing to the moon if we are not able to cross the abyss that separates us from ourselves? This is the most important of all voyages of discovery, and without it, all the rest are not only useless, but disastrous. (Merton, 1970, p.11)

As previously mentioned through the work of Thomas King (2003) we, the broad collective “we” of humanity, live stories. We have a beginning, an end, and interesting bits and pieces that happens in between. Life is narrative – an account of our selves. Through our stories, we express who we are. We listen to the stories of others to find out

who they are. We examine lives/stories/narrations to better know ourselves, to figure out how the world works and to find our place in it. We give voice to where we are located and where we are going through the telling of our stories. Like our assumptions, stories can serve as maps through our life “voyages of discoveries” – reminding us of where we’ve been – inspiring and guiding us towards future directions.

For educators, stories are very powerful. Teachers can use stories to teach and to understand students. For example, when I worked with struggling readers, I wanted to know their stories so that I could have a better sense of what challenges they faced in their learning. I wanted some type of map so that I could make their way a bit easier. I was constantly trying to fit the stories of my students into theoretical frameworks of learning and teaching. And as a teacher, I was generating my own stories of pedagogy with my students. As Dewey (1938) believed, education is the process of examining our experience. Within my current research, the stories of preservice teachers served to illuminate the experiences of participating in the Earth Fibres course – specifically on changes in the preservice teachers’ perceptions of learning and teaching.

The methodology of narrative inquiry supports the assumption that the *personal practical knowledge* of practitioners can serve to inform theory (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Polkinghorne (1998) believed that research was out of touch with practical experience and began to “look at what could be learned from the practitioners about how research should be done” (p. x). His work began to connect practice to theory as well as theory to practice. He identified two types of narrative research. The first, *descriptive narrative*, serves “to produce an accurate description of the interpretive narrative accounts individuals or groups use to make sequences of events in their lives or

organizations meaningful” (p. 161-162). The second type, *explanatory narrative*, is focused on understanding the causal relationships of human action and events through the narrating of experience. My study was primarily based in descriptive narrative, although a sense of causality may be a secondary outcome.

In their authoritative guide, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) point out that “life – as we come to it and as it comes to others – is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities” (p. 17). Based in Dewey’s theory of experience, which highlights the notions of situation, continuity and interaction, Clandinin and Connelly see narrative as being in a three-dimensional inquiry space of place; the temporality of past, present and future; and personal/social exchanges.

This framework worked well for my study. First, the indigenous pedagogy course stood out as an unusual and significant place of learning and teaching. Second, the preservice teachers came from a past that was steeped in strong stories of Eurocentric influences. The present day timing of the course was embedded in their personal and powerful experience of being in the process of transforming from a student into a future teacher. The “unities and discontinuities” of their stories at this developmentally critical point in their teaching career were poignant. Third, the course was especially social in nature – emphasis was placed on building community and finding one’s own place within that community. Because meaning-making occurs during the process of expressing experience through language (Vygotsky 1986), the narrative expressions of these young people at a particular time, in this context was very rich and informative.

On the Potential Stasis of the Written Word

That being said, I am also uneasy with narrative inquiry as a methodology. As an educator I have always been drawn to stories in order to understand what it means to learn and teach, yet at the same time I am concerned about a tendency for stories, especially written stories, to become too static in nature. Writing is a very useful process. When we write down our stories we can share them, over time and place, with others. We go to books, magazines, journals and newspapers to ‘hear’ what other people are thinking – to know their stories. The trouble is, writing becomes static. There can be something so final about little black lines on a page – as if they were things that could be put in a box and given away. The following brief dialogue that I had with Lynne, one of the wisdom keepers in my study, in the context of a discussion on reading, helps to illuminate the issue:

M: I find that the written word has taken on sometimes this bigger than life sort of thing...when I write I find myself getting anxious. I’m going to write this, and [I wonder], is it right? Because it's somehow more permanent when it's written down.

L: words have power, they last a hundred years. Be careful how you speak them. [That is] a Nuchalnuth teaching.

M: so, if you write it, it could last more than a hundred years...

L: oh, ho! So, be sure what you write is real.

Life is narrative. It is a fluid thing, full of constant change, and not necessarily written on a page. Just as Couture talks about assumptions as being points on a map, so too can be narratives. As Clandinin and Connelly say, “fragments” of life/stories to be reflected upon within a larger continuity. I imagine them as floating on water – a river, or

an ocean, a drop of dew, or a human tear. They are fragments floating in something that insists they will eventually change.

Locating people in a certain context can be a useful thing. My own written reflective and reflexive practice gives a map of where I am that can inform what direction I might decide to take with my inquiry at a certain point in time. I worry because, while I don't believe that researchers who use a narrative approach are unaware of the importance of change, I do think that Western-influenced minds are adverse to the idea.

As Goldberg (1986) tells us in *Writing Down the Bones*:

The problem is we think we exist. We think our words are permanent and solid and stamp us forever. That's not true. We write in the moment. Sometimes when I read poems at readings to strangers, I realize that they think the poems are me. They are not me, even if I speak in the "I" person. They were my thoughts and my hand and the space and the emotions at that time of writing. Watch yourself. Every minute we change. It is a great opportunity. At any point, we can step out of our frozen selves and our ideas and begin fresh. That is how writing is. Instead of freezing us, it frees us. (p. 32)

It is my intent to take this same outlook with the narratives in my study – snapshots of one point in time that are destined to change.

Narrative as Dialogue – Change Agent and Transformer

When I write my story down as a narrative, I fight the tendency of print to become static. I try to keep life in my words, as good authors can do. I try to write to catch the essence of experience – enough words, without too many. I am reticent to “pin down” life. But it is more than that. As I write, I yearn for dialogue. It is a fine thing to be able to express my self and my ideas on paper, but in the end, I want to discuss things with others. For me, meaning is socially constructed. It is through dialogue that we create meaning and through the creation of meaning that we envision change. The therapeutic process of mutual understanding changes our stories together towards a different future.

This collective liberation comes to us through the voicing of our stories, as explained by Britzman (1990/2003):

Voice is meaning that resides in the individual and enables that individual to participate in a community.... The struggle for voice begins when a person attempts to communicate meaning to someone else. Finding the words, speaking for oneself, and feeling heard by others are all a part of this process.... Voice suggests relationships; the individual's relationship to the meaning of his/her experience and hence, to language, and the individual's relationship to the other, since understanding is a social process. (p. 14)

In the process of the Earth Fibres course, participants, including myself, co-created understanding of what it meant to learn and teach at that point in time and in that particular location. We shared stories with each other in different ways – through sharing in the circle, discussions, ceremony and the simple act of cleaning up and putting away supplies. Our stories were vessels that embodied our identities – reminding us of our existence and our place in the world.

My role as a researcher was to be open to the listening of these stories - to get to the heart of the preservice teacher experience within the context of the course. Through the sharing of these stories we begin to rewrite our lives differently (Clandinin, Davies, Hogan & Kennard, 1993).

Educational scholar, hooks (1994) suggests that, “when our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice” (p. 61). As a researcher, finding this place that bridges theory and practice is difficult. Yet that has always been my aim with this project. I believe that it has required me to expand the tenets of narrative inquiry by emphasizing the temporality of stories along with expanding the definition of what narrative representation can be.

Other Ways of Narrative Representation

Along with seeing text as part of a fluid changing process, I think that we also need to expand our definition of what narrative texts can be. Just as the quantitative traditions of inquiry made way for qualitative approaches, qualitative research must be flexible to other ways of knowing. In this light, narrative is about stories that are written, but it is also about stories that are told orally, or through movement, song, or graphic expression such as painting or collage. These other ‘texts’ can tell our stories. I am suggesting that a narrative methodology can include and be enhanced by the inclusion of other ways of expression.

To give an example, I remember back to one of the first classes I attended as a doctoral student. The assignment was to bring in an item that was representative of me as a student. I brought to class a small stone – muted black, lumpy as if molten, and scarred. To me it represented the process of absorbing – something I was doing a lot of those days. My little rock stuck out a bit amidst the objects that others brought – highlighters, favorite books, or pictures of their kids. I felt a little silly.

In fact, that small stone was a fragment of my story. It represented a fragment of narrative that attached to both my past, present, and it turned out, to my future. As I hold the stone now, I remember days on a beach playing to learn; I remember sitting in a darkened room meditating to learn. And since that time I brought the rock to class, I had the experience of learning about indigenous history through a story of a different stone – told to me by Cynthia Chambers (2005) about the great rock Mistaseni. I have passed a similar stone hand-to-hand in a high school First Nations Leadership circle and felt the

strength of ancestral stories in the voices of remarkable, and too often troubled youth. And those stories now reside for me, in that little black stone.

In this way, something as seemingly foreign to learning as a rock (with apologies to my geologist friends), tells a piece of my story of who I am as a student. I record it now – transforming it into a written text, but even as it sits, pre-reflexively on my desk, it is a narrative of my life as a student. In class, I told the story of my rock orally. Here, it is transferred to text. Tomorrow, I may make a collage that narrates the meaning hidden in its weathered surface. It is important to search for meaning beyond, and perhaps in spite of, print.

By expanding the definition of narrative to include other ways of representation, I am better able to understand the transformative experiences of the preservice teachers. It offers a broader descriptive structure that allows for a deeper sense of meaning.

Writing to Know

My last point about narrative has to do with using writing as a process of coming to know. Through writing, I stumble on meaning by bringing connections to consciousness. It can become a conversation with myself about a given topic of interest. It is a process of moving from practical knowledge into the realm of theory. In academia this is potentially problematic, when so much emphasis is placed on critiquing and evaluating *what* we know. In fact, I have been informally chastised by fellow academics for my self-discovery of ideas that others have previously written about. This attitude seems particularly narrow and territorial – especially in this historic point in time that cries out for social empathy and care. In the intense climate of publish or perish, on some levels I can understand the concern – and I certainly am not advocating plagiarism. But at

what cost do we give up our freedom to explore on paper the personal musings we have in practice? To relate this apparent digression back to my research, I want to be clear with both my committee, as well as with my participants in my study, that I see narrative representations – written or otherwise – as emergent steps we take towards our goal of understanding, not as static “knowledge” frozen in time.

A View of Phenomenology

Views

Red sea through pine lattice.
Islands kneel like vassals before headlands.
Rain clouds snag on coastal ridges.
Yarrow stands spectral in the lighthouse beam.

It is difficult to take in the details of a landscape all at once. Our eyes can only focus on one point at a time. We look near, then we look far. We look left, then we look right. Our view of any one subject, if it is too large, is never whole, but a composite image in our minds. (Deng 1992, No. 145)

There are numerous and diverse orientations within the field of phenomenology. For the purposes of this study, I drew on a phenomenological perspective primarily through an existential lens, as explained by Merleau-Ponty (1962) who describes life as a process of “direct and primitive contact” with the world as we experience it, not as we conceptualize it (p. vii). To help explain notions of pre-reflective lived experience I drew from the practical applications of Thomas and Pollio (2002) in the field of nursing, and van Manen’s (1990) work on the experiential phenomenology of practice. My understanding of phenomenology is very much in process, for as Ihde (1986) writes, “Without *doing* phenomenology, it may be practically impossible to understand phenomenology” (p. 14, italics added).

I will start by explaining my understanding of what, for me, are the salient phenomenological ideas and how I believe they informed my study.

The Reduction

Van Manen (2006a) writes that, “the aim of the reductio (the reduction or epoché) is to reach direct contact with the world by suspending prejudgements, bracketing assumptions, deconstructing claims, and restoring openness” (§ 1). To illuminate this process of reduction, I turn to an early paper I wrote on the topic of listening (Tanaka, 2006). As a member of a participatory action research team, I worked with Aboriginal high school students who were videotaping their perceptions of health and wellness (Riecken, Conibear, et. al, 2006). In the paper, I describe the process of how I tried to listen to the students in the project. Even after I presented the paper at a conference, I struggled with the concepts that I was trying to describe. My task would have been easier at the time if I had been more familiar with writings on phenomenology. The paper was, in the end, an unconscious exercise in describing the phenomenological process of reduction. It was an example of finding theory through the messy process of practice and was an attempt to reduce listening to its essence, to go to “the things themselves,” as Husserl (1913/1931) suggests. I did this by describing what I perceived to be six essential elements of listening: knowing myself; suspending assumptions; being comfortable with unknowing; creating space for power to move towards balance; finding common ground; and walking with the other person on *their* path.

I bring up this example in an effort to point out the difficulty of understanding phenomenology – and in this case, the notion of reduction. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) states:

What is phenomenology? It may seem strange that this question still has to be asked half a century after the first works of Husserl. The fact remains that it has by no means been answered. Phenomenology is the study of essences; and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essences.... But phenomenology is also a philosophy that puts essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their ‘facticity’. It is a transcendental philosophy which places in abeyance the assertions rising out of the natural attitude, the better to understand them; but it is also a philosophy for which the world is ‘already there’ before reflection begins – as an inalienable presence; and all its efforts are concentrated on re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status. (p. vii)

The reduction then, is embedded in a balancing act between the phenomenon of interest and the worldly context of that phenomenon. This can be further understood through an examination of the phenomenon of figure/ground.

The Figure Ground Phenomenon

The overall task of my study was to understand the experience of the preservice teachers in the Earth Fibres course in order to identify the essential phenomenon of change experienced in the course. To do this, I attempted to understand their “lifeworlds” (Schutz & Luckman, 1973), as the contextual background to the experience they had in the course. The background/ foreground relationship is articulated in the following graphic depicting faces and vases.



Figure 4: Faces and Vases

Thomas and Pollio (2002) explain the importance of this relationship through the lens of phenomenology writing:

Figure and ground co-create each other in human experience. Neither the vase nor the faces can be seen without one another; Remove one, the other disappears. Although they may depend on one another, only one figure is experienced at one time. (p. 18)

As I listened to the stories of my participants I was constantly trying to be aware of the balance between face and vase. It was a process of not holding too tightly to one or the other. This goes back to my concern with narrative text – as a researcher I must not champion the thing over its context. By striving for that balance, the fluidity of living stories began to emerge. These stories in turn embodied Clandinin and Connelly’s three-dimensional notion of narrative – social interactions, temporality, and place. In addition, the process of narrative as a transformative act could also be acknowledged.

Bracketing – Setting Aside and Reflexivity

The ability to be successful at reduction is related to the process of bracketing. Originally, the term was borrowed from mathematics by Husserl (1913/1931), and bracketing “in phenomenological research, is an intellectual activity in which one tries to put aside theories, knowledge and assumptions about phenomenon” (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Because I took a phenomenological stance in this work, it was important that I consciously and continuously bracket myself as a researcher. Obviously, I did not enter this work as a blank slate, but rather, I came to it with ideas and experiences from my personal lifeworld (such as my participation in the pole course) that shaped my perceptions and influenced my researcher stance. For this reason, I kept a reflective and reflexive journal that allowed me to consciously keep track of my personal interests and biases. In addition I asked colleagues to carry out two separate interviews with me designed to help me think aloud in a reflexive way. Thomas and Pollio point out that:

Although the interviewer will attempt to “bracket” prejudices, this attempt will never work completely. What will happen however, is that researchers (or practitioners) can place commonly held beliefs within parentheses, allowing greater openness to the specific experiences now being described by the unique human beings before them. (p. 34)

Through the use of bracketing, I was more able to be open to possibilities in the course that might exist beyond my preconceived notions of learning and teaching. In addition, Ahern (1999) writes about the importance of a reflexive stance in the process:

The ability to put aside personal feelings and preconceptions is more a function of how reflexive one is rather than how objective one is because it is not possible for researchers to set aside things about which they are not aware (p. 408).



Figure 5: Reflexive Face and Vase

Ahern’s point is key, and requires the researcher to pay close attention to underlying assumptions. By using the formalized process of journal writing and interviews of myself, I have been able to place myself in the research with care and consciousness in an ongoing and dynamic way.

Hermeneutics: The Art and Science of Interpretation

While my methodological orientation is more existential than hermeneutical, the important process of interpretation must be addressed. As van Manen (1990) writes:

Phenomenology is, on the one hand, description of the lived-through quality of lived experience, and on the other hand, description of meaning *of the expressions* of lived experience. The two types of descriptions seem somewhat different in the sense that the first one is an immediate description of the lifeworld as lived whereas the second one is an intermediate (or a mediated) description of the lifeworld as expressed in symbolic form.... Actually it has been argued that all description is ultimately interpretation. (p. 25)

In this study, my intent was to describe the experience of the preservice teachers, yet in doing so there was always an element of interpretation on my part. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) state that “the closer you are to the source of the text, the more valid your interpretation is likely to be” (p. 108). Building on the notion of a “hermeneutic circle” – the cyclical process of moving between the whole and the part of the text, and between ourselves and the text – they introduce the idea of a *research spiral* “to emphasize the sense of expansion and forward motion” that occurs in a reflexive practice (p. 42). In this way, hermeneutics has been an integral part of my research process.

Pathic Knowledge and the Use of Metaphor

The nature of my research questions required that I unpack non-cognitive, pathic insights of the participants in the study. I am referring here to participants’ experience of *ways of knowing* other than intellectual, understanding that comes through action or embodied involvement in a given process. Western influenced thought relies heavily on knowing primarily through cognition that sets up a Cartesian mind/body dichotomy. Pathic knowledge is a more holistic knowing that utilizes the non-cognitive insight experienced through embodiment (what the body experiences); action (we know what we do); relationships (we discover through others); and is situational (our world informs us).

Van Manen (2006b) tells us “cognitive insights by themselves cannot address noncognitive meaning. Thus we may need to employ noncognitive as well as cognitive methods in order to address pathic experience” (¶ 2). In an indigenous research context such as the Earth Fibres course, a phenomenological reliance on the holistic nature of knowledge works well because it is congruent with indigenous beliefs (Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005). It is also a good fit with the expanded notion of narrative

representations suggested earlier and allows for a fuller interpretation of experience through moving beyond the somewhat linear nature of written texts.

To get at the experience of pathic knowing, I consciously incorporated the use of metaphors in the interviews by giving the preservice teachers the option to describe the double-sided process of learning and teaching with an image. I consciously gave this as a choice because as Lakoff and Johnson (1981) state, “our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of what we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (p. 3). Metaphor is often used when exact descriptions cannot be expressed through our regular vocabulary. The work of Thomas and Pollio (2002) suggests that phenomenological researchers actively “mine the data for metaphors” because metaphors reveal hidden meanings that might otherwise be lost in literal translation (p. 36). In my research, the nature of the course experience lent itself to metaphor, as the preservice teachers were deeply involved in an artistically expressive and creative process.

Specific Applications

Taking a phenomenological stance as a researcher has enabled me to be continuously developing what van Manen (1991) refers to as tact – the capacity for a thoughtful attentiveness in the realm of research. The interpretation of narrative representation requires a heightened sensitivity that has required a continuous process of bracketing my pre-conceived assumptions and theories through reduction and contextualizing the students’ narrative stories within the broader situations of the teacher education program and the personal lives of the students.

To analyze the process of change, an overall dialogic process was engaged. The phenomenological interviews first contextualized individual participants (Seidman, 2006)

and then engaged the researcher and participants conversationally (Mischler, 1986). This dialogical process was furthered within the context of the post-practica focus groups.

By expanding the definition of narrative representation to include the use of metaphor, it became easier to see changes in the students' awareness of alternative ways of knowing. It allowed for participants to express their narratives in ways other than linear formats, thus opening up channels, pathic or otherwise, that might have been unused in the past. The breadth of data that were then collected reflected a fuller picture of the students' awareness.

One concern that needed to be addressed in the interviews was around issues of reflection and reflexivity for the preservice teachers. As a university instructor of similar groups of student teachers, I have had some experience with the processes and was aware of the controversial position that reflection and reflexivity holds for many of them. For this reason, I was especially careful in creating a tone that was open to the participants feeling comfortable and willing to have conversations about their own personal processes. As in the past, I found that by expanding the definition of reflection and reflexivity to include pathic knowledge, metaphor and participant direction, the students appeared willing, comfortable, and deeply engaged in the process of the interviews.

My Role as Researcher/Participant

While I was not enrolled in the Earth Fibres course as a student, I participated in many of the course activities. Within this indigenous context, it would have been inappropriate for me to be an observation-oriented researcher, who stood back and merely, and so-called objectively, watched what was happening. Instead, I took the role of both participant and researcher, moving between engagement and observation as the

group situation dictated. Based on my experience as a student in the pole course the previous year, I assumed that a high level of trust would quickly develop between the course participants. Therefore, I consciously presented my role as a researcher to the group in as transparent a way as was possible. I believe it was clear that I was acting in the role of a researcher, but also that of a committed participant in the overall goals of the group. In addition, I used the phenomenological technique of bracketing myself as a researcher over the course of the project as described above. Oberg (1989) writes that in phenomenological research, “the researchers themselves are important sources of ‘data’ and their involvement with the object of study must be as full as possible in order for rich and valuable insights to develop” (p. 11) It was in this light that I proceeded.

Aboriginal Protocol

Although the research involved Aboriginal participants and context, the project was not specific to any particular Aboriginal group. Any necessity for following appropriate protocol was approved by my committee member and course facilitator, Dr. Lorna Williams (Lil'Wat) and the course instructor Charlene George (T'Sou-ke).

Description of Participants

The study targeted three specific groups of participation. They are described as follows:

1. *Whole Group*: This group consisted of everyone who was enrolled and/or involved in the course. The participant population was dependent on the enrollment for the course and was determined as it commenced in the fall. Whole group participants were undergraduate level preservice teachers,

graduate education students and faculty observers who were predominately female and predominantly white, although an undetermined number were of Aboriginal and other ethnicities. (Total number = 43)

2. *In-depth Group*: This group consisted of twelve preservice teachers who were both enrolled in the Earth Fibres course and who were also enrolled in a practicum in the eight weeks immediately following the course. The members of this group were asked to participate in individual interviews as well as one focus group. In-depth participants consisted of eleven undergraduate level preservice teachers, one post-degree education student; ten female, two male; and all participants in this group were non-Aboriginal. All twelve members of this group participated in the initial interviews. One preservice teacher did not participate in the second interview round or the focus group round, but did communicate with me via email and informal conversation through out the remainder of the project. Another preservice teacher opted for a personal interview instead of attending the focus groups, while two others opted out of the focus group round citing busy schedules.
3. *Instructor Group*: This group consisted of eight instructors who were involved in the course. These participants were all Aboriginal, artists-in-residence and/or wisdom keepers/mentors (see Appendix 1: *Course Description*). Even though she was an instructor in the course Dr. Williams was not interviewed due to her supervisory role.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited in person in the following manner:

1. *Whole Group*: I described the research project on the first day of the course and passed out consent forms to the whole group (see Appendix 2: *Consent Form #1 - Whole Group*). The forms were returned to a box that allowed for anonymous acceptance throughout the class time.
2. *In-depth Group*: I invited all the preservice teachers to meet with me over the break in the second class to explain the purpose and details of the study. A second consent form was given to this group (see Appendix 3: *Consent Form #2 - In-depth Group*). Retrieval of these forms was the same as above.
3. *Instructor Group*: I spoke individually with each instructor and asked first for informal consent to conduct an interview. After a verbal agreement, and at the time of the interview, I asked them to sign a written consent form (see Appendix 4: *Consent Form #3 – Instructors*).

Data Gathering

The interview and focus group transcripts were my main data source and were supplemented with the photographic data, field notes and written student assignments.

1. *Whole Group*: During the course hours (Wednesdays 4:30-7:30, over a thirteen week term) I took supplemental field notes that focused on my research questions. I also took occasional photographs of some of the group activities. This was to capture the visual essence of the course experience and supplemented my notes.

2. *In-depth Group*: Each of these participants were asked to engage in one interview at the beginning of the course, one at the end, and a post-practicum focus group discussion. (See Appendix 5, *Interview Questions #1*, Appendix 6, *Interview Questions #2*, and Appendix 7, *Interview Questions – Focus Groups*). Interviews and focus groups took place in a private office or classroom on campus. In one case the interview was done in a public location. The interviews and focus group discussions were audio recorded and later transcribed by myself using voice recognition software.
3. *Instructor Group*: I conducted one interview with each of the instructors sometime during the course (see Appendix 8, *Interview Questions – Instructors*). These interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participants and occurred at various places either on campus, at the residences of the individuals, or in an agreed upon public setting. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed by myself using voice recognition software.

Limitations of the Study

The preservice teachers who participated in the study had consciously chosen to take the course. It is possible that they were biased in that they already had an interest in, and limited understanding of, indigenous ways of knowing. A second limitation is that within their practica, the preservice teachers had very little control over their teaching context and they were limited in their ability to incorporate the ideas developed in the Earth Fibres course. Third, there was the possibility that the participants wanted to please me as a researcher due to my personal involvement in the course. Fourth, it is important to understand how the dispositional changes experienced by the preservice teachers will

affect their long-term teaching within their own classrooms and this study is limited in that it was unable to follow the preservice teachers further in their careers. For this reason, a follow-up study is proposed.

For optimum analysis of the data, this project would ideally enlist a team approach to analysis where more than one researcher's perceptions were engaged (Thomas and Polio, 2000). This was not possible under the limitations of doctoral work. Therefore, I incorporated follow-up sessions with all of the wisdom keepers to discuss the interviews after they were transcribed, thus clarifying their meaning. Unfortunately the preservice participants were unavailable for this type of follow-up. I also met frequently with Dr. Williams and Dr. Riecken to discuss the direction of my analysis. In addition, I was a member of an interdisciplinary graduate writing group, with whom I was able to share certain aspects of my thinking. Their feedback and insight were very useful in terms of gaining perspective on my data.

A note about anonymity: All participants preferred having their first names used in the reporting of the data. The Wisdom Keepers agreed to the use of both first and last names, a practice that I believe would acknowledge their work in the course in positive ways. Occasionally I decided to make certain comments anonymous if I felt that the data might be too personal in nature or shed the participant in a negative light amongst their peers or others who might read the final document.

Process of Analysis

The analysis for this project was ongoing and phenomenological in nature and included the following elements. They are not listed in a specific order because they occurred in a recursive and non-linear process.

1. *Identification of emerging meaning units* (Thomas and Polio, 2000). Through reading and re-reading the data, significant meaning units were identified and highlighted in the text using the qualitative analysis software NVivo 8.
2. *Identifying themes and patterns*. The meaning units were organized and re-organized in schemas that highlighted significant themes and patterns. This was done in NVivo 8, in written diagrams in my journal, as well as on sticky notes that were attached to the wall of my office and moved around in relation to each other over the course of the analysis.
3. *Discussion of themes and patterns*. The working themes and patterns were discussed within the context of an interdisciplinary writing group, with my co-supervisors, and with other colleagues in the context of scholarly presentations.
4. *Writing as a method of inquiry and analysis*. Numerous professional papers and journal entries were written over the course of the project that furthered the analysis. The act of writing was at times a process that clarified, as well as a process that brought further questions to light.
5. *Mid-analysis follow-up interviews with wisdom keepers*. After transcribing the interviews, I was able to discuss the content of these transcripts with five of the eight wisdom keepers. These conversations were then incorporated into the analysis process.
6. *Reflexive bracketing practices*. I participated in 3 bracketing interviews over the course of the project. Other graduate students who were familiar with my work interviewed me and followed the format of the other interviews in the study. As

well, I engaged in ongoing journal writing that focused on how my position and beliefs might be influencing the analysis.

7. *Mining the data for metaphors.* Throughout the process of analysis I gave careful attention to metaphors that might be significant in terms of meaning units, themes and patterns.

Reporting the Findings

Along with the findings of this study being presented in this dissertation, the study has also been reported on at numerous conference presentations and peer reviewed articles. In addition, I hope to further disseminate the data in texts that are useful to practicing educators. Because the study is “an exploration into the essential nature of the experience studied” (Oberg, 1989, p. 7) my hope is that any final documents will read more like a conversation than a static account of the course experience. In this regard, the focus of dissemination will not be prescriptive. Instead, the direction will be assisting the reader to act with more understanding in the context of teaching practice.

Summary

In the context of my research, the combined methodologies of narrative inquiry and phenomenology allowed me to focus on the multidimensional transformative effects that arose in the Earth Fibres course. A phenomenological analysis of the students’ narrative accounts of their personal experience gave a sense of how their dispositions shifted towards others cultures, and towards learning and teaching in the context of the course. These methodologies served the study well due to their ability to accommodate changing perspectives, transformative learning styles and an indigenous worldview.

Chapter 4 – The Findings

Complex pedagogy as woven strands of a spiraling wheel

The Earth Fibres course is deeply rooted in a complex pedagogy. This requires writing that frames the findings in a way that is reflective of its web-like complexity. The course was a vessel for numerous different experiential stories. Because of this, there are many ways to tell the stories of what happened, and as many ways to present what might be considered significant in the data. I am concerned that I relay the stories I heard in the data in a way that honours the living complexity of the course. I worry that the experience might become too dissected or linear in the telling. For this reason, I start this chapter on the findings with three framework images that I find to be useful in bringing clarity to the data.



Figure 6: Buckskin Print, Echoing Complexity

To begin, the stories in the Earth Fibres course can be likened to the image of braided strands of cedar woven together to make designs that are both interesting to look at as well as functional. In the context of this writing, I have chosen to highlight four specific storylines, or strands in the braid, that emerge from the data and appear to be important from my perspective as a participant/researcher in the course. These strands are the intertwined stories of the wisdom keepers (WKs), preservice teachers (PSTs), and the actual earth fibres (EF) themselves. The fourth strand, that of my own experience, is

discussed in other chapters. The three strands highlighted here are filled with multiple stories that weave around and through each other, demonstrating the reciprocal nature of the overall experience.



Figure 7: Charlene and Learner, Braiding

The first strand, that of the WK stories, tells of the underlying intent of the instructors who wanted, as WK Charlene said, to “bring the strength of the old teachings into the modern” through sharing a variety of traditional skills using natural earth fibres. The WKs story is rooted in generations of people who have lived close to the land, such as the local Coast Salish areas of T’Sou-ke, Saanich, Esquimalt, and Songhees (what we now refer to as lower Vancouver Island) extending back many, many generations before colonial impact.

The second storyline is that of the non-Aboriginal PSTs enrolled in the course. Their ancestors are of European descent and they come to the land of the Coast Salish as relatively recent arrivals. For the most part, these PSTs took the course because they felt unprepared to teach the Aboriginal students in their public school classrooms. Additionally, many expressed that they were looking for a different or novel educational experience of some kind. As Lindsay (I1) said, there was a longing for a “genuine” learning experience within an educational context in contrast to their previous school experiences.

The third strand in the storyline is that of the earth fibres themselves – the cattails, cedarbark, wool, buckskin, and shell buttons that were ever present in the course. These fibres tell the story of this physical place, of that which has endured here in this location, over time. While there are obviously no interviews with the fibres, the stories are there and are woven through the data in powerful ways. Together, the three strands create a metaphorical braid of lived experience that survived in stark contrast against the positivist-oriented backdrop of the university, a context that the course so boldly tries to disrupt.

Alongside of the image of the braid, the main themes in the data (those of place; spirituality; learning that guides your soul; good hands; and integration) emerged as being deeply congruent with a framework suggestive of the spiraling sensibilities found in the Métis medicine wheel. The teachings about the wheel were first described to me in an interview with WK Lynne midway through the EF course. In a more recent meeting, she told me that using the wheel is a good match for the findings because she believes it is “teaching about circles and not about squares” (follow-up interview, March 2009). Further, the holistic and flowing nature of the wheel echoes the intricacies of the EF experience.

Lynne has generously given the teachings of the wheel to me to use in the context of this writing, and I thank her deeply for that. Nonetheless, I want to be clear that it is not my intent to appropriate this knowledge away from the Métis people from whose tradition it extends. In addition, my intent is to use the wheel, not as a static model, but rather as a resting place of sorts, a fluid framework that can hold the data that represents the EF course experience in a gentle way, as it lives and breathes in my researcher hands.

The wheel is a place where the data can rest for a time, as I tease out some of the stories, before they move on, as stories do, to become whatever else they are meant to be.

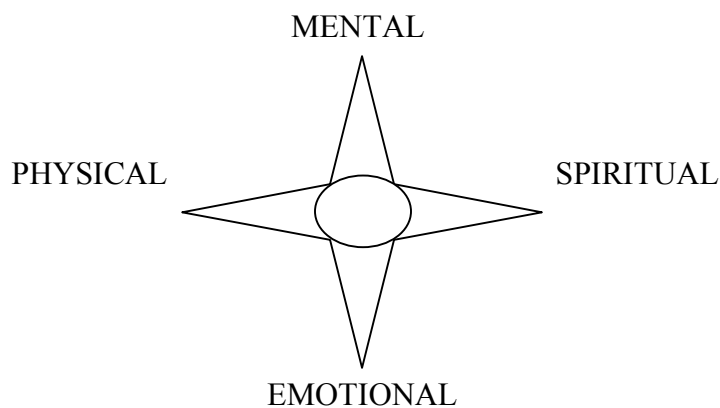


Figure 8: Medicine Wheel

To clarify my decision to use the wheel as a framework, I would like to describe in more detail the process I went through. As I moved through the various stages of data analysis, I struggled greatly to find a suitable framework and took various potential frameworks to meetings with Dr. Williams. She would verbally reinforce my feeling that I had not quite gotten a framework that was right – they were always too hierarchical or linear in nature. I was consciously trying to let go of my Western oriented mindset, but couldn't quite find a place to call home.

Eventually, I decided to make a return visit to WK Lynne, as she was one of my participants who had offered to meet me above and beyond the initial interviews. My hope was that by sharing my general themes with someone who had an indigenous perspective, I might be able to realize a more organic way of presenting my findings. At that point, I had around 18 or so loose groupings of the data that I had been arranging in different ways in an attempt to find a structure for the writing of this chapter. As I showed the group headings to Lynne, I sketched a visual diagram of how I thought the

data were unfolding. At the time, my drawing was similar a DNA structure whorl with the stories of the PSTs and the WKs interweaving and spiraling upwards. Quickly Lynne recognized the congruence with the Métis wheel. Working together we placed what are now my sub-themes, into the four directions of the wheel. I developed labels for the five themes as represented in the following diagram:

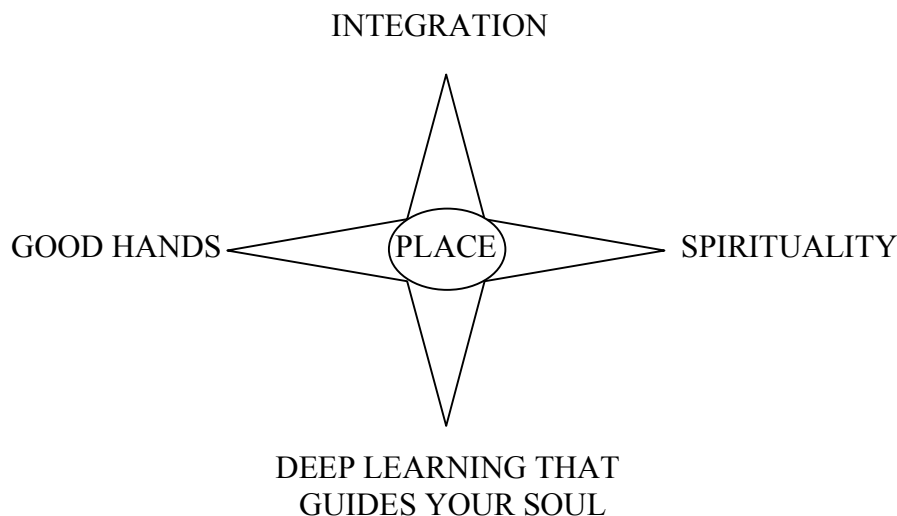


Figure 9: The Data Themes

The Métis medicine wheel, as I understand it through Lynne’s teachings, is a simple reflective tool that helps to situate a person amidst relationships in a given time and place.

Lane, Bopp, Bopp, Brown and Elders (1984), describe the medicine wheel as:

An ancient symbol used by almost all the Native people of North and South America. There are many different ways that this basic concept is expressed: the four grandfathers, the four winds, the four cardinal directions, and many other relationships that can be expressed by four. Just like a mirror can be used to see things not normally visible (e.g. behind us or around a corner), the medicine wheel can be used to help us see or understand things we can’t quite see or understand because they are ideas and not physical objects. (p. 9)

In a similar way, WK Charlene spoke briefly in a follow-up interview (June 10, 2009) about local Coast Salish teachings that draw from an image of four house poles holding up a lodge. Although the course was offered on Coast Salish territory, I chose to use the

Métis wheel as a framework with the guidance of WK Lynne because the wheel was very present in both my observations of the course and within the data.

Lynne teaches from her Métis tradition that “the true power in the wheel is in the centre, in the hub, and the outer rim follows” (Lynne, I1). The middle of the wheel is a place of strength and connection to spirit, reminiscent of a place where it is possible to connect to Aluli-Meyer’s “knowledge that endures.” Lynne told me:

With your four directions, you have the four teachings. North, South, East, and West. North is strength, the East is the ancestors and illumination and wisdom, the South is purity and innocence and the child within and joy, and the West is the looks within place and it's the place of here and now, paying your bills, looking after life, you know, being responsible, all that stuff goes in the West. (Lynne, I1)

Lynne continued on to describe a process of “walking the wheel” when trying to discern a good path to take in a given situation. Her description evoked a sense of spiraling movement for me where the walker of the wheel continuously comes back to centre after visiting the four directions for clarification. Since that conversation, I have personally experienced walking the wheel on a few occasions, and for me, after “returning” to the centre, I noticed a shift in my understanding that slightly adjusted my sense of self. In this way I experienced the wheel as a reflexive practice that helped me recognize and clarify my innermost beliefs. Placing my data in the frame of the wheel became then, a reflective process that furthered my analysis in a way that is congruent with the worldview articulated by the Wks.

The final metaphorical tool that I use in this chapter is that of a simple strand of beads. As I proceeded to tell the story I imagined that each quote or idea was a bead that I placed on a string. In between those beads are comments that I have tied gently to hold the beads in place. This strand would look different if someone else placed the beads. At

its heart, this story is my own story – my interpretation through my personal sensing and writing. I ask the reader, as you continue through my articulation of the findings, to keep in mind the images of the braid, medicine wheel, and beaded strand as temporary tools that help to describe the EF course experience for the time, place and purpose of this writing.

What follows, are some of the interwoven stories of the experiences in the EF course, laid out within the directions of the medicine wheel. I begin in the centre with the theme of place, and walk through the four directions with the themes of spirituality; learning that guides your soul; good hands; and integration. As ordered as this might appear, the woven braid is much more complex and interdependent. The path laid out in this chapter is one of many possible ways through and a temporary snapshot of lived experience in the EF course.

Summary of Findings
(Walking the wheel)

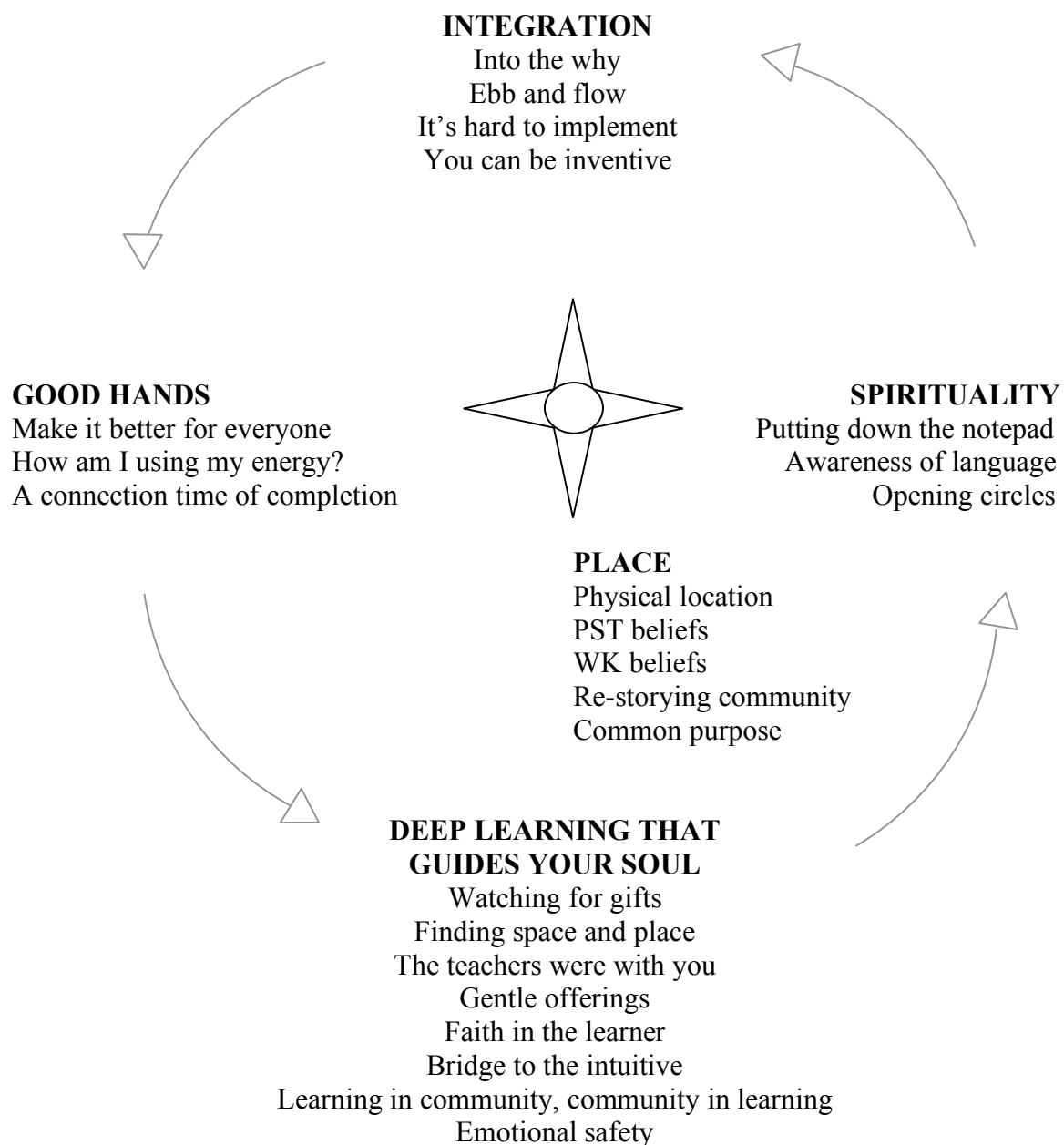
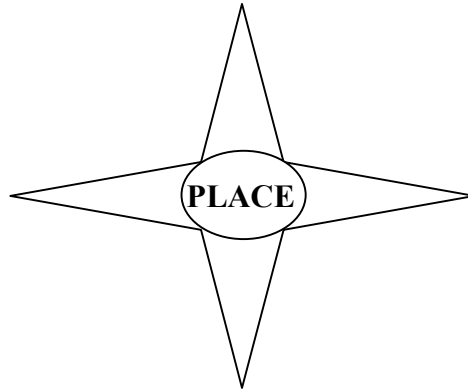


Figure 10: Summary of Findings



Place: A sense of Location and Common Purpose

Older than my great grandmother would be if she were alive today, the cattail mats, call to me. Their presence is soothing and a sense of wonder arises from my being. I feel a great connection that I cannot explain. I sense the embodied spirit of things that came before – both in the physicality of the cattails and in the stories of those who have sat on the mats around fires of long ago. I listen to the voice of Charlene. She is telling of how the cattails no longer grow so tall. I try to listen through the meditative opening of every pore of my skin. What is this knowing? What is this place? What are these stories that I am honoured to hear? For now, it is enough for me to sit in the presence of these mats, listening. (Field notes)



Figure 11: 100-Year-Old Cattail Mats

The theme of place, at the centre of the wheel, contains the five sub-themes of physical location, preservice teacher beliefs, wisdom keeper beliefs, re-storying community, and common purpose. Overall, location is about knowledge of position including physical, spiritual, personal and social sites. The first sub-theme, *physical location*, looks at how physical environment and the earth fibres that are an extension of that, affect our sense of place. The second and third sub-themes, *preservice teacher*

beliefs and *wisdom keeper beliefs*, discuss how finding location as a teacher requires examining personal beliefs, as described by WK Charlene:

[Connecting with your students] has to come from a real deep understanding of your own self, from where you came from, from where your siblings might have come from. Because whether that was a created family or a physical family, you are in that family structure, so what did you learn from that? What did you learn from looking at those other people? What did you learn from feeling from all those other people?

Charlene points out the importance of teachers having an understanding of personal positioning through a sense of what has been learned from relationships with people. To locate the participants in their perceived positioning as teachers, I report on the beliefs that they held around the topic of learning and teaching at the beginning of the EF course.

The fourth sub-theme, *re-storying community*, describes how the EF course was a different type of learning community than what the PSTs typically experienced in both university and within the public schools. This re-defined space was crucial as a starting place for cross-cultural understanding. The final sub-theme, *common purpose*, has to do with the conscious intent of both the PSTs and the Wks to envision the EF course as a site for making schools better places for learners (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) through an experience that deepens PSTs cultural knowledge of indigenous ways.

Physical Location: Knowing through Connecting to Nature

The Wks saw the actual physical earth fibres as being central to understanding knowledge of a certain place. This wisdom that sits in the natural fibre was often demonstrated through stories in the course. Charlene pointed out the length of the cattails in the 100-year mat and compared them to the significantly shorter ones she had brought in for us to weave that day. That visual knowledge of how things had changed was striking. Ben (I2) shared how the course was a unique learning opportunity where

“examining the plants, seeing the working knowledge in action” was like “almost seeing a history.” His comment points out the usefulness of such a direct interaction with a physical place to gain knowledge about the changes in our physical environment.

There is also a different kind of wisdom in the earth fibres. There are the cultural stories of the people who reside on the territories alongside of the fibres. WK Caroline talked about the importance of cedar in the Hesqiaht traditions:

We use the roots, we use the wood, we use the bark, we even use the branches and the greens when we pray... It's such a part of our culture...it's like your right arm or your left arm. It's a piece that's always there.

Caroline went on to say that “if there was one essence that could be captured” for the mural project, it should be cedar because of its cultural importance. In this way, the significance of cedar extends beyond physical usefulness to include it being used to show respect for the physical environment in social contexts and the WKs felt that this notion was transferred to the students in the EF course. Lindsay (I1) speaks in depth about learning beyond the surface of a place:

We learned what I wrote down on my paper, like names of plants, all the different things we can do. But we also learned to pay attention to the plants that we walk through, and, the whole tobacco [giving], and the thank you. And [Della] was singing before pulling some of the plants and being respectful. Like, there was that whole experience that you can take a lot more learning experiences from than just simply, this is rosehip and it helps with blank.

Having a deep connectedness to nature was seen as being important by both the WKs as well as the PSTs. The WKs were very clear in their goals to help students see patterns in nature and connect them with their everyday lives. Charlene, as lead instructor, often discussed the seasons, the moons and how certain things happened at certain cyclical times. Many of the WKs spoke of the importance of experiencing the wholeness of a given earth fibres process to really understand a reciprocal connection to

earth. WK Caroline felt “forlorn” that her group couldn’t “process it from start to finish” by going out to strip the cedar bark right from the tree:

They would have had a more profound awareness if they had been able to get that bark themselves. So, I was trying to explain to them...that although we were not able to take them out to get their own bark because it was not the season...if they could maybe go out and find some forest, and offer up a little prayer, whatever they felt appropriate, a little gift or tobacco or something that they felt, you know? I just wanted them to have that at least. But it was hard to reiterate everything about the whole process just verbally. So that was the one drawback.

This type of deeper awareness was seen as being lacking for both Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal children in today’s classrooms. WK Gay spoke about a cultural camp experience in her own community:

We had brought children...to the lake to cut fish. Within five minutes I think three of the students fell in the lake. And I said my goodness! This is our surrounding, this is where we live for all the time, and yet our children can't function in what should be normal for our children to function. They don't really grasp how to respect the fish, they don't really grasp that it's connected. The fish isn't only connected to us – we are connected to the fish. And you can't put that into them unless they live it, unless they do the whole process. And that's what I [would like to see] for education.

And Amber (I1) saw a similar need in non-Aboriginal students:

it just doesn't have to be First Nations culture, you don't have to teach it in that way. But why not take your kids on a walk and tell them some things about the plants, or ask them to sit under a tree instead of in the classroom when you're teaching them, or things like that, you know? Why not? Why isn't it that way? Why are kids watching TV instead of going outside? I guess this class has got me thinking about that.

For the PSTs, the EF course brought to the fore questions about how they could get students to appreciate the environment and feel a connection that had been lost. This lack of connection to nature was expressed in many ways by the participants. They spoke of how novel it was to interact with nature and how they enjoyed being a few steps closer to the environment right outside their doorway. As Lindsay (I1) said, “Can you believe that

we've gone through so many years of school and we've never learned what the plants outside the window are and all the cool things they can do?"

Like his peers, Darren (I1) worried about the institutionalized settings that children, surrounded by four walls, learn in. He recognized that "the environment that we learn in has major impact on what we learn, and how we use that knowledge." The PSTs were aware of the difficulties of implementing nature-based programs in schools on a practical level (e.g. liability issues.)

At the same time, the PSTs were becoming aware of other barriers that kept them at a distance from being in nature and both WKs and PSTs expressed concerns about the overall health of the planet. WK Gay articulated how consumerism plays a role in damaging nature and said that "getting along" with nature would leave us "better off, instead of destroying so much of it and in turn, destroying ourselves possibly. I don't know it seems like there should be a better way." The following dialogue with Jenni (I1) elucidates how she was in a process of getting in touch with nature, and how that might transfer into her teaching in ways that counteract the nature deficit of her students:

J: I loved the second class when Della took us out to the garden and taught us all the plants. And just the fact that she was actually in, like right next to the plants and trees and stuff. Whereas other teachers might have stood with us on the path, but she was right in there in the dirt, and the earth... And at first, I noticed that we were all on the path, because we don't walk on the grass here. I think "oh, I don't want to wreck the gardener's hard work". And then I noticed after a while people were walking through the garden... so I think we realized that it was okay to be in there, like a part of the whole thing.

M: That's interesting. I didn't notice that, but now that you say it, I wonder why that is. Do you have any sense of that?

K: I don't know, I think it's that there's always signs to stay off the grass, or don't pick the flowers, that sort of thing. So, for me it seems like nature or gardens, or whatever, is just there to look at from a distance. So it was nice to really know

that we could get closer to it. Because I think it's more healing than probably I realized.



Figure 12: Della Immersed in Nature

Jenni's description of realizing that she could actually be right next to the plants supports her understanding of what a nature deficit actually feels like. And her sense of wellbeing in nature echoes concerns held by other PSTs who speak of experiencing a different sense of energy when they are connected to nature or are working with natural materials. The EF course nourished the participants' need for close contact with nature and gave them concrete examples of how nature can be incorporated in the classroom. This attachment to physical place within the surrounding environment became a cornerstone for the class pedagogy. A sense of physical place supplemented a sense of place based on cultural location.

Preservice Teacher Beliefs: Consciously Finding the Way to Teach

This section describes how the PSTs placed themselves in terms of their teaching beliefs. Overall, the PSTs saw themselves as being actively involved in a process of developing as a teacher. They acknowledged that learning and teaching were complex endeavours that required them to try and make sense of what one PST called, a "jumble of teaching beliefs" (Kim, I1). During the interviews they were consistently hesitant when asked to explain what the concept of learning meant to them -- they had not thought about it much before the class. They welcomed the process as a chance to explore the

topic, as Lindsay (I1) expressed, “it’s not everyday that you sit down and question teacher roles, and where you are in your life.”

The beliefs expressed by the PSTs revolved around constructivist notions of learning where the learner needed to be engaged and hands-on in a lifelong process. “It’s like building blocks in your brain or something, always adding to things” (Jenni 1). This quote from Kim (I1) is typical:

My teaching beliefs, or philosophies are still really developing, but for the most part I want to bring the world into my classroom. And I think in order to do that properly I have to get as much experience as possible...I’m not into rote learning, like I don’t believe in kids sitting at their desks doing math sheets and spelling sheets. And I’ve been in classrooms like that teaching, and it’s just not me. I want kids to have fun – I want kids to enjoy life. And hopefully those kids who aren’t maybe enjoying life at the time that I meet them, that maybe I can help them in some ways to appreciate what they have, and learn how to go on with life in a positive way and become lifelong learners.

The PSTs believed that some learning was fact-based and required transmissive approaches to teaching, but they also were looking for ways of engaging learners in “interesting methods that aren’t really out there yet” (Amber, I1). They talked about how, in some of their courses, they were asked to put kids in boxes to categorize their learning. They felt that “you can’t separate teaching and learning from life in general, and we know that life’s an awfully complex thing” (Lindsay, I1). The PSTs felt that many of their teacher education classes were narrow in scope and they wanted to take more diverse courses that were not limited to subject area, believing that the EF course would add to their knowledge in important ways.

The process of learning was seen by the PSTs as a vehicle that gave the learner power through knowing, and freedom to follow their passions. Learning was also seen as

a social endeavour where social skills and peer learning are fundamentally important.

Tristain speaks to this:

Learning? In a classroom setting its kind of taking up ideas, and building on your own background experiences, and adding to that. Not only from the teacher, but from your peers and just getting a broader sense of what the world's like, as well as the content area. But I think the social skills and the life skills are the most important things to be learning in the classroom setting...I know no kids are blank slates – and I know they go in with some knowledge, some notions that may not be fully correct, but they are their ideas, their beliefs. And they just build on that through experiences that they're exposed to and the other people they are exposed to. (Tristain, 1)

Learning was also tied with social responsibility and making the world a better place. Many of the PSTs believed that learners get more out of learning when it happens in community, citing that it was important to have a positive environment where “people feel comfortable sharing their ideas and there is respect” (Tristain 1). For a teacher to take on a role of counselor was seen as problematic by some participants who felt they might be crossing a fine line that they were unprepared for. Eva (I1) thought that “maybe if I had more qualities, like training in how to talk to them like that, but really my job is to motivate and inspire them and get them excited about learning.” I continued this conversation with her:

M: What are the skills that a counselor would have that a teacher isn't taught?

L: I think what a lot of counselors do is kind of echo back people's feelings in an articulate way that [shows] they understand...But, I think it's so sensitive for teachers to be in that role even though we may feel like we have the insight to do that role. But that's just not our job. And it's just an area where we really can't go into...We can't allow children to be opening up to us and to have this confidentiality because it just causes a different dynamic in the class.

Despite these feelings of being unprepared to deal with emotions that might come up in a classroom, PSTs felt that teachers should promote “compassion and empathy” in their classroom as well as take the lead to “establish guidelines” around respectful

environments.

For the most part, PSTs also felt unprepared to teach students who were culturally different than themselves, particularly Aboriginal students, despite having Aboriginal content in some of their classes, as Lindsay describes (I1):

I think there's a need. I mean, this morning we watched a movie...about residential schools. And it was exploring some of the social issues that surround Aboriginal education in BC today...And I thought, gosh, I'm glad I'm in [the EF] class because, I guess what I'm thinking is that this class will provide just a small insight into a culture that is so complex and so different and diverse that perhaps in the traditional curriculum we have simplified and not...given it the respect or the understanding that maybe it needs to be able to bring it into the curriculum. I mean, its listed in our curriculum, it's there. We as teachers are coming out, supposedly ready to teach it, but it's by no means something I feel ready to teach.

Many of the PSTs see the EF course as a way of gaining practical methods to meet the needs of cross-cultural classrooms.

One of the interview questions asked the PSTs to give an image of what they believed the roles of the learner and teacher to be. The images they gave for learners were: a vacuum sucking up information; something growing, such as a flower or tree; a sponge absorbing; a sponge becoming conscious of absorbing knowledge; or a swimmer in a stream of knowledge. The teacher was seen primarily in a gentle directive role as tour guide; leader; manager; role model; guide; helper; friend; learner; coach; instructor; giver of knowledge and facilitator. The PSTs saw the role of teacher as being a complex response to the many responsibilities of the classroom that require a “career sort of mentality” that can juggle different expectations. In addition, they often acknowledged that it was their job to help learners find passion around learning, as expressed by Leigh (I1):

I think there [are] many forms of teaching for the many types of learning that there are. So you could have your factual teacher who just covers the basic facts,

the facts of life, the facts of textbooks. But then you can also totally go beyond that and be aware of where your student's sponges are located, and what they're ready to take in, and that all students are different so try and connect things to *all* their learning levels [which is] kind of difficult I'm sure. But, try and teach not just to those facts but to deeper meanings, and things that are going to really intrigue and make kids passionate about learning.

To summarize, the PSTs looked at learning as a constructivist process embedded and influenced by a social context. They believed that developing social skills was of fundamental importance in promoting healthy classroom learning communities. Despite being in their final term at university, the PSTs did not feel prepared to deal with emotional issues in the classroom. They also felt unprepared to teach Aboriginal students as well as Aboriginal content. They saw learning and teaching as a complex process where the teacher took a gentle directive role in facilitating the learning of the child.

Wisdom Keeper Beliefs: Bringing the Teachings Forward

This section attempts to locate the WKs culturally by looking at their beliefs around teaching and learning. In response to open questions, the WKs were much less hesitant than the PSTs to speak. As lead instructor, Charlene was clear in her intent to “bring the strength of the old teachings into the modern” and this was reflected by the other WKs as well. They wanted the PSTs to pay attention to natural cycles such as weather and personal interactions and think about how these things may have changed since contact. Charlene spoke of how these teachings were often subtle, “internal learnings” that took time to be absorbed after “seeds” were planted. WK Gina said that, “sometimes the lessons are so subtle, you don't realize you're being taught” until years later. WK May spoke about the importance of these lessons embedded in unconscious learning, saying that often they are “learning but not knowing it. The teachings that [me and my husband] have passed on, have taught our children how to be.”

The Wks talked about how the teachings had been misrepresented, persecuted and destroyed since colonization. And they described their struggle to find the ways that things used to be done. Charlene mentioned that some of the teachings were private and couldn't be shared in the context of the course. At the same time, Wks were excited to share what knowledge they could with the learners in the course. They saw the working with textiles, and the eating of food together as good times to share teachings. WK May explained how "part of our teachings is [that] we're teaching while people are eating, and swallowing. They are swallowing what they're learning, and remember it."



Figure 13: Swallowing While Learning

Conceptually, the Wks saw learning as an organic and focused process embedded in the practical usefulness of getting to know how things work, beginning with a process of observation. From there "you can learn just because you're around it all the time" and you "do it hands-on only later" (WK Gay). Throughout the learning process, the learner "absorbs the information into [their] whole being so that it's there without consciously thinking about it" (WK Gina). Gina describes the process of learning from her elders:

I would watch them, whatever they were doing. Whether it was learning to fillet salmon, or hanging the salmon in a smokehouse, or making jam, picking berries, making bread. Both my grandmothers made their own bread for all their lives, and I do that today. And I can remember saying to my one grandmother, "what recipe do you use?" And she said, "I don't have a recipe, I've been doing this all my life." And I said, "well, I'd like to learn, but I need a recipe. I need to get the measuring cups out, and I need to know how much flour to put in, how much yeast to use." And she said, "I'll write you out the recipe." And so the next time she made a batch of bread, she measured everything, wrote it all down.

And then, it wasn't until I was probably in my 30s, and I have my own children, and I'd been making bread every week for many years, that I realized where my grandmother had been when she was trying to teach me how to make bread. Because I don't measure anything anymore, and my daughter had the same problem. You know, "how am I going to learn mom if I don't have a recipe?" And my grandmother taught me that making bread is a very personal thing. You get to feel the dough, and you know the texture, and you *know* when it's just right. And you can only learn that by doing it.

This quote describes the process of watching followed by doing, as well giving an example of how the “seeds” of the teachings can take time before they are realized. The notion of watching is so important that some of the Wks were concerned that the adult learners in the class would be unable to pick up the work because they had not had the chance to first observe the craft skills over time. Another concern revolved around questions of learner intent. WK Gay wondered if her efforts would be worthwhile:

That was the other thing I was trying to sort out...Do I want to teach someone that just wants to do it the one time? Do you know? And that was difficult for me because most of the time the people that I like to teach, are the ones that are not doing something for a living, but they do something for themselves.

The notion of the learner doing something for themselves is tied to a common belief amongst the Wks that the learner had to want to learn, and that the learner had an intuitive sense about what learning was appropriate for them. In addition, many of the Wks spoke about how when a learner creates, for example, beadwork or a button blanket, the process is connected to spiritual knowing, or as WK Lynne's husband James⁵ put it, the learner becomes the “creator creating.” This idea of autonomy of the learner is seen as opportunity as WK Janet explains:

It's like being a photographer and knowing that the perfect picture is out there just waiting for you, and...it's your job...to recognize it...The learner is the photographer knowing that what they *need* to learn, want to learn is out there for

⁵ James was present in my interviews with Lynne and participated in the discussion.

them...It's the job of...the learner to recognize the opportunities or the instances where they can learn.

In fact, for many of the Wks the very term “teacher” is problematic. As Lynne says:

You don't teach anybody, people learn. And they learn what they're willing to absorb...because example is the only real teacher...You can share your knowledge, you can share your awareness, but you can't teach...I don't like the word teach because I don't believe anybody teaches anybody anything. I think people share knowledge and awareness, and that's what you're doing with the children. And as soon as you stop teaching them, and start sharing knowledge with them you'll reach them better.

Many of the Wks had an attitude of being teachers who love to share knowledge.

As WK Caroline said, “I'm not a master in this. I'm just here to show you some simple ways of manipulating the bark so we can make something. But I'll tell you a little bit about what I know.” Other Wks talked about how this process was simply a “natural place” of sharing how to do something the teacher was seen as being open to learning and on the same level as their students in many ways.

A Different Sense of Community: Learning in Families through Story

The overall theme of community is fundamental to the course experience and it was talked about many times during the interviews, by both the PSTs as well as the Wks. From this “centre of the wheel” perspective in the reporting of the findings, the poignant stories about community revolve around the idea of the EF course creating a different kind of learning community than those the PSTs are familiar with. It became an active re-storying, or redefining of the possible ways a learning community can be. Within the EF course, the notion of community is strongly tied to a deeper sense of place for the PSTs who felt welcomed and included in the non-judgmental environment created by the Wks.

The PSTs perceived the Wks as having a strong sense of personal culture that was embedded in an equally strong sense of community. They also were aware that

community was structured differently for the WKs. The term “family” was used often in the class to refer to the large group as well as the smaller groups, but took on new meanings in the context of the course. Amber (I1) explains:

I heard Lorna calling all of us a family a few times. And I know cousins and sisters and brothers isn't defined as I define it. Which is neat, it's anyone who you love and care about in that way. It can be your sister, or your brother, or your cousin, or your auntie. That's kind of neat, how family is a broad spectrum instead of this little tight knit group (laughter).

WK Lynne talks about how this notion of extended family that has more of a group consciousness begins at birth in her community where babies are passed from grandma to grandma and never put down. This sense of community was evident throughout the course in the way that the WKs included and acknowledged the PSTs in many aspects of the decision making process. As well, the WKs often brought “extra” people with them to the class, children, siblings, spouses, etc. The PSTs were impressed by the fact that some of the visitors, who were teens, would be interested and/or willing to go to school with a parent. As Leigh (I1) said, “I couldn't imagine sitting in that room with my mom right next to me, you know?”

The PSTs were conscious of not wanting to idealize the relationships they saw, but expressed that it was refreshing to be around that kind of closeness across generations. Some felt that while they were close to their own family, things seemed to be more of a production or an obligation when they get together. Tasha (I1) explains the importance of community:

I really like the aspect of having leaders from the community come in. I think that that's something that is so crucial and it's such a powerful connection...because it really helps create a sense of place, and a sense of belonging... Where are we, and why is this my community, and how am I connected to it? And I think that that's something that is so important for anyone to have – is that sense of “I belong

here.” You know, this is somewhere where I’m welcome, where I feel comfortable.

The PSTs spoke about how important it was for them to hear the stories of others as they introduced themselves at the beginning of the course. Some were impatient about this initially, as they thought it would be a superficial activity, but they changed their minds as they listened, finding it to be one of the most useful and enjoyable parts of the early classes in terms of building community across cultures. Darren (I1) shared that:

Hearing everyone's stories, especially the stories from the people that are from First Nations cultures was pretty impactful for me because I want to learn so much. I feel so disconnected from other culture’s ways of learning, that it’s kind of neat [hearing] why they're in this class and what they’d like to get out of it...For [some] people it was a long journey to get to this class...You know I don't see this much in classes here, in my program anyways. Giving other people just the chance to speak their mind, and not always feel like they're being graded on it or anything like that. I've enjoyed that.

Many of the PSTs felt that their stories were not as interesting or as important as those of some of the other participants, and Ben wondered if “that would change significantly if we were to introduce ourselves again at the end of the course” (I1).



Figure 14: Listening to Each Other’s Stories

For many of the PSTs there was a sense that the stories told in families and community are significant in the passing down or articulation of cultural beliefs. They were struck by the depth of this type of knowledge transfer that happened for the Wks.

As Jamie (I2) said:

Hearing everybody's experiences that they've had growing up, and their grandmothers and their aunties and sisters, and moms, and passing down the knowledge, I thought it was really neat...they can just tell story after story of sitting with somebody, and their learning by doing and telling in stories and that's a really important part of learning. And yeah, it's really missing in my family and in my culture. I thought that was really neat though, just to stop and be with somebody and learn like that.

The WKs typical ways of being in community gave the PSTs a re-storied sense of what a learning community could be. In this particular community the PSTs feel welcomed and thoughtful about their personal sense of place in the larger context of their own community and culture. From this more nuanced place of knowing through physical place, teaching beliefs and community I move now to add the last bead onto the strand within the centre of the wheel – common purpose.

Common Purpose: Increasing Cultural Awareness of Preservice Teachers

While there were many intentions in the EF course, the overall purpose stems from the need for teachers to have a better understanding of Aboriginal children in their classrooms. It was acknowledged by both the PSTs and WKs that in Canadian classrooms, Aboriginal children won't always be taught by Aboriginal teachers, and that therefore non-Aboriginal teachers needed to know more about possible ways that Aboriginal students learn, as well as possible ways they live outside of the classroom.

Kim (I1) said:

I think it's so important to teach kids about the world and that we're just this tiny little place in this huge universe...And I think I can't teach that understanding unless I have experience with other cultures...You can read about [places in the world] but it's not the same. I think actually being in this class and working with things from the earth, it just sort of starts that experience, if that makes sense.

Additionally, there was acknowledgement by both groups that Aboriginal students can have different learning styles and learning needs that should be attended to and that it

was problematic for schools to measure all students by only one standard. They cited examples of difference such as learning and telling through stories, observing before acting, not using eye contact so that listening is heightened, etc., as being important issues to consider in the classroom.

Charlene, as lead instructor, also saw that developing an understanding of a physical, natural, place was tied to understanding and working better with students cross-culturally. She hoped that the EF course would give the PSTs a “flavouring” of awareness about nature that would then help them in the future with any “native student that they might have in their class, or a student from another total area of this whole planet.” She also looked at the course as a way to bring awareness to the planetary changes that are occurring, saying that “people still stick their heads in the sand for the most part. They don't want to stand up and have a look.”

The WKs were conscious of creating a space where the PSTs could experience ways of learning and teaching that were congruent with learning dynamics in Aboriginal community settings. They were making a conscious effort to pass this awareness on to others that could support the work they were trying to do. This attitude fit into the teaching philosophies of the PSTs, who were aware and upset by the ways in which Aboriginal students and indigenous pedagogy was marginalized in the schools. Lindsay (I1) articulates the need for a university experience that directly addresses these concerns:

[I] would like all children to see something of themselves in the classroom environment. And that goes with any child from any culture. So the more as an outgoing teacher, I can experience different cultures and get an idea – and just have different teaching strategies and different learning experiences – the more I can create that diverse classroom too.

The PSTs wanted a hands-on, authentic environment where they felt like they were experiencing the actual pedagogy that they were hoping to go out to teach. They were tired of being in classes where the instructor asked them to “do as I say, not as I do.” As Eva (I1) said, “It’s hard to create that ideal classroom without having experienced it yourself.” The EF course gave the PSTs hope that they could gain insight and understanding into how they might work to change the narrow practices they too often observed in schools. As Lindsay said, “to be able to experience this classroom environment and then for us to be able to take that experience and bring it into the classroom is priceless.”

The PSTs saw that in some cases there was a deliberate effort on the part of some of their peers to avoid learning about Aboriginal culture. On the other hand, the Wks were conscious of providing a space within the university environment where the status quo was being disturbed. The PSTs felt that the course reaffirmed values that they held about education and that the class set an example that helped them put their teaching goals into perspective. This was often described in contrast to experiences they had in other courses in the program that they perceived to be more outdated, conventional and unhelpful for the issues they would be facing in the classroom.

The PSTs also saw themselves as needing experiences that would help them feel more comfortable as advocates for their Aboriginal students and wanted more understanding so that they could share indigenous ways with other non-Aboriginal students, as Amber (I1) expresses:

I’m hoping to take [what I learn] into the classroom so I can teach...children this wonderful culture that's all around us really, even if they're not indigenous people, I think it's a part of them. This is the land where they lived. And I hope to get a sense of that more, and a sense of the culture more. Because like I said, I never

learned that, I don't know a lot about the culture in terms of being able to say they value this, and do that. (I1)

In addition, the PSTs expressed discomfort about not knowing what was politically correct language and behaviour in indigenous contexts, and saw the EF course as giving them a safe place to explore those questions.

Both the WKs and the PSTs saw the importance of interacting with each other to develop deeper relationships and understandings about indigenous ways, so that the PSTs “didn’t feel so weird when they start to teach” students who were Aboriginal (WK Caroline). WK Gina stated that “one of the problems we have in this world today, the reason we don't have peace, is because we’re not taking the time to learn about each other. We're not giving each other the respect that is due.” Both groups were excited about the possibilities of working together and were eager to learn together.

The PSTs saw the EF course as a chance to have real-live conversations with people from another culture and as Darren (I1) said, to “hear straight from them, the experience that they had been through, and their perspectives on everything.” The PSTs felt that very quickly an atypically strong sense of community was forged in the course and that it happened both cross-culturally as well as amongst themselves as a peer group. Many talked with surprise at how, even though they had spent three years together as a cohort, they were just really getting to know each other in context of the EF course. Ben (I2) believed this was because “we were united towards common goals, and we were invited to help each other implicitly.”



Figure 15: Hearing It Straight from Them

Many of the Wks talked about how encouraged they were by the level of interest in indigenous ways that was expressed by the PSTs, and WK Janet observed that the learning was done in a way where “there was just an equal amount of respect on both sides for everybody. Everybody came as a student willing and open to learn, whether they were Native or non-Native. And so that was beautiful to see.” It was frequently acknowledged by both the Wks and the PSTs that all students, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal would benefit from the types of indigenous ways of teaching and learning that were presented in the class. Many of the PSTs expressed their gratitude that the class was helping them to grow and expand personally.

The PSTs were aware that this course was unusual and important as Eva explains:

You can see that it's just so much more than a class... This is something that's hopefully a step in a more positive direction, as opposed to getting my grade out of it, or whatever. Like I just see everybody there has so much more invested in it, and there was so much more meaning behind it. It was really...necessary to have something like this. (Eva, 1)

This realization of relevancy gave the class an air of excitement and both groups were very committed to putting in energy beyond what they would normally do in a more typical university level course. The PSTs were aware that the type of changes that needed to happen would be hard work, but that the course was immediately useful to their being able to act on the topic. From the beginning of the course, they were thinking of ways to incorporate indigenous pedagogy in their upcoming final practicum experience.

Aside from the main goal of developing cultural awareness in the PSTs, there are two other intentions that should be noted. First was the intention to teach textile skills. While a few of the PSTs were drawn to the course because of their interest in working with fibres, most of the PSTs felt that they knew little about the making of textiles. Some had never used a needle or thread, and were intimidated by the challenge. Others, who were more familiar with working with fibres, opted to participate in groups that presented skills that they were unfamiliar with so that they could learn a new skill. The WKs talked about the importance of teaching basic skills so that the PSTs could continue to interact with the materials creatively and share this knowledge with others.

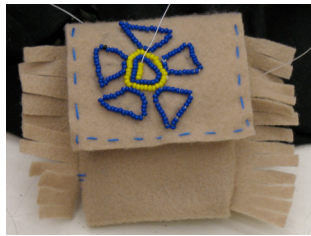


Figure 16: Simple Stitching and Beadwork

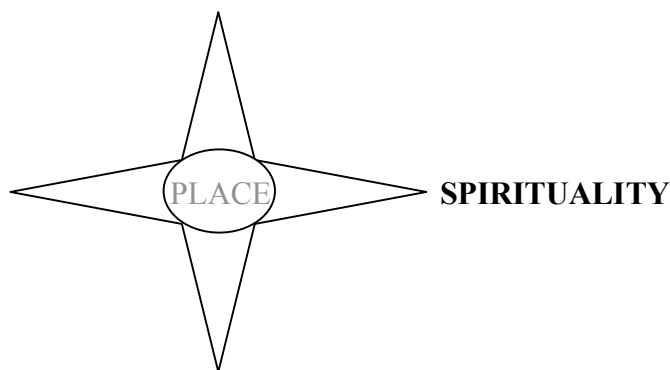
Second, there was a conscious intention to honour the work of women through the creation and display of the mural within the education building. By making the physical mural, the course is giving a stronger indigenous presence in the university that will allow future students to ask questions and understand more about indigenous ways. It is, as Janet said:

Giving honour to the women who did this work before, and before, and before – generations ago, and bringing it in this institution here and saying we validate this work, we honor this work, and we honor those women who have brought this work, helped it to survive into this day and age.

In conclusion of this sub-theme, and before we move from the centre of the wheel to spirit, I would like to share a quote from WK Gina's interview. She talked extensively

about her personal experiences as a learner within university courses, describing what a good teacher meant to her in the context of cross-cultural understanding. I believe that her words in many ways summarize the overarching goal of the course and speak to the qualities and dispositions needed in a teacher who wants to have a more inclusive, socially healthy classroom that acknowledges and thrives on diversity. Gina told me:

[Good teachers] have the heart to reach out and try to understand where [Aboriginal people] are in our location. And from those people I try and learn... I think it means an individual who has no judgment, who has no preconceived idea about what a First Nations person should be, who simply accepts them as they are, where they're at, and strives to meet them where they're at without asking a lot of questions, or wanting explanations, or [asking] "well, what is your view on this." They have an idea of our history, and our culture and they understand a lot of things that are not said when you're in a classroom. But because they are so sensitive to where you are at, they are good people to be around... It's a balance, and they're not pretending to be the experts. While they might be very learned people, they are open to what you have to say. And so it's a learning/teaching for both of you. [And] they are very honest about who they are. They know who they are... [They are people who] sit quietly and listen. And they have no motivation other than they respect the culture, they want to be in it, and they want to learn it. Those are open people. And I have no problem sharing with those people.



Spirituality: Listening through Other Ways of Knowing

It is in the East of the medicine wheel that all journeys begin.
(Lane, et. al, 1984, p. 45)

Moving from the centre, the first corner of the wheel has to do with spirit. It is a place of birth, illumination, renewal, hope for the people, courage, vulnerability, capacity

to believe in the unseen, uncritical acceptance of others, trust in your own vision, concentration, and devotion to the service to others (Lane, et. al, 1984, p. 45).

The previous section, showed that the intent, or common purpose of the EF course was to make schools better places for children, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, by giving the PSTs a lived experience of indigenous pedagogy that they could appreciate and bring forward to implement in their future classrooms. For this type of journey to really begin, the PSTs had to consciously choose to walk into unknown territory in many respects.

In this section I present data that describes how the PSTs began to listen to other ways of knowing (such as spiritual knowing). The first sub-theme, *putting down the notepad*, portrays the process of the PSTs adjusting their ways of taking in and recording the world around them. The second sub-theme, *awareness of language*, presents ways that the PSTs became aware of how language is an extension of basic cultural beliefs. The last sub-theme, *opening circles*, describes the routine yet surprising time at the beginning of each class that gave the PSTs an opportunity to adjust their frame of mind to be more congruent with an indigenous perspective. Before going to the themes, I will present more general findings about spirituality, and the PSTs' initial reasons for joining the class to give a backdrop for this spiritual location on the wheel.

The WKs spoke often and openly about how their culture is inseparable from spirit. They saw culture as holistically including the aspects of spirit, emotion, physicality and mind, just as is represented in the medicine wheel, and felt that dominant society placed an over emphasis on the latter. The WKs said that spirit is embedded in everything they do, and is experienced both consciously and unconsciously. For the WKs,

spirituality had to do with respect for all life, reciprocity with nature, connecting to ancestors, and a belief that everything is connected intimately to the creator and therefore has its own place and purpose. WK Caroline explains further as she speaks about the process of her small group using cedar bark to create the ceremonial shawl for the mural:

Sometimes when carvers get wood, [like] a cedar tree, you know they wait a while. And they wait until the tree speaks to them about this is what it's going to become. And that's very true. It's how totem poles are born, and masks are born, it's the same with the bark. So you know, maybe that bark made up its mind a long time ago, and gathered that was its purpose. And that's how I feel about it, you know? Because like I said, everything has an energy, and that's what it was born into.

The WKs spoke about how important it is to learn the skill of working with the material, and then to let go of the skills so that the spirit of the piece could be represented.

For the WKs, spirituality is tied to natural place, as with the cedar, and it is also connected to the bringing forward of wisdom from the past. WK Janet explains:

I think that it's within context to apply the word spiritual to what we did [in the course]. And I think what *that* is rooted in, is the fact that these artistic practices have come from such a long time ago. And the fact that we are participating in perpetuating these artistic practices *is* spiritual. It's many things. It's multifaceted, but spirituality is definitely one of them. It's political, it's cultural, it's educational, and it is spiritual, you know?... The measure of that is [that we are] going back out into the [larger] community, recognizing these people you've had this experience with, and feeling ah, I know who you are because of what we've done together. And I know that you're okay. I know where you're at mentally and spiritually because we've had this experience together, you know?

This quote also points out the communal nature of spirituality, and the sense that acknowledging and experiencing spirit together is a way of knowing who another person is at a deeper level of authenticity.

The teachings brought forward by the WKs, are inherently spiritual. At the same time, the PSTs saw spirituality as unfamiliar and unpredictable territory within the context of a learning environment that made them feel weird, unsure and emotional. They

were very interested in talking about it, even though I had not specifically asked about spirituality in the interviews. Three of the twelve, spoke openly and repeatedly about their own spirituality, while one said that she wasn't spiritual at all, yet the experience made her feel surprisingly intrigued by it. The remaining nine PSTs talked about the spiritual experiences in the course, with varying degrees of a sense of uncertainty, worry, excitement and awe. Katie (I1) expressed some of the concerns of uncertainty the PSTs had revolving around a sense of being out of touch with spirituality. She talked about her feelings after some visiting drummers had sung a powerful song acknowledging the recent death of a friend:

It's a really beautiful culture. They're very interconnected it seems, a lot more than my culture is... With the here and the now, and the land, and that sort of stuff, but it's [also] with the things that have gone and the stuff you can't see – people who have passed away. I find in my culture it's a lot of “if” and guessing, and you know, well *if* there is a heaven then this is what it would be like. Or, you know *if* grandma could see me right now. But, it seems with the people that I've been introduced to here – they *know*. And I would love to know. I'd love to be that confident that life is always happening and continuous and that this is just a small part of it.

Despite the unfamiliarity of a spiritually oriented learning environment, the PSTs chose to come and enroll in the course. Their initial decisions to join the class revolved around issues of practicality, past experience and passion. Overall, the PSTs enrolled because they wanted to know more about indigenous pedagogy and culture, so as to be better prepared for teaching Aboriginal students. One PST came because of convenient scheduling, although most felt that it was an inconvenient time, but came anyway. In addition, some of the PSTs said that while typically they would consult their peers before signing up for a class, in the case of EF, they made the decision on their own.

Some PSTs had had experiences with Aboriginal cultures in their personal life and realized that they only had surface information about cultural beliefs. Others had classroom experiences with Aboriginal youth that piqued their interest. Two of the PSTs heard about the course from peers and decided to register late, two knew of Dr. Williams and felt that they could learn a lot from her. The novelty of the course was appealing to some, and the chance to be involved in a class that let the PSTs be passionate in a learning environment was important to many. Overall, and unlike many of their other university courses, they felt that EF was not a class that was another hoop to jump through and that it had deep pedagogical value.

Beyond these initial choices to be a part of the course, the PSTs had to choose to come in other ways that cut more to the core of their beliefs. The following description of the three sub-themes will help to clarify some of the choices they made.

Putting Down the Notepad: Opening to Other Ways of Knowing

Many of the PSTs spoke about how EF was more of a listening class than a place to talk. They described consciously stopping the chatter in their heads that naturally and continuously critiqued what was happening. Instead, the internal monologue was replaced by a process of listening and observing through a more holistic and embodied manner. For the PSTs, paying attention in different ways was not always easy or comfortable. Many of them told me about their experience in the course of having to put aside the familiar university habit of taking written notes.

The PSTs likened taking notes with not really listening. It was a habitual way to take down information that could be memorized later on, and it looked impressive, but it often was seen as a waste of time because you really didn't have to think about what you

were writing. Eva (I2) said, while taking notes she was “copying down what's being said, but...not actually processing what's being said.” Letting go of taking notes pushed the PSTs’ comfort zone and instead of referring to the written notes they were forced to pay attention and watch instead. Kim (I1) said:

I found that if I just let go and just listened, and just took in what [Della] was saying for what it is. And not worry so much about, oh well, I really, really want to remember all these things that she's saying so I'm going to write them all down. I left my book in the classroom, I left my pen, and I came with just myself. Which is hard for me because I'm a perfectionist, you know if I'm learning I want to learn it, I want to remember it. Otherwise I sort of feel like I've failed a little bit... And I think I just sort of got past the fact that we're learning different plants and their names and what they're useful for, [and saw I was] actually learning a new way to learn. So, I think that was a big difference. That was sort of letting go of that notion that I need to learn exactly what's being said. But more, learn from the experience.

Kim’s perfectionist anxiety was shared by others PSTs, who liked to be prepared for what might be next, and will come up again as we move along to other areas of the medicine wheel.



Figure 17: Ben Listens

Putting down the note taking left PSTs feeling like they weren’t just getting ready to regurgitate information for a test. They found the process hard to describe but said that they were learning more through all of their senses and that it happened in a more effortless way. The PSTs reported that taking notes in a lecture hall required lots of energy to stay focused, while the EF experience let them absorb information without having to somehow mentally categorize it. In addition, the PSTs felt that listening

without note taking was more respectful and had more of a give-and-take feel that is more congruent with a reciprocal indigenous orientation of being.

Awareness of Language: Hearing How Other People Interpret the World

In her interview, WK Charlene spoke of how, as an Aboriginal person, she often had to learn the language of the dominant culture and find ways to translate it into her own more intuitive ways of knowing. For Charlene, this was about more than verbal language – it was also about the deeper constructs reflected in that verbal language. She remarked that for the PSTs, the EF course was a chance to do the opposite. It was a time where they could feel the sense of unknowing that comes from being immersed in another culture. As non-Aboriginal participants, the PSTs could be the ones who struggled to understand. She spoke about how this would be useful for the PSTs as teachers in multicultural classrooms:

It was a culture shock for them, a total cultural shock... [But] once you have a basic understanding of *a* cultural setting, it doesn't matter from whose, then you can make comparative changes and understanding from one set to the next, and bring that with you.

Some of the WKs were conscious of choosing their words very carefully, especially when they were sharing cultural teachings. WK Gina shared that the EF experience:

Has taught me to be very aware of the words that I'm using. Which may sound strange, but if [the PSTs] don't know a culture, it's important to use the right words to describe what you're trying to teach. And in our class in particular, I've been sharing the stories, the legends that go behind some of the figures that we use on our button blankets for example, in our dances and why we do certain dances when we do them. I think it's important to not just do the hands on craft, but to give meaning behind that craft.

In order to articulate what the deeper constructs of language looked like in the context of the EF course, I turn to another quote from Gina who spoke about describing the sky:

Maybe it would help if I said something like, we can teach a child that the sky is blue. That sentence I've seen in books. The sky is blue. *We* would say, the sky is the colour of the water after the wind has blown for three days. The sky is the colour of snow coming. Or the sky isn't blue today it's gray, the clouds are covering the blue, but it's still a good day. It's just a different way of looking at things.

As indicated earlier, understanding a different way of looking at things at this deeper conceptual level was seen by the PSTs as being an exciting, but also scary endeavour.

They worried about saying or doing the wrong thing in a cultural situation. But Leigh (I1) spoke about benefits of the process:

I really enjoyed learning about the words of the Lil' wat language last night. It was so powerful. And just the fact that the culture has decided that we need a word for this because it's something that's important to them, it's something that exists, you know. And...there are like 80 words to translate this one word. So that kind of learning just blows me away. I really loved hearing how other people interpret the world. And how sometimes you've had a feeling, and all of a sudden there is a word for it, you know.

Many of the PSTs spoke of how certain experiences in the course would have the effect of articulating feelings, or intuitive knowing that they felt and had been unable to put into words. Charlene said that for her, the process:

Gains for me much more appreciation of the ones who came before *me*. It's so cool. It brings it down to the simplest form. Here is the concept, but it applies to *all* of these things. And it's a simple concept, but in its simplicity is its incredible largeness.

Charlene's statement echoes Aluli-Meyer's notion of specificity within universality. It became a resonance of knowing on a non-intellectual level. This experience was

particularly highlighted during the opening circle times at the beginning of each course and so it is time to move on to the next bead of the strand.

Opening Circles: A Sense of Being Known

Charlene spoke of how it was necessary to find spaces away from the dominant culture in order to be able to do the work that spirit presents. WKs suggested that taking a walk, sitting in the forest, or going to cultural celebrations and ceremony might be useful ways for PSTs to take themselves outside of their daily lives and let go of their deep held beliefs for a time being. As Charlene said:

I think so many people just go through stuff without waking up every day and having an awareness about, let my eyes be open, let my heart be open, and having that gift of thought and openness through the day of just taking [time] and paying attention.

The opening circle times at the beginning of each class session served as a doorway into a spiritual realm of knowing. The circles also gave the participants a chance to regroup from their busy days and connect with the focus of the class. It set a tone of expectation that the work ahead should be done in a mindful way. This quote from Lindsay (I2) describes the community feel that was developed in the circle and moved throughout the rest of each class session:

There is a certain warmth to the entering of the classroom, and something new, and exciting, and unexpected occurs. But it's [also] common in the sense that we're in a circle, we are welcomed, we have that touching base of how's everyone doing. That doesn't occur perhaps in the more traditional classes. You know, *how* are you doing *really*. And if someone's having something that is bothering them, or if something sad has happened in the community it's addressed. We don't just pretend that it's an outside world...And then you plan for each week together as a group. You know, what do we need to have done? Do we want to get together and do it? Half the time we shared food together, so it's a totally different experience ...there is that sense of being known, and the warmth...and sense of bonding because we're in this community family together. We're all working towards the same gigantic chunk of canvas, and we all have our little piece to put on it.

The WKs appreciated that the course truly incorporated cultural components and saw the opening circle as being very important in this way because it respected spiritual beliefs.



Figure 18: One of Many Circles

The PSTs said that being together in a circular shape was a good thing because they could see everybody equally, and people could see them as well. They saw the circle as being inviting, inclusive, and safe, and that it didn't feel like a class anymore, it was more real. Darren (I2) talks further about the sense of realness:

It just didn't feel manufactured. Like, fake, you know? ...I want my students to feel comfortable and supported in the classroom, and you *do* that by sharing and getting to know each other. And you do activities that you hope would allow for that to happen. And sometimes you don't mean to, but you sort of force that upon the students, and it ends up not being really real. I've had that happen to *me* where I've had instructors that would have get-to-know-you activities and such things like that, where it just seems forced. But this was different. It didn't feel like that. We all came together and, it's hard to explain. I don't know, it just didn't really feel fake in that sense, it just sort of happened. I think a lot of that had to do with there was a lot of Aboriginal [participants] in the classroom, and it was just sort of second nature to them. It was just sort of how they knew how to share, and how to come together as one family. And I just sort of watched them. It's hard to explain.

The PSTs thought that the fact that they were taking time to be thankful and to recognize that it was a privilege to be at university and to be taking the course was part of what made the circle times so useful. They felt it was an important time where they could collect their thoughts, reflect and share whatever they wished. It gave them a sense of group bonding and common focus that felt more real than the group work they had done

in other classes. It was difficult for the PSTs to put the experience in words as Lindsay

(I1) shows:

I think that goes back to the feeling of acceptance. It's just *such* an interesting feeling and I really would like to get into that more. It's literally that it doesn't feel like a class. If somehow you could quantify feeling...if you could put a little barometer in the classroom, it would be a totally different colour or something... I don't know if its open mindedness, or acceptance. I think its acceptance and willingness to learn maybe, or something. I don't know. It's a very different feeling.

Despite the feelings of confusion about what was happening, the PSTs believed that the circles changed their mood to feeling more alive, gave them renewed energy and made them want to return to the class. They felt less anxious after the circle and more willing to participate in the activities. As Leigh (I1) said:

I don't really understand how it changes feeling. I guess it's because it's things I believe, and other people are saying them maybe? And maybe it's like everyone feels good all at once, maybe it's something like sort of healing, I don't know. I definitely don't understand it, but I like it.

One circle activity that was especially poignant was when Charlene brought in the two 100-year old cattail mats mentioned earlier. The, mats, measuring roughly 1.5 x 6 meters had been in her family for generations. Charlene asked us to move towards the centre of the room while the WKs wrapped the tightly woven mats around us. She then asked us to concentrate on our heartbeats. The experience gave the PSTs a heightened sense of being part of a real community and that even though they were packed “as tight as sardines,” when the mats were removed there was a sense of having “touched base with everything around us” (Darren I1). Jenni (I1) talks about how this experience with the mats gave her a sense of place:

I don't have the family connection of hundreds of years... I know they are from England, but that's all I know. So, I like the history in the mats, and there must be

so many stories that those mats have heard. All those different bodies sitting on them, and that they were made by people's hands.

The mat story is just one example of the many ways the PSTs felt connected during the opening circle times. In fact, for many of the PSTs the feeling of connectedness spread throughout other times in the course.

This is demonstrated in a conversation that I had with Ben (I2). It is revealing in that it gets at the heart of a different, more indigenous way of understanding the notion of spirituality.

B: Every [EF] class basically started with a prayer. So I've been trying to think about what the significance of the prayer is. Is this, and I don't mean it to demean it, is this a mundane thing? Does it occur on a regular basis, or is it a sacred thing? So is everything that we did in our crafting – working together, being together – was this a sacred spiritual? Or was it normal?

M.: What's the difference?

B: The mundane is an every day, normal occurrence. And not that it's any *less* but you know, sacred is a special event usually held up above others as ceremony, a festival - something that's held in reverence by many people... And I don't mean to meander all about, but not all the students that I see were completely comfortable with it...there were kind of a few laughs so I'm not quite sure how to interpret that but...[the prayer] provided context to me, towards how important the event was, how important it was [for] my instructors, my teachers, some of my fellows or counterparts...

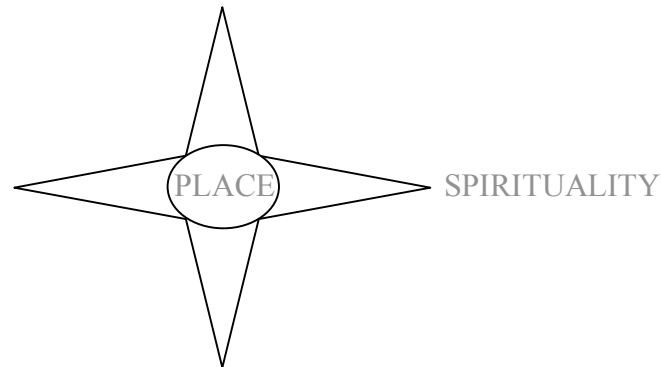
M.: So were you comfortable with the prayer happening?

B.: I wasn't expecting it. I knew that prayers were part of an Aboriginal custom, but I was not expecting it in this course, nor at the beginning of every class...I mean, my perception of spiritual, as I said in the first interview is pretty much kind of different.

M.: What is it?

B.: Different in the context that, and this is going to be very difficult to explain. [For me] spiritual is not necessarily a religious feature. It doesn't have to tie in to a god or gods, and it's maybe pretty much agnostic. It's a reverence for everything.

Ben saw spirituality as being embedded in all aspects of the course in a way that was similar to how the Wks spoke about it.



**DEEP LEARNING THAT
GUIDES YOUR SOUL**

Deep Learning that Guides Your Soul: Emotional Safety and Gentle Offerings

[The course is] more of a learning with your whole self, versus learning with just your intellectual side I think. So, deeper learning that guides your soul almost, and makes you interested in certain things and want to learn more about them. And passionate and caring towards people, or aspects of life, like wanting to make the world a better place and stuff like that. Yeah, I think when you learn things that you're intrigued about, that you care about, it will drive your life in a certain way, versus when you learn things that you don't find important [and] you kind of say why am I learning this? And you stop there. But if you are like, yes, I should be learning this. You start to travel in a certain direction with your thoughts and sometimes with your actions too I think. (Leigh, I1)

According to Lane, et. al (1984) the south corner of the wheel focuses on:

developing and refining feelings, loyalty, fullness, the heart, sensitivity to the feelings of others, anger at injustice, ability to express feelings, idealism, control of appetites, and passionate involvement in the world. The main theme from the data in this corner, *deep learning that guides your soul*, has to do with Batistte's notion of nourishing the learning spirit, and how that process is supported for each learner given their individual needs.

The PSTs repeatedly indicated that the environment in the EF course was conducive for their own learning spirits to be encouraged.

There are eight sub-themes in this section that all have to do with a complex ebb and flow of learner/teacher interactions: *watching for gifts; finding place and space; the teachers were with you; gentle offerings; faith in the learner; bridge to the intuitive; learning in community, community in learning; and emotional safety*. Some of these ideas have been addressed in earlier sections and will be elaborated on only as needed here. This is a reflection on the circuitous nature of the findings, and reinforces the importance of reporting on them within the circular framework of the wheel. They are listed in an order here that I feel will make understanding them easier for the reader but, as with the overall themes on the wheel, these sub-themes are not linear in nature and don't translate easily to text.

Watching for Learner Gifts

The WKs believed that each learner comes into this world gifted with unique abilities and that adults should never try and shape a child. Instead, adults should watch children and wait to see who they are becoming. WK Janet said, "it really is [that] there are gifts. And I think...people are gifted with different things." From this perspective there is recognition of each learner's potential that is grounded in who they are and what they know rather than an external source, such as a provincial curriculum document. WK Lynne described how the learner teacher relationship might look from this worldview, using a musical metaphor:

[Learners] each have their own note or vibration. And for me, someone who's going to share with them their knowledge, is somebody who is a musician enough to know the notes, and give them what they need to create what music that they need to make, with the tones that they have to play with...What you're giving is the safety to let all of what they feel happen. So, what you're really doing is creating a safe world in which they can live, and that they can have fun, and learn things by. Because kids want to learn, all of us want to learn. Everybody has a curious mind. That's not the problem. It's finding out what note they're tuned in to.

This type of learner/teacher relationship requires the teacher to be very open minded about the possibilities of the learner in terms of what direction the learner might take, and what their needs might be (as Lynne said, you don't teach anybody, people learn). Charlene said it was important that teachers ask themselves:

Is it my need that's being filled, or is it the student's need that's being filled? You know, if we were a real educator, it [would be] the students' needs that we are trying to fill and not ours, and not the system's.



Figure 19: May Watching for Gifts

The Wks were concerned that learners were being harmed by the typical pedagogy that is prevalent in today's schools, and that such practices were in part responsible for disengagement and even extreme reactions such as violence and suicide. WK Gay advocated for a more hands-off, child directed approach:

I don't think you should criticize children because it's not going to help them. To give them what they need, you need to encourage them...They already are who they are, and they've already got different talents beyond what you know. Our concept is that we're teaching them and a lot of times I find that children are teaching me! Because they're all different, and they all have different ways of expressing themselves, and they've already got all kinds of talents you know?

Nourishing the learning spirit is about helping the learner to actualize the gifts that they have in whatever way they want to pursue. The learner determines the direction of the learning, and the teacher actively supports that learning.

Finding Space and Place

The learner holds great responsibility in the process of nourishing the learning spirit. Leigh (I2) noted that at the beginning of the EF course, “there was no sign up sheet of duties and things like that, so you ended up finding your own space and place.” It was up to the learner to find their own path through the learning process, to recognize possible learning opportunities (similar to the photographer image that Janet presented), and to decide what matched their own learning needs. This type of process happened at different rates for different learners and was unpredictable.

Having the opportunity to find their own place and space as learners, led the PSTs to think about how learners have to manage tensions between freedom and responsibility, as described by Kim (I2):

I think what stood out was the way that we were given the opportunity to take responsibility for our learning...it was really refreshing because you went in there and you got to *enjoy* it more because there wasn't sort of that pressure to have certain things done by a certain time. And you know, I think I personally learn better that way. If there's not that sort of deadline then I actually get it done faster and better because it means more to me...So I think *that* for me really stood out the most, just that freedom, but also that expectation that you're taking responsibility for your learning. And I think it's an important skill for everyone to learn.

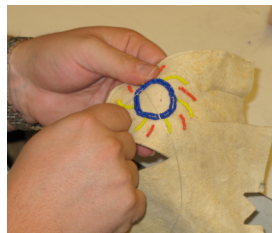


Figure 20: Ben's Beadwork

The PSTs said that this type of freedom as a learner gave them opportunity to find what learning situations and learning content were meaningful and relevant to their real life experience. One example of this is that some of the PSTs were able to remember details

about the medicinal use of plants (without writing them down) because they felt they could use that information to affect their own lifestyles in positive ways.

Many of the PSTs reported that being in control of their learning motivated them to be more productive. In a conversation with Amber (I2), she explains:

A: The way we learned stood out. It wasn't regurgitating, it wasn't take notes on how to make moccasins. [Instead] it was here's the material, work with your hands and give it a try... I learn really well that way, and I've never really had the opportunity to learn that way before, so it was neat... [It was] learning through experience and by doing instead of passively sitting there and getting your head filled up with the information. You're the one that's kind of creating it, and *you're* in charge of learning. It's up to you how much you learn, it's not up to someone else...

M: And how did that feel, or how did that work for you?

A: I was much more motivated to do the work. I stayed up three hours, I'd sit there and bead at night. And I really wanted to do a good job too. But it was for myself, it wasn't for anyone else for a change. When I was in school, I worked because it was more for my parents. If I didn't get a good grade, I was in trouble. And for my teachers, or you know it was never for myself. I didn't really care if I learned anything about English literature, or you know, anything like that. But this one was for myself. It was something I really wanted to do.

Some of the PSTs had difficulty adjusting to finding their own space and place and looked to the WKs to guide them, as they would in other courses. But as Gay said:

I always like people to create their own beading and pattern making and how they would fit, because all your inner expressions will come out in the beadwork...And [the students] always want to know is this the way? And I kept on trying to tell them, there's no set way to do it. Because it's actually in you coming out, so I can't say this is the way to do it...they're going to develop their own way, and that will be the proper way for them.

The Teachers Were with You

One aspect of the course that surprised many of the PSTs was the feeling that the WKs and the PSTs held a more equal positioning within the learning environment. As Amber (I2) explained:

I found just that act of sitting in a circle brought you together a lot more. And...the teachers, you felt that instead of being superior to you, they were with

you almost, guiding you. They weren't this figure to be feared or afraid of. You felt just fine going up to [any of them]. And that's a bit different, usually you see profs as you have to walk on eggshells around them. But it wasn't the same, which changed the dynamic of the class for sure, from what I'm used to.

The WKs saw themselves as equal partners in the learning process, and Caroline shared that:

It didn't ever occur to me, that they felt somewhat apprehensive simply because they felt that we were teachers, and they were students. And I really... wanted for them to feel like we were all equal and feel comfortable, and that we could learn together. And I think once they became aware of that fact, I think everyone felt far more comfortable... I really wanted them to just let it flow, and experience something come alive through their hands. That's really what I wanted for them.

The WKs acknowledged that they often felt passionate about, or called to their work with textiles, and it was a natural extension of that interest that motivated them to share. The WKs often spoke of how they didn't consider themselves to be experts or masters with a given textile. Instead they described themselves as people who simply knew about certain things and were willing to share that knowing. Darren (I1) observed this in Della on the nature walk:

Della was really interesting. When we were out on the plant walk, she didn't really say that she was an expert in anything... What she knew, she just knows it. And there were some times there where she picked up a plant and she didn't really know the name of it. And you know, if that was anyone else, well usually the students would question the teacher [and say] "oh they don't know anything, they don't know what they're talking about." But with Della, I believed her. I mean, I knew that she knew what it was. She may not have known the name of it but I could sense that she knew what it could be used for, and it definitely made me respect her and First Nations ways of learning a lot more.

Darren, like many of the PSTs, was rethinking notions of expertise. This leads to the last quote in the section that further disrupts the learner/teacher bifurcation typically found in schools. Leigh (I1) was trying to identify what makes the EF course so different:

I'm trying to observe to see what it is. But I feel like if there was *one* thing it could be, is that [the EF course] allows everyone in the class to be a teacher. And

that, the real teachers, the real professors or whatever you call people like that, are just like guidance for the teachers that add their own words that allow you to self direct where your learning *should* be going.

Once again the learning spirit is being attended to in the actions of the WKs as they allowed the learner to be a teacher.

Gentle Offerings

Charlene spoke about how, “a cultural learning is only a gentle offering out there...all it is, is little gifts that are being offered...So, let [the learner] find wherever that is for them.” In fact, the very way the course was first discovered by the students was done as a gentle offering. Lindsay (I1) said:

We were so excited when that email came... It was like, you know “attention year 5 students, if you would like.” And it was worded in the way that, ah, you might, you *could* look at taking this course. And I remember just thinking, oh, yes!

The WKs felt that it was their job to lay a table, or show what they knew to the participants of the course in ways similar to those described by WK Gina when she learned to make bread. They did this by showing ways of patterning bark and beads, how to use tools and what tools were proper for different projects, they showed shortcuts that might be useful with a textile such as basting or marking out a design. And after that, they just let the learners go at it. As WK Gay said:

There is a proper way to handle the scissors, and how to use it and everything. But more than likely, they're going to develop their *own* way, and that will be the proper way for *them*...I never ever tell them what colours to pick because their colours that they pick, appeal to different people than my colours that I would pick.

The WKs were accepting when the students made mistakes as Gay continued:

I told them to be careful on how you're sewing a moccasin together because there's a wrong side and a right side. And somebody was careless, and we ended up with two same sides! But nobody will ever notice, we're not going to point it out! ...But, I'm really glad, because normally *those* people will learn. I mean even

though they didn't succeed on doing what you tell them, they'll be more careful when they do it next time...it's not always the ones that are *doing* good that are doing the best.

Gay went on to say that she was pleased that her students often get better than her at certain textile skills, and this view was shared by many of the other WKs.

The WKs acknowledged that the gentle guiding process took lots of energy mentally and emotionally, and was tiring at times. They also talked about the importance of being aware of what offerings they made. Lynne likened the process to setting a table filled with healthy foods:

That's why there is so much power in being a teacher and there's so much of a gift that you can bring, because you're setting that table. And what's on the table depends on what the teacher's put there.



Figure 21: Setting a Table

Gentle offerings were sometimes so subtle that the PSTs missed opportunities to engage with them. Charlene reminded me about a visitor to the EF class who, in the context of a more formal talk to the large group, offered to share later with anyone who was interested in learning more about her teachings. Charlene was frustrated by the lack of response:

People just didn't get it. And then finally there were two students who came and wanted to learn and grow...they made the effort to be there and...wanted to hear those other things. So those are the ones that got more [teachings].

The PSTs spoke of not always being certain about how to interact with the WKs and guests. One PST talked about feeling excluded at times. This PST spoke of wanting more background information about what was going on, and more clarity on instructions of

how to engage. Many of the PSTs spoke of how they were used to lots of direction in their coursework, and felt that they needed to consciously learn to engage with the WKs in other ways than was typical for them to interact with instructors. Overall, the PSTs said that while it took some getting used to, the gentle offering approach became comfortable and enjoyable.

Faith in the Learner

The WKs felt that once the learner knew the basic skills, the learner could then come up with their own interpretations and ways of creating. WK Caroline had a student tell her:

I really appreciated the way that you taught. You had so much faith in us. You guys just said okay, here it is, now you do it... I just felt that you had so much faith that I could do it, that I just had to keep going and do it because you *believed* in me.
(unknown PST in Caroline's interview)

Many of the WKs spoke about how their own first experiences with textiles came at times when an adult needed their help and put the tools in their inexperienced hands.

When her granny first handed her a moccasin that needed to be finished, WK Gay said, "she knew that I had the capability, it was just me, I never had attempted it." But Gay had watched, and was pleased by her own relatively quick success.



Figure 22: Beadwork Designed by a Participant

Eva (I2) spoke about how transferring her first skills of watching and trying made her think differently about learning:

There's just a lot more things that I had never even really considered to be *learning*, but were things that I picked up and then they came second nature to me... There was a large difference from when I started just stitching and sewing and everything, than to when I ended, it's just a lot more natural. It's a bit more fluid. And it allows [my] creative juices to go more because I could see different avenues I could take with it.

The Wks said that it was important not to put limitations on children in terms of imagining potential because it was impossible to know what a child might be able to do and how that knowledge might be useful for either the child or the community. The PSTs felt that their opinions were genuinely valued by the Wks and that they were trusted to put their own signature on things. For me as a participant learning in the course, this faith in the learner felt like an ebbing and flowing of intuitive understanding between myself, and the Wks. They would show me something, and I would choose whether or not to engage. They would show me something else, and the decision would be transferred back to me.

Bridge to the Intuitive

Along with being open to learners' possible ways of knowing, the Wks spoke about how it was important for teachers to be a bridge that helped students express and understand intuitive and holistic ways of knowing. The Wks were concerned that schools overemphasized academic learning (mental) at the cost of other significant knowledge and ways of knowing (such as spiritual, emotional and physical). The Wks said that it was important for learners to put their whole selves into learning through hands-on engagement in relevant activities. Charlene spoke about how learners need to hear things four ways before they understand:

And that's a cultural teaching, that's how you teach... whether it flourishes now or it's a seed for later on, they will get it... There is such a lack of respect for understanding that you *should* offer teachings in more than one way. Instead of just one way that's it... Each person is an individual and they learn very

individually... You teach them in four different ways. You make offer of that understanding, of that knowledge, of what you're trying to teach [through the] physical, emotional, spiritual and mental.

The Wks felt that the holistic experience in the course took pressure off of the PSTs as learners, and that it would encourage them to try new ways of acting as teachers. As Caroline said, "I felt like they learned something in a way that maybe they hadn't learned...before. And maybe it [would] encourage them to try something new later on when they become teachers - just to approach it from a different angle."

The PSTs spoke about how the Wks' holistic way of teaching would be good for learners who might be anxious in the classroom. Leigh (I1) told me:

This seems like the way that education should be going -- more focused on educating the whole self and creating people who feel welcomed in the world, and know they have a place. And then *that* I think in turn will make them more relaxed in the classroom and let them learn better, you know? Let them learn more deeply.

The PSTs felt that the learning styles of other students around them in the education program were not particularly diverse. Therefore, they were excited to be around community members and students from other areas of interest who had different ways of looking at learning, and felt that this opened up, as one PSTs said, another "community of knowledge" to them. They were very enthusiastic about engaging in hands-on learning that was highly experiential and involved other ways of knowing such as smell and taste.

The PSTS spoke about how learning in the context of EF was more unconscious and hard to explain than in other settings. They said that it was a different way of focusing attention that took effort and practice, but that they liked using more than their brain and that it was a more natural way to learn. Darren (I2) describes:

It was more of an experiential sort of learning rather than somebody telling you what they know, and then you absorbing that. There were people that taught us,

but I learned it in my own way, my own process. So, it wasn't like somebody passed on their knowledge to me in a direct way. It was sort of an indirect way where it allowed me to gain that knowledge in the way that I felt comfortable in doing so. Just almost like an unconscious sort of learning. Yeah, it's sort of hard to describe, I guess because it's nothing that I've ever really experienced before.

And Ben (I2) spoke of how he began to be aware of knowing through the sensations in his hands:

As I progressed through the craft I began to rely on my fingers, my hands a lot more. I mean I could feel things that I necessarily wouldn't have noticed in the past. And so I was becoming more aware of a sense perhaps that I've took for granted. I didn't need to use my eyes so much, as I could feel with my fingers, feel the texture of the fabric or string, know how far I could go... As my crafts grew, I think part of me grew too - something that I was not familiar with before, or had very little experience with... if I were to have been taught directly, or had been prepared through reading on how to do the craft, my experience would be not the same. It would be drastically different, because of the exploratory [element in hand-on learning]. (Ben 2)



Figure 23: Hands Paying Attention

Both the WKs and the PSTs spoke of the importance of getting to know something through modes other than the intellect; other ways of knowing gave them a deeper more authentic and meaningful understanding of the work at hand. As Ben said, as his crafts grew, another part of him grew as well.

Learning in Community, Community in Learning

The opening quote of the section by Leigh points out how nourishing her learning spirit was connected to a sense of community and an increased sense of social responsibility. The actions of the participants demonstrated that the learning spirit of an

individual is intimately tied to the wellness of the community at large. There is a back and forth awareness of self in community, and community in self, similar to the ebb and flow between teacher and learner. The PSTs would alternate between paying attention to their internal learnings, and paying attention to the needs of the group — specificity and universality in action.

The small groups within the EF course often worked together to find their focus and decide on what they would be creating together for the mural. For the cedar bark group, this was a complicated process embedded in the context of the larger community.

WK Caroline explains:

I figured well, whoever was meant to use this bark, will gravitate towards our group. And they did. It was funny, actually. And...my mom and I...sat with them and we talked about ideas about how to contribute to the whole mural, as a group. And one of the things that occurred to me, was in that video about...the totem pole [project from the last course. The carver] kept referring to the totem pole as the "old man." And it made a lot of sense to me because, honestly it is...And then for me, the bark was the old woman because they go together. So, we talked about it with the group. And we talked about ideas about how to personify visually, in a three-dimensional sense, the old woman.

Caroline goes on to describe how the group had to go through an initial stage of getting to know each other and gain trust in each other. They went through long discussion on the best way of representing the female aspect of cedar through weaving a burden basket.

This idea was eventually discarded because some of the PSTs felt that it represented a negative image of women's work, despite assurances by Wks Caroline and Fran that men also used the basket. Caroline and Fran then offered the idea of weaving a ceremonial shawl, and after that idea was accepted by the group, "it just sort of flowed out of them":

They got excited once they realize that something was growing, and they really enhanced it. We gave them tools as we went along, just little things like shells or whatever. And to see their minds were working about, "hold on, this is how I can be creative with it."



Figure 24: Preservice Teachers Working on the Cedar Shawl

At this point in her story, Caroline brought up an issue of tension in her group due to external expectations after being asked to make cedar rope to be placed along the border of the mural. Caroline described this as a special task that was “not to be taken lightly” and that the weaver “needed to have to have some level of peace to do that type of work.” Caroline felt that her responsibility was to honour what was emerging from the group as they worked with the cedar, and felt that making rope would be stressful, in terms of the group having time and resources. She spoke of protecting her group from what she felt was an overemphasis on product rather than process by those requesting the rope, saying she appreciated the vision that others had, “but I’m glad we kept to task for what felt right for us.”

Members of the button blanket group also felt particular pressure to produce. They had extra responsibilities for the overall mural production such the intricate moons across the top. One member was particularly distressed by this and said:

I felt that I wanted to do the work, and more or less, that the work was for me. I was inspired. In the last portion of the class, I felt like the work was for an external person [or] thing. I feel like UVIC wanted to show their interconnectedness with different cultures so they decided to rope a bunch of students into making something. The work asked for in the end (the pieces) lacked meaning for me. Not that they weren't meaningful to someone or something as a whole, and the ideas behind them were meaningful... its just the process I think that lacked the meaning. Also, when the pieces were initially discussed, I was

motivated and inspired... but as the time grew tight... it was less about the piece and more about getting it done.... our group lost a sense of connectedness to each other and the piece. And even, seeing the whole piece together set up in the library does not give me the sense of meaningfulness and pride that I think the piece initially deserved. (Anonymous, in email)

This student describes a process where the emphasis shifted from the learning to the product, and the bad effects it had on them as participants. In a later conversation, the participant reiterated how important the first few weeks were, saying something like, "it really did change the way I think about education" in a useful way (personal conversation recorded in field journal). In a follow-up interview, WK Gina verified that her button blanket group felt some anxiety of this nature.

Despite the pressures described above, the PSTs felt that a very unusual and positive type of community was created in the EF course, saying that it was not so much the "what" of community, but the "how" of going about community that mattered. They had all done lots of group work before, but this was different. Lindsay (I2) talked about the inclusive feeling she experienced that extended beyond just the students in her small group:

It should be qualified [that] the "we" is inclusive of the teachers as well. I don't want it to seem that you know, the teachers came, but then we just took off and did it ourselves. We couldn't have done it without them. So we as a collective community, through the scaffolding that the university, and the planning, and the WKs gave us, created [the mural].

Many of the PSTs spoke of feelings that they were working side by side in this way with the WKs.

Emotional Safety

In the earlier sub-theme *watching for gifts*, WK Lynne suggested that teachers give learners, "the safety to let all of what they feel happen." The PSTs spoke repeatedly

and in-depth about how important it was for them to feel safe in educational settings. As Tasha (I1) said, safe spaces affect the learning spirit:

In my experience there have been a lot of times where I personally haven't learned as much as I could because I'm not in a place where I feel comfortable or I feel safe, and so creating a learning environment is more about opening up a safe place, and then pursuing passions or interests, or things that catch your eye, and then going deeper into them.

And Leigh (I1) wondered what it was that the Wks do to involve everyone and make them feel “really special and worth while, and not scared, and not all those bad things that are often associated with academic learning.” Some of the PSTs felt that they had developed anxiety from being in the teacher education program and that being in the EF course made them feel calm, in part because it was a choice for them to be there.

The Wks spoke about wanting to create a safe environment where the PSTs could be themselves and explore new ideas. Charlene likened the PSTs to marbles – all going off in different directions to learn, saying that her role was to give guidance:

[It's a] a gentle guiding process...I see it as a spiral, but it's a spiral that touches and grows. And a marble is a very good equivalent [for the learner] because we need to have an outside boundary of ourselves. And sometimes that's hard like a marble, and sometimes it's much more soft and malleable. When it gets to the soft and malleable stage, it means that there's much more willingness to have things coming *in* to that space of growing and learning.

Charlene went on to say that safety is especially important when change is happening from all aspects of a person, including mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. She felt that it was important to “create a space where it's safe to kind of allow some of those boundaries to become less structured, less hard” and that the process of art was a safe place for these kinds of internal learnings to occur.

The PSTs acknowledged that the work was occasionally personal and emotional and that the different structure of the course and the uncertainty of what would happen

left them uncomfortable and wary at times. However, they spoke of feeling welcomed and accepted, and that people were seen as being more equal and being able to bring what they felt like bringing to the experience rather than trying to meet external expectations. They appreciated that learning could be more relaxed and happen more in its own pace. In addition, the collective project of the mural took pressure off of individual achievement. The PSTs saw the small groups as being very helpful to creating a feeling of safety. Amber (I2) said:

I think the relationship that you form within your small groups stood out. It *was* like, kind of a little family. Every week you came and, we worked so hard together, and we really fed off of each other. And I was one of the weaker ones in terms of sewing, I'd never sewn before, so I really needed the help. And I didn't feel bad asking for it. And we took and we gave, you know? And everyone was helping each other, I don't think anyone felt that it was on *them*. That was really neat.



Figure 25: Working Together in Community

Eva (I2) said that it was like the PSTs had “turned our brains on to a different way of thinking almost” that was more inclusive and community oriented.

In addition, the PSTs felt that it was ok to make mistakes and that they were a part of the creative process. Jenni (I2) shared:

At the end we had gone in to do the finishing stuff [on the mural] and Charlene would come around and show us how to do the cutting or the tracing and that sort of thing. I was so worried that I would mess everything up. And then she would just come and help me fix it, and it wasn't a big deal...I was so worried that I would wreck it. But you just fix it. And she would say, "you're the artist, this is your work."

The PSTs also expressed feeling like the WKs genuinely cared about them as learners. As Lindsay (I2) said:

May... took so much pride...and joy in seeing us succeed...She would do anything for us, like before she even learned my name properly, you know she was just so behind me, and getting our group to succeed in what we were doing. And we would knit dreadful, dreadful things (laughter.) And she would say that they were just amazing. And that's a big thing.

Some of the WKs went out of their way to give learners attention outside of the class as well, through email and phone contact, and they acknowledged the continuous nature of the process.

Most of the PSTs talked about how significant it was that the EF course was offered as a pass/fail instead of a graded course saying that it increased their feelings of safety. They were skeptical about the lack of marks at times, worrying that their peers might see it as easy credit and therefore, not participate fully. In the end however, they spoke about many benefits that the pass/fail situation offered, saying it made them more relaxed, less anxious, there was less competition and showing off with their peers, and that they saw each other taking pride in the work. The PSTs believed that people were there for the right reasons and that it helped them to focus on the commonalities between people rather than the differences. This also increased their feelings of safety.

The PSTs enjoyed that they could just be there in the class without worrying about taking notes and tests. Amber (I1) said:

I love the fact that I don't have to worry about how good my little cattail mat is going to be, and if I'm going to get an A on it. I just got to experience doing it without worrying, and it made me enjoy it so much more, than being so stressed out and worried about it. I think that learning for the sake of learning, is so important. And I think that that's what we need to instill in the children too – is the love of learning, and learning for the sake of learning -- instead of learning because I need to get a grade, or learning because I need to let my parents know that I'm doing well in school or things like that. I think that's very important.

To close the southern corner of the wheel, I want to share a story about Darren that highlights the process of nourishing the learning spirit. Darren (I1) chose to be in the EF course because of the feelings he got from a previous course he had taken with Lorna. As he said:

Every time I leave a class with [Lorna] – and it may be all First Nations classes, I don't know – I always feel more connected to what *I* know. And I always feel like it's a more supportive environment, and I don't feel as stressed to learn what other people expect me to learn. I enjoy being in an environment where I can choose what I want to learn.

Darren told me that he was drawn to the smell of cedar and so decided to be in the cedar weaving small group. Unfortunately, it was hard going for Darren as he often struggled with preparing the bark. After many sessions however, a light bulb went off and he got his nickname, “The Rose Man” by becoming skilled at making cedar roses:

D: It was a really good feeling, *getting* something, because I struggled a lot with the Cedar. You know, it was such an intricate process, trying to strip it, and making those long strands. Most of the time I'd end up stripping it half way and then it would break, and I'd end up with something that I couldn't really use. So, it was frustrating a lot of times. So the rose thing, it was really good because it was simple for me to understand, and it wasn't something that I could really screw up on. I mean, it's something that I felt like I could contribute to something. So, I just sat there and made roses. And it was something that I really felt satisfied about.

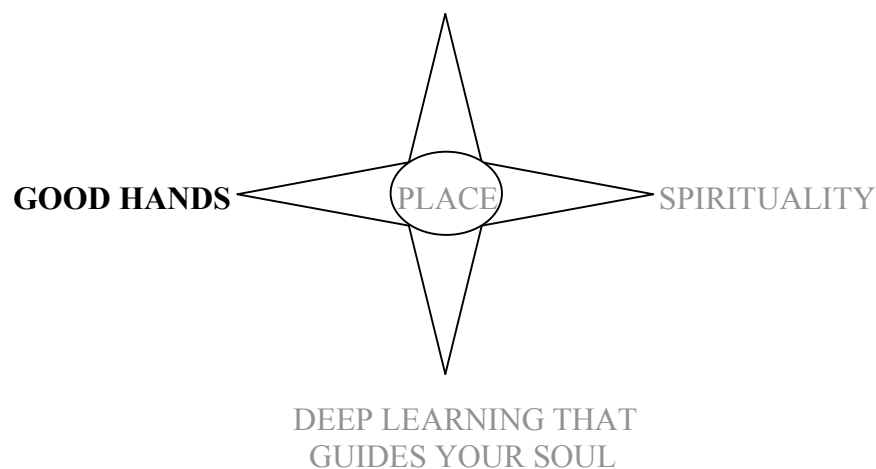


Figure 26: Cedar Rose

In the interview, I asked him if he could share more about the rose making process, and he spoke about the gentle and trusting role of the Wks:

F.: well, Caroline showed me how to do it *once*. And I watched her do it and then, she just kind of left. And then I tried to do it and I know that I didn't get it the first few times, and I just kept on picturing her doing it. And then I finally got it. And it wasn't like she stood over me and watched me do it, and watched me struggle. It was [more like] she left and sort of had confidence in me - knowing that I would get it eventually. And I did. It wasn't like there was that pressure, you know, that somebody is *there*, waiting for you to succeed. It was like, she knew that I would, it was just that I needed to do it on my own, you know?

Many of the PSTs talked about going through process similar to that which Darren went through. Although the specifics were different for each individual learner the PSTs had many instances of finding their paths as learners in ways that guided their souls.



Good hands: Getting Out of Your Head and Into the Work

The "good hands" was something new to me but I really like that concept, and it's so true when you think about it. It's obvious [that] everything you feel is reflected in your creation. (Leigh, I1)

Learning to work with my hands was definitely something that I've never really been a part of. And it's a different way of focusing your attention than if you're just using your brain for essays, or anything like that. It does take a lot of focus, and it takes repetition, and it takes practice, like everything does, but in a more natural way, you know? If you think about it, it's almost more instinctual to be working with our hands and to be creating and everything, than it is to be writing and [things] like that, so it kind of felt like more of a connection in a way.

(Eva, I2)

The west corner of the wheel is about perseverance, the unknown, management of power, going within, dreams, reflection, silence, sacrifice, humility, awareness of our

spiritual nature, respect for others, commitment to a path of personal development, commitment to struggle to assist the development of the people, clear self-knowledge, and vision (Lane, et. al, 1984). This section starts with a brief description of good hands, and then moves into three sub-themes. *Give away*, is about how the PSTs focused their energy towards the wellbeing of others. *Reflection* is described as being embedded in learning and an act of clarifying intention. The last sub-theme, *ceremony*, describes how the EF participants connected to the greater community and brought forth the work of their good hands. From this position in the west of the wheel, I remind the reader once again of the non-linear and recursive process of the EF course that this document tries to articulate. Reflection, for example, occurred throughout the EF experience, as did ceremony and the act of giving away.

The WKs often told the PSTs during the course that work should be done using “good hands” or with a positive intent. Good hands, was about the attitude and the energy brought to the work. Lindsay (I2) shared that it was based in “knowing that what you’re feeling inside will come out in the work that you do with your hands.” Leigh (I2) described how having good hands included mental engagement:

You have to have a positive attitude about it, kind of having good hands, but with your mind...positive thoughts so you're not frustrated, you're not shutting things out, you are open to learning new things.

For Kim (I2) focusing on having good hands was a practical way to be present with the task at hand:

I think back to my other classes and a lot of the times I was there physically, but you know, I had a hundred other things on my mind. So I wasn't really there, you know? But, this class I really tried to focus on what we were doing.

The PSTs also saw that invoking the use of good hands was a way to connect with the other people they were working with and that it gave a sense of peace and focus, even when there was much work at hand.



Figure 27: Good Hands Prepping Cedar Bark

Eva's comment at the beginning of this section speaks to the importance of getting out of a mental framework, and engaging in more holistic hands-on action with your good hands. Charlene told me that it was important to act in a good way, getting "out of your head," "letting go of judgment" and "working hard, and work[ing] until it's finished." The WKs noted that the hands-on learning seemed to relax the PSTs, and WK May said that her group told her "how nice it is to do something different than what they do in most of their classes...it's like a different kind of learning for them. And they're just really excited about it and appreciative to be here." Jamie (I2) spoke of how the work had a meditative quality:

It's taking a step out of our [normal life], because we're so focused on just graduating and writing these tests. And it just made you stop and appreciate even working with your hands. And they talked about that calm that would come from it, it's so true -you just get mesmerized by the work, you keep going and going and going.

Some of the PSTs described how they got caught up in the process of working with the EFs so completely it was as if the fibres themselves led the way with the creative process. Many of the PSTs worked with the EFs above and beyond their normal work hours.

One concern brought up by Charlene was that the university environment “interrupted the groove” of the participants and caused breaks in the work just when things were at the height of engagement, due to scheduling and shared space. Charlene spoke of how helpful it was to have a more permanent space towards the end of the course. This allowed for the natural rhythms of the learning process to occur and supported a good hands approach:

To open up into work intuitively, and emotionally and spiritually within the university setting was a difficult thing to do. So I was so glad we actually had that room for a whole week [right before the ceremony]. We didn’t have to pack up and put back together again. I think that would be much more respectful from a cultural perspective if we could have a space that sort of was designated our space. It would also have allowed the students to come into that space more regularly, instead of just the once a week kind of thing.

While Charlene expressed the importance of having a space that would support the learning rhythms of the group she also saw an advantage to being more embedded in the university structure saying:

On the other hand it was cool for the university, because that...creativity, spirit, and emotional part was allowed to be built within the whole university area.

Make it Better for Everyone: Give Away

During the EF course, there was always an expectation on the part of the WKs that the good of the community be kept in mind. The PSTs picked up on this quickly, as Jenni (I1) said, “do your best work for the community’s benefit not just your own. So make it better for everyone.” The idea in this sub-theme is that work is focused on the giving away of the energy and intent of good hands – for the good of the community and

as described earlier, for a common goal. WK Caroline said that group work is exciting and exhilarating “because you really are a part of each other's vision.”

Working together towards a common purpose gave the PSTs a different sense of group work than they often had in the university setting. They talked about how in the EF course, having common problems like learning to thread a needle, brought them together and led them to support each other. They saw their individual work as clearly going towards a meaningful group project and that focused and motivated them to do their best work and take pride in that work. Jenni (I2) said that although she was not artistic:

I had to make it look nice for the whole. So it was my individual work, but it counted for everybody's, the final outcome. Which was nicer because, I think if it was only my piece of work going up somewhere, maybe I wouldn't care. But because it was contributing to everyone's, I didn't want to let them down.

Another significant aspect of the group work was that the PSTs felt that while there were high expectations, it was not a competitive environment. Eva (I2) noticed:

...the energy and enthusiasm, the participation level, and the awareness in everybody. You almost, leave everything else at the door when you come in there. It feels [like] it's just a different learning environment. And it's more of a community and everybody's there to help each other. It's not competitive.

The PSTs felt that people were taking the work seriously and that it was their job to help anyone who was struggling.

The PSTs expressed some concern over what they perceived as a lack of communication at times, for example when class locations or times were changed. One participant suggested that a better email system might have been put in place. As well, some of the PSTs felt disconnected from the other small groups and wanted to have more contact with what they were doing. Overall however, the sense of community is well described in this comment by WK Janet:

The native and non-native participation of the students was a beautiful thing to see. And [they were] just like little worker bees, you know? Having the opportunity to stand back every now and then and watching all these little hands go at it, and everyone's chatting, and sometimes they're sharing collectively and sometimes just two people off to the side sharing, but they're still doing the work.

Within this busy context, the focus was on give away. The Wks spoke of how some Aboriginal people still have a giveaway room in their house, where things are kept until they given away through ceremony such as potlatch or as needed. WK Lynne told me "native people are measured by what they give away not by what they have." The concept of good hands, is about generosity not about individual gain, and this is often a difficult concept for western oriented people to understand at its deepest levels. WK Lynne's husband James shared:

Native...teaching says that...a wealthy person is not a person who has great wealth, that has stored all these things, is holding on to them. The wealthy person is a person who gives things away. The generous person is a wealthy person. And that really separates the native people from the cultures that say your importance in society has to do with how much you have and how much you own, instead of how much you have to give away.

Some of the PSTs were surprised by the expectation that each group make numerous items to set aside for the ceremony, and the Wks spoke of not being sure how to give this teaching to the PSTs. In the Wks culture it is common to start teaching "give away" at an early age, but the PSTs had not had that experience. At one point, after bringing the other elders tea, a WK shared with me that she was "tired of modeling" the give away types of behaviours. WK Lynne said that at times the Wks were:

...frustrated at how to try and make the white people understand the giveaway, and the need to *really* give away. [The whites] are thinking "oh I'll just give away one thing." And I'm pushing everybody to at least have two, right? And...I said I've done three or four because I want to be sure that at least we have five belts separate from the one we hang, because at least that much should be given out...if we had our way...we would have 300 gifts, you know go buy 300 bowls or something, and put it out.

Lynne felt that one of the reasons the PSTs were not understanding the concept of give away, was that they didn't realize that what they gave away would come back to them in some other form.

Some of the PSTs were surprised at the amount of gifts that were given at the ceremony. They also worried that their work wasn't good enough or that it would ruin the work of others. The PSTs also worried about how these pieces that were their first attempts at a craft weren't perfect. But WK Gay explained to me:

it's a real honor to get somebody's first thing...it's a more special thing because we're not looking for perfection. And that is really hard to get across to the group because they kept wanting to be [perfect]. Like when they would see that work that we showed them, some of those moccasins, well those are really master craft moccasins that we had... And I was saying we're not going to get that, that's just to show you where you can go. And those people have been at it for years. I mean if you watch those ladies, it will take them less than a day to bead that moccasin that we were looking at, hey? But it is not perfection you're after. Because you're just learning and as you go along, you get better, and better and better.

Some of the PSTs did recognize that the WKs were more accepting of mistakes than they were used to. Leigh (I2) thought that the message from the WKs was to "just do your best, you know, not anyone else's best." Kim (I1) understood that the focus should go back to working with good hands:

You know, it's not the final product. And Charlene, she stood up there and said "mine's not great, but you know, I put a lot of love and a lot of thought into it." So I pondered over that for a while.

Jenni (I2) described how this trust in the learner helped her to bring more calm into her creative processes:

I was so worried that I would mess everything up, and then [Charlene] would just come and help me fix it, and it wasn't a big deal. Like I was saying earlier I was so worried that I would wreck it. But you just fix it. And she would say, "you're the artist, this is your work." So it wasn't, I didn't need to be that stressed out. It was okay.

WK Caroline pointed out that “you give so much of yourself” in this kind of work, and the PSTs talked about how they felt they were giving away a part of their lives in both the things they made and the teachings they passed on. As Tristain (I2) said:

At first I was embarrassed to give away what I had created, or even the skills that I had learned, because I wasn't really sure what I was doing myself. But in working with someone else, you kind of refine your skills, and it helps you... The things I gave away, I was pretty embarrassed about because it's your first try, and you have to give that away. How many people give away their first copy of an essay or anything like that right? But the people who received it last night [at the ceremony], I hope they took the time to look at it, and appreciate it for its beauty even though it has flaws in some places, and I don't know, just for the time and for good thoughts that went into that.

Tristain went on to explain what she felt the first piece embodied:

I think that one piece that I created, that first finger weaving had *every* emotion you can possibly think of in there. It had all the frustration, and I think that's the best feeling I've ever felt to complete something, because I *did* have the struggles and I did have all of those feelings that you don't have very often usually. I was glad to have it finished, but I was kind of sad that it was finished because the second piece didn't evoke all those raw emotions I had the first time. It did, but not in the same way.

Another issue that came up for the PSTs was the idea that they would not be able to control the direction of their give away. It was disturbing to some that the gifts they put all that energy into would be put in a box and passed out randomly to the guests at the unveiling ceremony. They said that it was easier to give away to a specific person and worried that their gifts would not be appreciated.



Figure 28: Gifts for the Give Away

Gradually and to different degrees the PSTs got used to the idea of give away.

Ben (I2) spoke with me about what he learned by giving away some of the things he made:

B: These are things that I had more than a material interest invested in. They had some sentimental value attached to them...giving away something that had...not just a material value, but a experiential value, *that* is a learning opportunity.

M: What did you learn from that?

B: [It was] a departure. I mean, in life we have to deal with departures. Giving things away, giving up, and it's experience that you gain from that. You gain an expectation of what to expect of yourself, and what you expect of others. It's not the same thing as giving away presents. Perhaps [it is] giving something of yourself away to other people...Let me try to put it in this way – it was a part of my life and in that sense it was significant, and meant something of my life, so *that* I was giving away.

What Ben describes is a deeper giving away that actually changed his sense of self.

How Am I Using My Energy?: Good Hands

Within the context of the EF course, the PSTs used both deep reflection and the practice of reflexivity to focus on being community centered, learning from the soul, using good hands, and incorporating the idea of give away. As Charlene said, if teachers “understand that change is from within themselves, they can then help other people to make that change.” Through their other coursework, the PSTs had been learning to be reflective practitioners. They acknowledged that, as Tristain (I1) said “the things that you grow up with aren't necessarily completely accurate” and that the process of reflection helped them to see that different people hold different beliefs. As well, they saw that a good teacher stays open to learning and that increasing their reflective skills would help them become lifelong learners, conceptualize better, understand themselves as a learners,

sort through emotions, and make sense of the “jumble of teaching beliefs” that Kim mentioned earlier.

Amber (I1) talked about how previous to the program, she had always learned by rote and memorization without a reflective element:

I was...not really encouraged to go outside the box, so to speak. I'm starting to learn for the sake of my own learning, now that I'm in the university setting, and because I'm becoming a teacher. It's part of [my] professional role...I think being a teacher is what pushed me out of the box -- realizing that if I want my students to take control of their own learning, I'm going have to take control of my own learning as well. So it was more of that role that's appearing in me as a teacher that pushed me outside the box, not the classes themselves, although I have had some very good professors that have pushed the limits.

At the same time, Darren (I1) felt like he was not given full independence in his struggle to find his way as a teacher:

D: I spend a lot of time thinking about ways that I would like to teach...it's ironic, but I don't really do that in my other classes. Even though they are education courses, I kind of feel disconnected. I kind of feel too much like a student in those other classes, and not like a future teacher, you know.

M: And do you have any sense of why that is?

D: I think it's just how our society works, that there's still so much emphasis on competitiveness and grading, and social hierarchies, and all of that. I think that's just the way it is and I would like to think that there's a better way out there. But it's a system, and I think it's just kind of a loophole that I'm feeling that I have to get through. You know, I'm just waiting for the day that I can sort of have my own classroom. But then again I'm thinking that I'm going to be in the school system and there's still going to be limitations there, so...

At the beginning of the EF course, there were feelings of confusion by the PSTs who saw that the roles of teacher and learner were different, but did not know how they should act or how they fit in. Amber (I2) describes:

At first...I was confused, and all the students in my program, we were talking amongst each other like, "well what's this, what are we doing? What is expected of us? What are we getting graded on? What do we have to hand in?" And that was the main focus. And as we got used to it and shifted, it was more "what are

you working on? What does that look like? How did you do that? Was it difficult?" You know? And, "what have you learned from the elder in your group?" And we were talking more along those lines, instead of what grade do you think you're going to get.

Through engagement in the EF course, the PSTs were shifting their focus to the processes of learning. As Lindsay (I1) said, "it's a teacher student role that's created there" where the teacher is a learner. This is a subtle but important difference for the PSTs who are often seen as student teachers.



Figure 29: Teacher as Learner, Learner as Teacher

The PSTs felt that indigenous education was a more reflective kind of education where reflection was somehow embedded in the process of learning. The PSTs appreciated that the unrushed pace of the EF course gave them time to reflect in meaningful ways. One of the ways this was done was through keeping a personal journal. For some PSTs it was a welcome time to sit quietly, think about things, and keep a written record of what had happened in the course. Many PSTs felt that the journal assignment was very important and appreciated that it was done differently than in previous courses. Kim (I2) explains:

I think a big part of it was that the journals in the other classes were being checked every week. So it was kind of like well, I'm going to write what my teacher wants to hear - quite honestly right? And this journal [for the course] was going to be summarized in a paper at the end, but it was my own thoughts and I didn't have to share them with anybody else. And so I felt like I could write both positive and negative things. So that was really powerful for me because journaling for me before was just "well let's write the good things, and the teacher will be happy, and I'll get a good mark, and everything was great, right?"

The PSTs felt that the end paper gave their journal a purpose and that they were actually excited to be writing it. They saw the assignment as a more honest way of reflecting that was tied first and foremost to learning, as Katie (I1) said:

It's more for me. And if I ever use journaling again I hope to do that for my kids -- that it's theirs, and it has nothing to do with grades or nothing to do with what you're supposed to say, or what I want you to say. Just reflect. Just learn and think about it.

The second way of reflecting happened in community, often through spontaneous and frequent conversations with peers. The PSTs said that these conversations helped them sort out what they were experiencing in the EF course and to find out different perspectives on the group work, etc. The interviews for this study were also a way that the PSTs reflected in community. They talked about doing pre-thinking before our meetings and that the process itself was reflective as described by Kim (I2):

A lot of stuff that I'm telling you is honestly coming out as you're asking the questions, you know? Like I hadn't necessarily thought about all of these things before. So that's kind of neat too, for me. I think this has been another reflection opportunity for me definitely.

The third type of reflection that the PSTs talked about in the EF course is reflection that is embedded in more holistic experiences of doing. Charlene talked about how important it is to engage ways of knowing beyond thinking skills when reflecting:

That's the part I think is missing. [It would be good] if it was built-in to some of the courses, like how do you go back into your heart? How do you get out of your head? How do you take and learn from all aspects of yourself? When do you take up the physical time to go move and walk? When do you take up the emotional time of, okay yeah that stuff really triggered this part here and now I can take that out and have a look at it. And then how do I close that down, and how do I integrate all of that back into being the whole of me? And what do I really want to focus on? And then go back to their regular daily lives.

Like her earlier description of the PSTs as marbles, Charlene described a process of opening to reflexivity and then closing it down so that she could proceed in her daily life. It is akin to the process of walking the medicine wheel, always returning to centre to move forward.

For the PSTs, this recursive type of reflection showed up nicely at times when they were frustrated or anxious with their work. It tied back into the notion of using good hands and paying attention to the energy that is being used to produce something. Reflecting on how they were engaging in concepts such as good hands was hard to do for the PSTs, as they said they couldn't always find the words to describe what they were feeling. WK Gay shared that by paying attention you can see outward signs of what it might look like:

I don't know what my mom would call it in her language, but when you pick up a piece of work you only work on it so long, because you don't want to get sick of it. So you put it down and then you don't force yourself and say I've got a work on this for many times of the day and finish it by this time. There's no real deadline... And most artists, you don't work when you're in that funny space. There's all kinds of signs, like when you break your needle. And that one girl [in my group], she had to break the needle three times. It was trying to tell her you're not in a good space to be doing this. You shouldn't be doing it. And it took the third needle breaking before she would figure it out.

The PSTs had different stories around reflecting on their frustration, particularly with the cattail mats. As Tristain described earlier, they felt strongly that the crafts they worked with were physical representation of themselves. As they sometimes wrestled with the earth fibres, they began to look more closely and reflexively at themselves and their role in the frustration they were experiencing. Eva (I1) explains:

It's a confusing thing because it's obviously just my perspective on something. But, when, you're working on homework or something, and that frustrates you, then you can kind of dismiss it and [say] it's just [the] homework... that's the reason that I'm mad... That's the problem. But then when you're working with

something with your hands, and it's something more artistic, and more of a therapeutic something. So then if that frustrates you, then you really have to think okay, it's not like this piece's problem. You know what I mean? Because you just have to think okay, well what about this is making me frustrated? Why am I getting angry right now? ...If it's my homework and I'm frustrated with that, I really put it on the textbook... And maybe my frustration level is something that I should be looking at and not be pushing it off onto something else.

Eva went on to say that she needed to embrace patience and use it as a reflective tool to look inward at her own beliefs and ideas and emotions. For Kim (I2) reflecting on the difficulties of the cattail experience was a way of paying attention to how she was using her energy to produce her work:

I found myself so frustrated with it. And I just put it aside. I thought I can't do this. It's too hard. I don't know how to do it. I need more guidance or whatever. And then, I think we had another class and they talked about putting good thoughts and good energy into your work and turning that frustration into something positive. Like, okay I'm frustrated, but I am learning things. So, now I've taken that frustration, I've put it into good energy. And amazingly I went home and I finished [the mat]. (Laughter.) So you know, I think it made me reflect on [how] something like that can be such a powerful learning experience you know? Where as before I probably would have thought, "oh, this is a fun art project. Great." But, I really did think about my learning and how I was using my energy to produce something...and I thought okay, now it comes back to taking responsibility for my own learning.

Underlying the cattail frustrations was a sense of impatience that many of the PSTs realized they had throughout other experiences in the course. Jamie (I2) said:

One big thing [that stood out for me] is how impatient I realized I am... especially towards the end of the course when we were trying to get it wrapped up, and [I found myself saying] oh, it's in a week, and we have to get everything done. And I was like, okay, come on, let's go, let's go, let's start working! And you know, they're taking time to pray, and think about their hands and everything. And I was like, calm down. Like, I'm totally always on time, and always go by my watch. So I learned how impatient I am. And just to stop. And you know, the quality is more important than getting it done on time.

The Wks were aware of the PSTs need for speed and tried to explain to them that they would miss important teachings if they didn't slow down. WK Gay said:

I would say, “no, no, no.” I know we have to be finished, I understand that. But you can lose the enjoyment of the whole thing and that will partly alter your learning. And I can't explain it otherwise because in order to get that far, you want to also absorb it, and if you speed along you might be missing something and you may not even realize it. It's nothing I can teach you even. It's the process you have to go through. And that was the difficult part of trying to tell them, “no, no you don't have to be speedy.”

Being around the patience of the WKs reinforced the how-to of patience for the PSTs. Many of the PSTs talk about how the WKs took time to show them how to untangle their knots and how to fix things they had done wrong. The PSTs' increased awareness of patience then transferred into patience for themselves as learners. Many of the PSTs gave examples of re-stitching work that they were unhappy with; from this they learned patience with the actual practice of reflection. Jamie (I2) said:

Having the patience to reflect...is absolutely useful. It's huge. It helps so much. It's been a task for me though, I've had to learn how to do it. I don't do it naturally. I just do something and then I move on. So actually having to sit down and think about it, you learn so much about yourself especially and how you do things.

Along with gaining more patience, some of the PSTs talked about their tendency to be perfectionists. Most of them had always been top students who expected a high level of work from themselves. The EF course causes them to think carefully about what perfection meant to them. In an interview with Kim (I2) I suggested to her that she seemed to be re-defining what perfection meant. She said:

Yeah, definitely that's a good way of putting it. Which was huge for me because I'm one of those people who wants to be the best at everything. And I want mine to be better than everybody else's. And when you say it out loud it sounds so immature and silly, because it should be trying to be the best for yourself, not for other people. So, it sounds so silly, from a little project, but I was amazed at how much I did learn from it.

Kim's reply indicated that she was moving towards honouring a more endogenous process as a learner where she was led by internal motivation instead of an external sense of perfection.



Figure 30: A Unique Cattail Mat

A Connection Time of Completion: Ceremony

From the beginning of the course, many of the PSTs and WKs made comments about how they really didn't know what the finished mural was going to look like. Despite not knowing, they showed incredible commitment and perseverance to the huge task before them. Tristain (I2) spoke about a time shortly before the piece was unveiled, on how the whole is greater than the parts.

Once we finally had most of our pieces together, and as a group we tried to put it on the mural, and WK2 laid out the canvas for the first time, and I realized how huge it was going to be and how much work everybody did put in to that. It was amazing because working in your group you're like, oh this little sash, it's not going to be much to display. But, it turned out beautiful.

Many of the PSTs spoke of being surprised and pleased to finally be introduced to the mural, named *Xaxe Siam Seetla*, which translates as *Honoured Grandmother of Many Generations: Wise, Learned and Respected as Mother Earth*.



Figure 31: The Unveiling of the Mural

The unveiling ceremony of the finished mural was, for the PSTs who could attend, a capstone experience. It was a chance to show off their hard work, celebrate, interact with the community, connect with the stories of the ancestors, and tell the story of their experiences in the course, both to important family members, friends, and the community at large. They spoke of being nervous and proud when they stood in front of the community to share their part of the story. As they spoke and listened to each other, the pride and dedication the PSTs and Wks felt towards the work was evident. As Tasha (12) said:

It was just an amazing dedication of a lot of people's time to make the project go, especially with the delays and everything that happened. It's really phenomenal that so many people felt so passionately about the class and about the project that they put in all those hours and did all that really good quality, great work. I think that was really powerful for me.

The PSTs were also proud of the work they did in the EF course in ways that they didn't often experience in other classes. They were excited to do their homework, go to meetings outside of regular class hours, and re-do work that wasn't quite right. This was due in large part because they felt a sense of creative ownership. In addition, they felt that the EF course gave them a place to actually put into practice the care and attention needed to have pride in their work, rather than to get an assignment done as a hoop to jump through. At the same time, they had an eye towards the fact that the piece would be

displayed in the education building. Eva (I2) talked about how her dedication caused her undivided attention to the goal of the group:

I helped stitch some of the hands that were on the bottom, and so at first I did hand stitching and it was so tedious because I had a crappy little pin that wouldn't go through the two fabrics together, but I did them all. And I looked at them, and they didn't look good, you know? And I was like, this is going to go up in UVic, and yeah, sure, I spent three hours stitching these, but they didn't look good. And so I unstitched all of them and I started over, which was another three, four, I don't even know how many hours. But, it doesn't matter. Time didn't matter.



Figure 32: Attention to Detail

The ceremony was a stepping out of time as well. The PSTs talk about being aware of their need for patience as the long evening unfolded. There was much excitement and anxiety for the PSTs while they and the WKs placed the finishing touches on the piece (this was happening in a side room, while the guests arrived). The ceremony protocol was unfamiliar to the PSTs and some felt anxious that they didn't know what would happen or that their lack of knowledge might ruin the ceremony. The PSTs talked about how they had to adjust to the slower pace and get used to standing and waiting, and about how easy going the WKs were about the PSTs learning as things unfolded.

There was some concern amongst the PSTs as to whether there should have been more information given to both themselves and the audience, to explain more explicitly what was going on. Darren (I2) described:

I spent a lot of time looking in the audience and watching people who had no idea what was going on, and remembering how I was in those shoes once. And sort of feeling sympathetic for them because they were getting kind of restless, you

know, it was a whole learning experience for them. For me too, but I sort of knew what was going on. So it was neat to see how there was such a learning gap, a knowledge gap, a cultural sort of gap there. You know, normally I was thinking that when they were doing the blanketing and all that, well, I was thinking that there should be like a play-by-play analysis, giving the audience sort of a heads up of what was going on. But then I thought you know, that wouldn't be right.

Darren's comments tie into the earlier section that described the PSTs anxiety over not knowing how to participate. Many of the PSTs at the ceremony were able to see their own growth as patient participants. During the ceremony, the uneasy feelings on the part of the PSTs disappeared once they settled into what was happening, losing track of time and relaxing into listening.

The listening the PSTs did was deep and important. They heard stories of the other small groups, and of the Wks. They listened to stories of the larger community, both the university and the local First Nations. At the ceremony the PSTs gained a deeper sense of the effort it took, on both the part of the university as well as the community to have a class like this happen. Jamie (I2) spoke of getting a better sense of history and how that might change a sense of ownership around the university setting:

J: I just realized how important this course is, and how different it is, and how nice and refreshing it is than a regular, sit down and study this [type of course].

M.: What do you see as being important about it?

J: um, learning who came before us. What they are all about. What they stand for... to learn about cultures that are *so* close to our everyday life but we just don't really see or acknowledge. But now it's starting to come more in the University, and I think [the dean] is doing a really great job of bringing that in. One of the other speakers was saying how I hope [First Nations people] feel more comfortable coming into this environment and realize that we do acknowledge that they were here first, and it is their land. And yeah, we don't just take it for granted that this is the University, and *we're* supposed to be here.

In addition to gaining this type of deeper sense of history, some of the PSTs acknowledged that they hadn't realized the extent to which Aboriginal people had to

adapt to be a part of universities and schools. The PSTs said that hearing the community stories at the ceremony gave a clearer picture of the reasons people felt unwelcome.



Figure 33: Dr. Williams Welcoming the Community

The ceremony also helped the PSTs recognize the significance of the EF course experience for the WKs themselves and for the work they did as women. In addition to the pieces created in the EF course, the mural displayed earth fibre textiles from women located throughout North and South America. Xaxe Siam Seetla embodies the wisdom that has passed down, through the creation of earth fibre textile pieces, over time and on this place, Turtle Island. As Tristain (I2) said:

I just [saw] the empowerment *for* women and, just when they were speaking last night, you could *feel* it, you could feel the meaning and how deep it was. It was just so strong... And it's not very often that women get a chance to shine like that, and have *ceremonies* based around their work, and songs written about them, and I thought that was great too. I don't know, just to show what's kind of been in the background of history, and display its importance and how it's been passed down and remains really prominent in these women's lives, and that *they* were able to share with us.

The PSTs recognized that not only were women being acknowledged but that the mural was significant as a representation and welcoming of Aboriginal cultures within the university. Tristain (I2) comments:

[It's significant] to display something in the University that's of a different culture than the university culture. I mean, you look at some of these buildings, they have gray walls and I don't know, there's not a lot of culture anywhere in these buildings, regardless of the culture, there's nothing. And so to have something displayed that's of someone's culture and has importance to them, it's just nice to

be a part of that. To help other people feel welcomed – as welcomed as maybe I've always felt at University.



Figure 34: Honouring the Wisdom Keepers

Only six of the PST participants in my study were able to attend the ceremony. These PSTs felt it was a significant event in terms of bringing a sense of completion or going full circle to their understanding of local Aboriginal culture. These PSTs reported that it was great to end a course on a positive note in celebration, rather than in the stressful energy of an exam. They felt that their hard work had really been honoured and that the ceremony gave them a chance to step back and engage in further reflection.

Darren (I2) said:

Having the celebration the way we did was a good ending, it sort of wrapped everything up... That's not usually what happens in a typical course here. You know, you hand in your assignments, you say your goodbyes briefly, and then that's it, you move on to the next course... I don't know if I'll ever have a chance to take another course like this. So, it was a good way to end it.

The other half of the PSTs in my study were frustrated that they were unable to attend the ceremony. The ceremony had originally been scheduled inside of the regular university term. The extensive nature of the mural, as well as cancellations of some class and external meeting times due to weather and other issues, caused the ceremony to be pushed back to the month following the end of term. Many of the PSTs were in practicum settings away from campus or had previous commitments and were disappointed not to

be able to help with the finishing efforts or to be able to attend the ceremony. Eva (I2) who was able to attend the ceremony expressed some of the intensity of the final days:

I have so much respect for everybody that pulled it together...in the last couple of weeks...I mean I went out to Charlene's house [for a work session], but I know that there was a lot of background work, and that not everybody contributed. So that was a small handful of people really doing a huge amount of work. And the little amount of work that I did, I can really appreciate how much more went into it...Charlene had a great vision, and was able to pull it off. And it looks spectacular...I wish I could have been there more and I wish that there had been more time that worked with my schedule. And I feel bad for taking credit for something that is so much bigger than anything I put into it...I'm disappointed in a way because it wasn't as cohesive at the end as it was at the beginning, but I mean you can't really help that – the snow days, and whatever. And now we're on our practicums and that's huge, so it's just hard to give up that time, right?

Charlene was also attentive towards the way in which the course ended, and was saddened by the lack of closure:

I was trying very much to do it in a cultural way. But some of my frustration, although I was willing to let go and just let whatever needed to happen, happen, was that we never got to the end part with everybody working on the main larger piece. And there [were] so many teachings that were to come in that part there, that I had held back...And we never got to that part, there were very few of them [at the ceremony], but maybe [they were] the ones that were meant [to be there] and who could hear...My plan had been to have a full end part for them to round everything, and tie everything together. And to show how those teachings that they were learning in their smaller groups were actually very much the same as what this overall piece is.

Charlene said that these teachings would be difficult for her to write down and so she had hoped that there could be another gathering where she and the other Wks could share what remained to be said. There was discussion about having another ceremony and gathering when the mural was installed in its permanent spot in the education building to have as Charlene said:

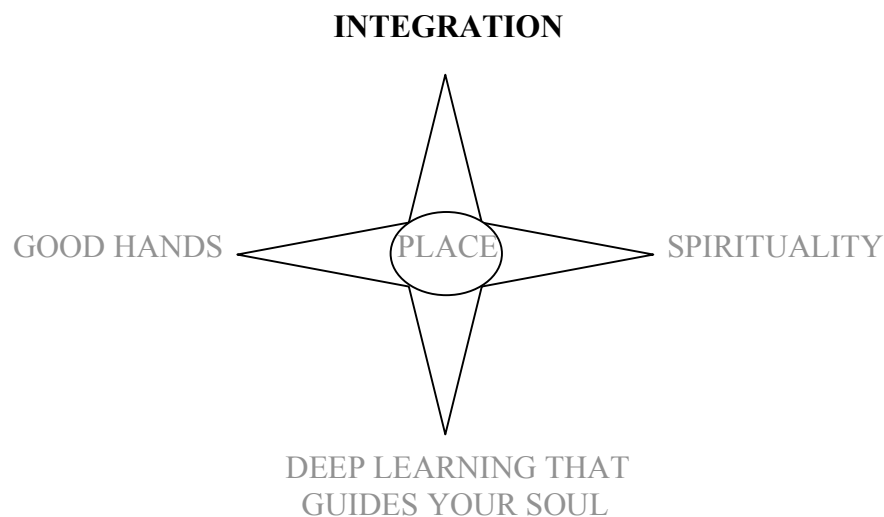
One final evening where we can come together and just have even a little bit of reflection time of completion. Yes, our baby's finally in its proper place, in its respectful way, and here are some of the other things that maybe not everybody

was aware of, like about what each moon time was. [It would give time for] the rest of the teachings [to be] offered and available.



Figure 35: Preparing for the Unveiling

As of this writing, over two years since the unveiling, there has been no final installation ceremony. The mural is still on temporary support structures in the Curriculum Lab located in the education building. This appears to be the permanent home of Xaxe Siam Seetla, and staff in the Lab told me that she is a welcome and appreciated part of this dynamic location.



Integration: Coming Full Circle

Closer to the end of our time together...it was interesting to watch how quickly [the PSTs] could go from their heart. Turning [the head] part off and just being in their spirit, and in their heart and letting their hands flow. It took a lot less time to make the quietness in the class and the peacefulness in the class happen, and it took less pulling, and less of my energy because...it was already becoming automatic. (WK Charlene)

The north corner of the wheel is about elders, wisdom, thinking, understanding, organizing, imagining, interpreting, moderation, completion, freedom from knowledge, seeing how all things fit together, intuition made conscious, and capacity to dwell in the centre of things, to see and take the middle way (Lane, et. al, 1984). There are four sub-themes in this section. First, *into the why*, describes the PSTs deepening awareness of Aboriginal cultures, Second, *ebb and flow*, returns to the earlier images of learning and teaching and shows how the images given at the end of the EF course suggest changes in the PSTs conceptual understanding of learning and teaching towards a more indigenous perspective. Third, *it's hard to implement*, highlights some of the issues that PSTs identified as being relevant to changing their practice. The final section, *you can be inventive*, describes the experiences the PSTs had incorporating their new knowledge into their practica placements.

It should be noted that while in this corner of the wheel I gradually draw increasingly from the data gathered in the post-practica focus groups. This reflects how the PSTs conceptual thinking was made more complex in the process of actual classroom teaching. I have also included some of the oral image data from the interviews as well as images that were drawn into informal notebooks at the beginning of the focus group sessions. In general, these data indicate that the PSTs moved away from a teacher as a facilitative and directive type of personality, towards images where learners and teachers enter into a more symbiotic relationship similar to the one presented in the EF course.

Into the Why: Deepening Cultural Awareness

The PSTs felt that the EF course gave them a chance to see the world from a different perspective. They said the experience was deeper, more real, and gave them

personal connections that were different than previous learning about cultures, particularly from a textbook. As Ben (I1) said, the course “started to unlock a picture” of another culture where the PSTs could “appreciate the actual work that goes into people's beliefs [and] knowledge.” This was even true for the PSTs who had previous experiences with Aboriginal culture as this conversation with Amber (I2) revealed:

A: I had always seen ceremonial dances, and I've been to sweat lodges and things like that. I knew the basics you know, like the food, the dance, the traditional wear, things like that – but I didn't know why those things were important. Why salmon is so important in the culture, I didn't know why often things are done slowly and there's not much emphasis on time or schedule. I didn't know those sorts of things. I think I've learned more about that now, and about the history of it and why it's important, that sort of connection.

M.: Other PSTs talked about moving beyond the feasts, festivals and fashion understanding of culture, into a little bit deeper...

A: Yeah, into the why.

The PSTs began to understand that Aboriginal people have a fundamentally different worldview, as Leigh (I2) tried to explain:

It's a lot about more of the spiritual, and the worldview of it, not like, what did they eat, and how did they catch the salmon in the river. That stuff doesn't blow my mind. I think it's amazing that they lived off the land for thousands of years, and that they were so a part of the cycle, and not disconnected like we've done to ourselves, you know? That's amazing, but it's not exactly [what I mean.] It's just the spiritual, and the knowledge side of it, the way it's different.

Leigh is referring to a clarified understanding of the epistemologically different way that the WKs see the world.

The EF course helped the PSTs to clarify misperceptions they had of Aboriginal culture and helped them build on knowledge they had from other courses. For example one PST spoke of incorporating the EF experience into a biology class on people's use of plants, noticing how the course had not incorporated how Aboriginal cultures use the

land. Some of the WKs also spoke about becoming more aware of the other cultures amongst themselves, talking about how they had been excited to learn about the ways of other Aboriginal groups.

The PSTs said that the EF course acknowledged Aboriginal culture and gave it a voice in ways that are deeply respectful and representative of the culture. Tasha (I2) said:

I think something that's important is that it's the point of view from that culture. It's not me looking at a culture and explaining to someone else about that culture. Because I mean, who am I to say that? And I think that to have all the different cultures come together and be able to share personally what their culture is to them is a real first-hand look, rather than having kind of a secondhand judgment.

WK Janet echoed this deeper way of appreciating saying that she felt the course was successful because:

People have now walked away with a tangible and emotional, and educational, and spiritual experience that will stay with them...And seeing [the culture this way] takes the kind of curiosity aspect out of it, when you invite people in and say okay, get your hands dirty, clean this fish, or whatever. And it removes that whole, let me be a tourist to your culture kind of thing.

The PSTs spoke about the importance of not trying to assimilate everyone into one culture. As Eva (I2) said, she wanted:

To really keep it diverse and acknowledge all of that, not just on a superficial level but on a much deeper level...to bring pride and to bring acknowledgment, and to bring other cultures in. And just to give that insight into other ways of thinking because I think each culture has such a different way of approaching ideas.

The PSTs hoped to transfer that positive and deeper way of looking at culture to their teaching and said that the EF course helped them relate better to Aboriginal people and made them feel more prepared to teach Aboriginal students. Amber (I2) said:

I think learning about the culture helps me understand First Nations people more and appreciate it more, and the work that *they* do. And if there's a child in my class that's First Nations I'll be able to make those adjustments as well. Like, I know now...if one of their brothers is having a naming ceremony, they're going to

be up all night, and they might not be ready to go to school the next day. And to, make those adjustments, because it's just a different culture. You know, learning about the culture helps a lot. And I still have a lot to learn, but I think, I think knowing a bit more will really help me connect with those students too.

The PSTs felt more comfortable sharing the historical knowledge that they gained from the EF course (e.g. the stories behind the textiles on the mural). They also felt interested in actively seeking out more understanding of local culture and expressed being more comfortable asking Aboriginal people questions. At the same time, some PSTs were cautious about this, and spoke of just trying to be open to when and what Aboriginal students wanted to share in the classroom. The PSTs felt it was their role to provide a comfortable and welcoming place for sharing to occur.

The PSTs saw that they had increased content knowledge about the represented Aboriginal cultures, but the experience went beyond increased content knowledge, to a deeper sense of learning through taking a reflexive stance. Kim (I2) discusses with me how the course helped her understand the learning of others more fully, by paying careful attention to her own learning process:

K: I see two sides for sure, one side being...about the content that I will be teaching, and the appreciation for culture that I'll be teaching not just the different ways to represent animals and what totem poles are and that sort of thing. It's more like, well what is the whole picture here, and what is the whole culture mean? And I think I can do a better job of that. I think I still need support for that, by having people from the community come in, but I certainly *can* do a better job of it now. *Definitely*.

M.: So there's a depth of understanding that wasn't there before?

K: Oh yeah, definitely. And the [other] side [of what I learned] would be the patience and the understanding for the different ways of learning, and uniqueness, and taking the time to really teach the whole child...that comes from me getting a better understanding of *myself* through the course...So I think they're two different things.

M: They're kind of related though aren't they?

K: They are, yeah. Because that patience and understanding *is* a big part of the culture so I think they are connected in that way.

M.: well it seems like you have a deeper understanding of yourself somehow, and you have a deeper understanding of the culture. They're different things, but there is the depth that has shifted on both of them a little bit.

K: Yep, definitely. And you know it was hard for me to accept that because I sort of thought you know, is that *really* coming from that course? Or am I just trying to make something from nothing? But I think, part of it has come from the course and part of it has come from the skill of reflection that I've gained from the course... And it's not necessarily [the specific content] from the course, it's the skills and the things that you learn about *yourself* that allow you to learn more about other things.

Many of the PSTs expressed similar increased confidence in regard to content knowledge about Aboriginal culture. Kim's second type of learning around reflexive practice was also acknowledged by other PSTs and is illuminated more fully in the next section.

Ebb and Flow: Shifting Perspectives on Learning and Teaching

The PSTs talked about how the EF course was an opportunity to see learning and teaching from another perspective in concrete, experiential and deeply felt ways. Many spoke of how the experience shifted the conceptual beliefs that they held coming into the course. Others said that it reinforced their existing beliefs and gave them more confidence about those beliefs amidst school and university environments that did not support the same ideas. Leigh (I2) said the course left her “feeling it deep down [and] believing it completely” as opposed to courses where she was told what to do by instructors, rather than being shown the pedagogy in action. Tristain (I2) spoke further about how the EF course was a deeper sharing of knowledge than a transmissive style course:

The learning process that I experienced in that class was definitely from someone else's heart to my heart, from my heart to someone else's heart. So it was definitely deeper than just this is what I know, remember it. It's a different kind of

learning for me, so it kind of shifts my whole vision that I probably had going into this course.

The PSTs spoke of four key concepts that the EF course brought to the fore of their thinking: teaching the whole child, learning in community, relevancy in learning, and learning as a two-way street where there is an ebb and flow between learning and teaching, teacher and learner. These themes echo the themes found in the south corner of the wheel that describe the WKs approach to learning and teaching, and were often described through the use of images.

Teaching the whole child. The PSTs talked about how in the context of their practica, they were able to observe the holistic needs of their learners including learning styles, and developing beyond the intellect to include creativity, motor skills and each learner's unique personality. Kim consciously worked to find a different image of the learner than the vacuum cleaner image she thought of at the initial interview. In her second interview Kim saw the learner as being represented by an image of the Earth because it was more holistic and complex. Tasha's focus group image had to do with the learner as a swimmer that could choose one of many rivers that represented ways of knowing:

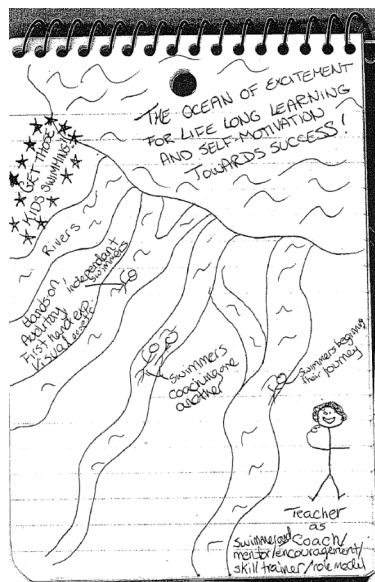


Figure 36: Page from Tasha's Focus Group Notebook

My picture is an ocean, and there are all these different rivers, there's a whole bunch. So there are kids swimming and they can pick whatever river. And I guess the rivers kind of symbolize different ways of learning...hands-on learning, or auditory, or whatever. Different ways of learning, it's going to be different for everyone. And as long as they get into a river and they are swimming, that's your goal. (Tasha, FGb)

The PSTs emphasized that teaching the whole child meant teaching beyond the curriculum, particularly paying attention to life skills and social responsibility. Tristain (FGa) spoke about her practicum in a primary class:

I found that I was teaching a lot of life skills and not a whole lot of content...it wasn't at all what I expected...kids don't know how to deal with their own issues...which was tough because you kind of have to throw out your math lesson to deal with some of these issues right away when they are fresh...During center time you'll have six kids come up to you saying "so and so won't let me play" or "so-and-so won't let me do this." And you're spending so much of your own energy solving all those problems, so you have to give them the tools and the language to be able to do that themselves.

Many of the PSTs spoke about similar experiences of needing to teach outside of the curriculum in their practica.

Learning in community. During the focus groups the PSTs appeared to acknowledge more fully that learning is very much embedded in social processes. Lindsay (FGa) was unhappy with her original image of the learner as a flower. Her following quote refers to the bottom left corner of this entry in her focus group notebook:

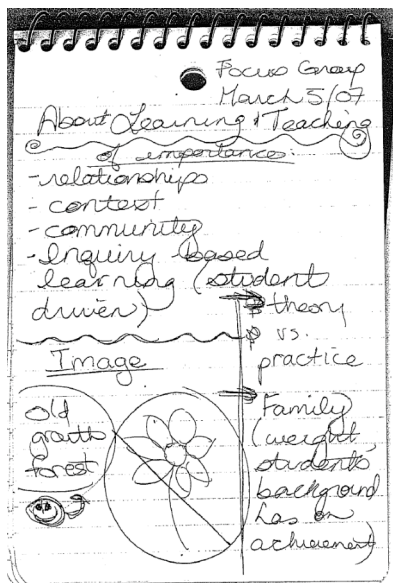


Figure 37: Page from Lindsay's Focus Group Notebook

I had earlier in my interviews always talked about the flower, the garden because we use it in our courses, and it's been done. And so I then drew a flower with a cross through it because I've decided I don't like that image to use as my representation of learning and teaching. (Laughter.) But it keeps coming, like...this curse in my head. So I then tried to think further, and I came up with the image of an old-growth forest, which I like the image of. And I'll work on that one in my mind for a little bit to try to replace the flower and the garden...I don't like [the flower] because it gives the impression that each kid is their own entity. And it doesn't really represent the interconnectedness that I think that teaching, and just humankind in general has. So I would prefer to stick to an image that shows that interconnected relations a little bit more.

Eva (I2) spoke of the learner as being embedded in a series of concentric circles where the learner is situated in the centre within the class group, within the school, within the community. Darren (I2) explained how this embedded-ness is more complex within a multicultural classroom:

Children need... a social context, an environment where they can learn from each other and share their knowledge. And that's especially true when there is a mixture of students, a mixture of ways of knowing. Like when you have an Aboriginal kid in a classroom like I do, [who is] feeling sort of on the edge, and sort of not really feeling in tune with everyone else's learning style and what's going on. I don't think that there's a [supportive] social process going on with her...with the other students. I think that needs to be in place...I think you always need to have people to fall back on. And also feel comfortable and confident that you can step outside your comfort zone and go on your own and discover and explore in an individual way.

In Darren and Eva's conceptualization, the concentric circles become a support system where there is an ebb and flow, or symbiotic relationship between the learner and the members of the various communities. Remembering his experience as "the rose man," Darren (I2) spoke of how teachers can take a gentle offering approach:

What happened with me with the rose and [WK] Caroline showing me the way, but not staying with me...I think there's a process there where it's social and then individual and then social and then maybe individual again.

Leigh (I2) shared how teachers needed to "create boundaries" so that the learners have guidance as to acceptable behaviours because:

Teaching and learning happens for everyone when you have that space where everyone feels accepted to be themselves, because...they'll contribute more from themselves, which creates better ideas and thoughts, and a more comfortable sharing atmosphere. And that way you're not just learning with the teacher or one person, but you're learning from everyone around you.

Jamie's image of a tree (FGb) supports the notion of learner/teacher/community symbiosis and echoes Lindsay's notion of a rainforest:

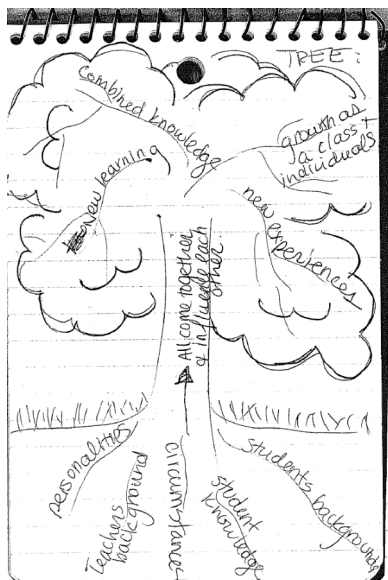


Figure 38: Page from Jamie's Focus Group Notebook

Learning is a two-way street. In one of the focus group sessions, the participants agreed with Jamie when she said of the learner/teacher relationship, “learning is a two-way street. You teach as much as you learn, and they learn as much as hopefully you’ll teach” (FGB). Jenni (I2) said that PSTs often “think of a teacher as being higher than a student. But I don't think that's really right anymore.” Many of the PSTs, when first asked did not consider themselves to be teachers within the EF course, however, after thinking more carefully, they all found examples of how they had moved in and out of the learner/teacher role. In addition, they saw teachers as lifelong learners who don’t necessarily need to be experts to be able to share or teach something.

In their classrooms, the PSTs wanted to incorporate ideas of mutual respect in the learner/teacher relationship where the student was treated, as Jenni said, “like an equal human being.”

Amber’s image (FGb) demonstrated this equalizing in the classroom:

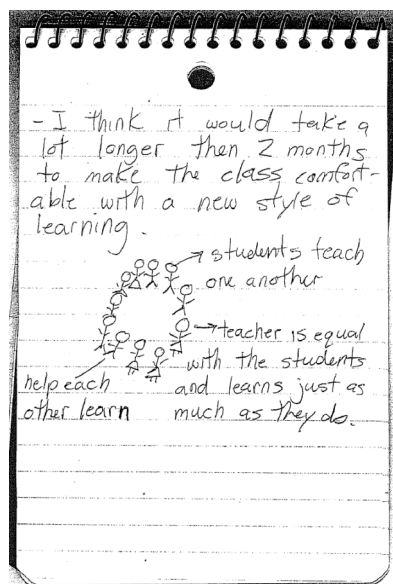


Figure 39: Page from Amber's Focus Group Notebook

I did a little drawing of stick people standing in a circle. (Laughter.) So that the teacher is equal with the students, is part of the circle, and learns as much as they do. And then the students teach one another, as well as a teacher.

The PSTs also saw how co-teaching, particularly with Aboriginal community members would be useful in their classrooms. As Tasha (I2) said:

It was really important for me to see how powerful it could be to have other people in the classroom teaching. And for me not to necessarily feel ownership for teaching every element of the lesson and to say there are people who can do this better than I can. And that's going to serve my students way more than me trying to do something that isn't necessarily where I am strongest.

By placing learning within a more complex social context the PSTs moved away from a transmissive conceptualization, as Tristain (I2) said:

[Learning is] not just receiving. I think to truly learn you also have to give it to someone else. And I think that's how you learn best, and how you realize you've learned something. I mean if you just take something in, it's not learning because you're not reflecting on it, you're not going deeper. So I think by sharing with someone else what you've learned, or what you've taken in, that helps you internalize it and that helps you realize your growth and reflect on your growth. It's definitely new to me compared to what I've experienced before, which is if you have it down, you've learned something. If you can repeat it, you've learned something...I think you can only remember things for so long, like facts. And...a week from now is that really learning if you don't carry that with you? So, I think

something that you can take with you and share with people, is something you've truly learned.

Tristain's comments also reflect the PSTs shifting beliefs towards a focus on learning rather than content, as Kim (I1) said, "it's not about finishing your work and handing it in and getting a sticker. It's about, what have you learned, and how can you use that?"

Relevancy. Many of the PSTs reiterated Kim's comment about the importance of relevancy in the learning process. Ben (FGa) talks about how tapping in to a student's sense of relevancy can increase learning:

A lot of the students in my classroom, sometimes they just don't [learn] because it's not relevant to them. And when it is, like one little kid he likes lizards and dinosaurs, if it's lizards and dinosaurs, (clicks fingers) spot on! ...So, does the child know what he or she is doing and wanting? Do they want to do it, or need it? That's one thing [to keep in mind] in terms of planning and implementing a lesson, and understanding where your student is coming from and where you need to go with them.

This quote from Leigh (FGa) shows some of the tricky terrain that teachers need to navigate to keep learning relevant:

When it's not relevant, perhaps that's our job as teachers to...show the students how it is relevant so that they can have that same excitement about what they're learning. Because when push comes to shove, we still have content that we're obliged to cover. But I would find it difficult to come up with any content that when you *really* look at it isn't relevant to our lives. So maybe that's what we need to do, and work on as teachers, is showing them how it is relevant. A challenge easier said than done, especially when it comes to some of those social studies, history related outcomes. But it could be done I'm sure.

The PSTs in this focus group agreed with Leigh that it was challenging to engage learners and that teachers needed to be creative and keep learning hands-on. The PSTs also said that they would now be able to teach cultural issues in more relevant ways, as expressed by Tasha (I2):

I think I definitely have a different way of approaching how to teach cultural elements, especially social studies. I think to not teach that second-party culture

lesson is really important, and to try to go away from textbook, and into real world. How is *this* going to affect *you* as a person, and how does that touch your life? And is that relevant to you in your life? And I think that applies to every lesson. Because students are going to be way more engaged and way more willing to give of themselves if they can see how it will help them, if they can see how it relates to them.

Own pace and time. The PSTs spoke about wanting to help each child find their strengths as learners, and wanted to do this in a way that resonated with the learner. Katie

(I1) said:

In the past couple weeks [when planning] I've already thought of "okay, what's a more natural way to learn this?" And I think that, I can see that already happening with me... That I will take my PLOs, and my IRPs, and then I'll say now here's the actual kid, not the make-believe kid. Here's the real kid, and how can I make them naturally learn this in a very organic way. I don't know if I'm saying it the right way but just not in the constructs of what I was taught like.

Leigh's image (FGa) also addressed student autonomy:

I drew a picture, I don't really know why. It's an easel and... a palette and a paintbrush. I think the picture represents not the teacher, but the learner... I think the learner is the one who has control of what they want to do, what kind of picture they want to draw, whether or not they even pick up their paintbrush, or how detailed they want to do their work, and stuff like that.

The PSTs felt that it was important for teachers to read the learners needs, as Amber (I2) said, so that learners can learn at their "own pace and time" even if it takes a couple of weeks "it should be okay for those kids to take that time."

The PSTs said it was important for teachers to assess the learner's needs and maybe play a different role than academic mentor. Lindsay (I2) gave an example of what that could look like in the classroom:

I've seen it actually in other classrooms where the kids have ongoing work, and they figure out what they need to work on. And yeah, that sounds normal at the grade 5, 6, 7 level, but even down in the primary grades, teaching those skills of [balancing] you know, this is what we need to get through, what's best for you right now? And what do you need extra help on? What do you feel like working on? Because we're so often with our kids saying, "nope, now it's social studies

time. You all have to do social studies.” And there's some kid in the back corner, whose brain is racing, and what he needs to do is something that is kinesthetic or whatever.

Many of the PSTs spoke of how they would be more likely to give this kind of space to their students so that the learners could be more actively engaged in their own learning process.

This section on the changing concepts of the PSTs ends with an image by Tristain (FGa) who acknowledged the complexity of the learning/teaching and learner/teacher process:

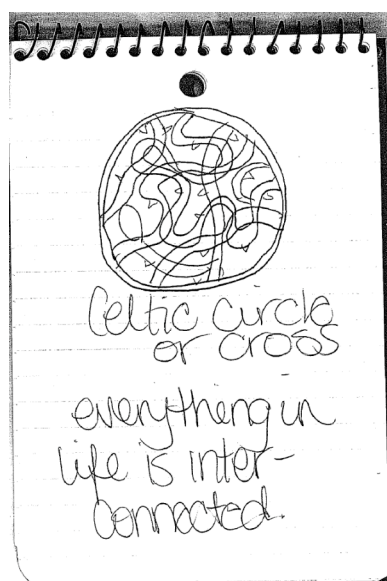


Figure 40: Page from Tristain's Focus Group Notebook

I drew a picture too, and it's not exactly what I want it to look like. [It is] a Celtic circle, or a Celtic ring, and it represents that everything in life is interconnected, no matter what you do. So...teaching and learning, you can't be learning without teaching, you can't be teaching without learning. Because when I'm teaching I'm learning so much about myself, about my philosophy and how I feel. As well as learning from the kids...And it's a different picture than what I saw last time...it's just a bit of a different symbol. Before, mine was a circle or something like that, so it's still that ongoing continuous process. It's just that there's a lot more paths involved in my new vision. And just how everything is *so* interconnected. And being in a classroom for a longer period of time you have a chance to see things unfold and see how things are more connected.

To summarize the changes in the PSTs conceptualizations of learning and teaching, they left the EF course with a stronger view of needing to teach the whole child. They also saw teachers as having a more equal and less directive role with the learner. They emphasized the communal aspect of learning and spoke frequently about the importance of making learning relevant and meaningful as demonstrated by the Wks in the course.

It's Hard to Implement: Issues Underneath the Goals

The PSTs went out into their practica aware that they were forming their own styles as teachers and saw the EF course as giving them concrete ideas in how to go about improving their teaching practice. They spoke about wanting to both increase cultural awareness within their classrooms as well as increase their use of indigenous ways within their pedagogical practice. The PSTs said that to do this effectively, it was necessary for teachers to show cultural acceptance in tangible ways, consciously create safe spaces, and to embed indigenous pedagogy throughout the curriculum. Eva (I2) articulated this concern:

I think of a lot of the time in schools it's executed completely wrong. It's always these small little activities, where it's like "community building time, or whatever. Okay, right now we are going to work together." So it just shows it as this isolated little thing instead of being implemented into every facet of how we teach.

At the same time, the PSTs were very aware of the limitations of their practica, in that they were visitors in some one else's classroom, had varying levels of support from their mentor teachers, and the 8-week time period was short. Amber (FGa) told her focus group members:

I found in my practicum it was quite difficult to put my vision of a classroom into action. Maybe it was just because it wasn't my own classroom and you don't get the same kind of opportunities as you get if you had them for the whole year, and everything. But it was a lot harder to implement it than I thought it would be. By implementing it I mean, different ways of teaching and learning. Because you

have to focus so much on getting it done, and getting those marks in for report cards. And there's all this other stuff that's in the way that you *have* to do. And I found that kind of unfortunate, but I think that as I grow and get more experience that I'll be able to do that part a bit better.

Depending on their individual situations, the PSTs did manage to incorporate some of their ideas into their teaching (see next section), and came away with a greater understanding of the following key issues that were underlying their hopes for future classrooms: *taking a risk, group work, assessment, patience and reflection.*

Taking a risk. Reminiscent of Lindsay's 'curse of the flower image' in the previous section, Amber continued her above statement by saying that she felt one of the reasons it was hard to make changes "is because you feel safer teaching in that standard way that you grew up with and that the rest of the classes seem to undertake." This awareness of doing things differently was coupled with a concern of the unknown response and outcome of incorporating unfamiliar strategies in the classroom. Lindsay (I2) said that "not really knowing where it's going to go" was a "risk" that teachers faced if they wanted to try an EF type of pedagogy in their classrooms.

The PSTs wondered about other issues as well, such as how a class of 30 might affect their goals to allow each child to guide their own learning within the classroom. In addition, they spoke about worries around how kids would respond to an approach that was more ambiguous than the explicit instructions they were used to getting from teachers.

Group work. The PSTs felt that group work was key to learning healthy social skills, such as understanding and respecting the values, beliefs and attitudes of others, learning to talk to each other, work together, and how to work towards a common goal. Group interaction was also seen as being a useful reflexive tool, as Tasha (FGa) said:

I think it is really important to be intentional about your work and to be able to sit down with somebody and to have them challenge you, and to be like well, why do you think that? And then you be like, well I have no idea. Somebody told it to me and I am regurgitating it, or you know? Wait a minute, stop and go back and think about that. Like, where is that coming from? That's a *really* good process, if you have time for the process, and if you're going to give time for the process.

Despite its perceived value and their strong desire to include group work in their classrooms, some of the PSTs disliked group work and most expressed that doing good group work was very challenging due to its complex and changing nature. They spoke about issues such as division of labour, control of group direction, etc., as being significant and complex factors of group success. Amber (I2) shared that:

Part of my vision, was having them work in groups more often than individually, so they could learn from each other and teach each other. But I found that with certain classes, the dynamics and stuff, it just doesn't work... They have a hard time giving each other tasks, they have a hard time working together. And I think if you built upon it they would have an easier time but there are still going to be those kids who kind of just sit off to the side and don't contribute much, and then those kids that want to contribute everything and don't let anyone else do it.

Despite these types of challenges the PSTs felt that group work could be successful if the teacher was very attentive to the process and to the students who were having trouble engaging due to feelings of uncertainty or discomfort. Darren (FGB) said it was a gradual process over time:

It's sort of a natural progression. I mean if you're not used to working in groups then it is going to be hard. So I realized that they needed to be introduced to it almost in baby steps [with] a lot of guidance... The social thing was big for me, so it was a real good experience having it actually become a struggle. I think if I had my own classroom I would prepare my students for that a lot more.

The PSTs also felt that some students needed to learn how to take a step back so that others could be more engaged in the work of a group.

The PSTs went on to say that the group work they were used to doing in the teacher education program was typical of the type of groups that happened in schools,

and that those groups often had an individual focus that took away from cohesiveness brought about by a common goal. This discussion from focus group B elucidates:

D: So often when we get in groups in our program, it's just [about] the most efficient way. We'll get down and we'll divide everything up – you do this, you do this. I'll do this.

(laughter and agreement)

A: And it's individual work just put together.

D: So we never have to meet again.

J: Because we don't have time.

D: But with my [EF] group, we did everything together, and we took it task by task.

T: Yeah, we did too.

D: So it wasn't like it was divided up or anything.

M.: So your identity was as a group not as an individual there?

D: Yeah... and when you're dividing it up like that, you're going to compare yourself to another person in the group. Because if you come back and meet, and you put down what you did, and [let's say] T. didn't do anything, and I did a lot of stuff (laughter), then sure there's going to be comparisons there, right? But when we do it all together step-by-step then there's not so much of that comparing and all that.

The PSTs discussed issues around whether it was possible to have individual and team focus at the same time within a group, the lack of time available in classrooms for good group work, the role of external motivation in group work, and how a drive towards efficiency was affecting group processes.

Assessment. The PSTs clearly articulated that there were tensions between grading and letting students guide their own learning. Amber (I2) said, “most times in classrooms learning seems to be forced. Instead of it being something that you want to

do, it's something that you have to do.” The PSTs acknowledged that forcing a particular curriculum was driven in part by an all-encompassing need to assess. Lindsay (I2) reminisced about how WK May “took so much joy” in the success of her EF knitting group, but lamented:

I'd like to think that any teacher wants to have that sense of pride, that joy in their students' work, that pure untainted love of seeing a student succeed. However, in reality I think it often gets squashed down by meeting learning outcomes, and insuring that curriculum is met, and getting the assessment done, and creating quantitative data that we can evaluate our students on.

As learners in the EF course, the PSTs appreciated that there was no external pressure of marks and that they could work together in a non-competitive, cooperative environment that fostered their love of learning.

Within the schools, the PSTs noticed that some learners were more enthusiastic about learning for the sake of learning at some times more than others. Amber (I2) expressed an overarching concern:

It kind of goes in a wave I find. Kindergartners love learning, you know they'll do it for the sake of learning, and they love it. And then it just goes down, down, down, down. And then, as you hit about grade 12 or so it starts [again]. You want to learn for the sake of learning and yourself...It just seems that when they are younger they love [to learn], and I don't think they realize that they're learning almost. And then all of a sudden they realize it, and...it's pulling teeth sometimes to get them to do their work, or to practice something, or to try hard.

Amber went on to say that learner enthusiasm appeared to her to really drop after the primary years when letter grades were introduced, and that she “hates that they get graded at such a young age.” The PSTs expressed concern that the external motivation of grades was affecting the internal motivation to learn and acknowledged that it was an issue that they would often be negotiating if they wanted to stay focused on the needs of the learner.

Patience. Throughout the EF course, the PSTs were aware of the patience of the WKs and how that affected their learning. They learned that their own sense of patience with themselves influenced learning processes such as weaving cattail mats. The PSTs also noticed how their learning experiences were shaped under time pressures such as deadlines and schedules. The PSTs transferred this understanding gained as learners, to inform their ways of teaching, and many spoke of finding ways to be more patient in the classroom. They talked about how patience could take various forms including giving “wait time” for students to think before answering, being more flexible with deadlines, seeing “tangents” or “detours” that the students take as enriching learning opportunities, and sitting back and listening to their students more often. Kim (I2) spoke of a deeper kind of patience that would maximize the learning of her students:

It's not just being patient, you know you've got 30 kids and 20 of them have their hands up at the same time needing help. I mean, that's one type of patience, but another type of patience is that understanding of how they're thinking and understanding that you need to take time with each child, and have patience for their own development and their own understanding of what you're teaching. So I think it's very different...I don't think I've really fully understood that [other people learn in different ways] and that I need not only to provide them with opportunities to learn in different ways, but give them more time to just sort of understand what they're doing and why they're doing it.

In this quote, Kim articulated how the PSTs linked increased patience with developing a real and useful understanding of the nuances of other cultural ways of knowing.

As well, the PSTs saw that patience was tied to focusing on learning rather than content to be taught. Eva (I2) said that teaching is too often “just so goal focused or so answer focused” and that by “doing that you can really miss out on a lot of meaningful thought processes.” She described instead, how a teacher could pursue tangents by engaging a dialogue that might not be in the lesson plan:

But then still letting them go on that [direction] and giving them those couple of minutes where they can form their thoughts. It's a really subtle thing...giving that confidence to articulate or to explain themselves. It's really part of the teacher holding back instead of the teacher wanting it this way or whatever.

Eva went on to say that by being patient with students in this way it was possible to tap into areas of interest for other students as well.

The PSTs spoke of being driven by an underlying sense of urgency in the classroom, and were taking a closer look at why that might be so. Many of the PSTs acknowledged that their lifestyle was one that was, as Lindsay (I2) said, “all busied up” and that they made conscious efforts in their teaching to slow down and consciously try to create the feeling of calm that was so often present in the EF course, both with their students and their own growth processes as teachers. As with their efforts towards healthy group processes, the pressures of expectations and time pushed on their efforts.

Reflection. After returning from their final practica experiences, the PSTs considered the act of reflection. Lindsay, Tristain and Ben (FGB) spoke about how reflection in teaching practice was different than reflection as an assignment:

L: In a way reflection over the past five years have been skewed for me. [Now] I reflect every day, but it comes at its own time and in its own pace its own way.

T: Definitely.

L: But it's definitely important. But that's something I've learned through the program is that you cannot force your children to reflect.

B: Learning how to reflect as well. Not simply writing a summary of what happened but interpreting the results, or interpreting *what* happened and making sense of it. The strategies.

T: yeah I definitely found over a practicum your reflection is genuine and you honestly care, you honestly want to know or want to grow. But in the university you just...

L: It's not a natural place to reflect.

T: No. I don't even think it's a process really when you're forced to do it.

L: It has to come from within from your own desire to change or to question.

T: Which happens completely naturally when you're in a classroom setting.

This embedded and endogenous way of reflecting was similar to the type of reflection that the PSTs did in the EF course. In addition, Jenni (I2) explained how her reflection happened in relationship with students:

[I need to be] making sure I'm aware of if my students are learning, and how much. And if they want to talk to me about something, then actually listening to them, not just sort of brushing them off, actually listening so I can improve myself.

Jenni's image of the learner and teacher placed them both on a circle where, through discussion, one taught the other in a circular process. The comments by the PSTs indicated that they appreciated the importance of reflective practice, especially within the complexities of a multicultural classroom.

You Can Be Inventive

This final section describes some of the concrete examples of ideas that the PSTs brought forward from the EF course into their classroom practice. The heading comes from Amber (I2) who, when talking about how she had to "take hold of the methods" she wanted to bring to her class said:

I guess, we all need a system, or else it might not work, right? But you can be inventive. An [Integrated Resource Package] states that [the students] have to do this, but what do you do surrounding that? You can do so, so many things. Just because they're learning about soil, doesn't mean you have to list the soil on the board, have them write it down, and memorize it. You can take them outside, have them dig, see what they see, you know? I forget, I think it's called child centered learning, the approach where they take control and you don't necessarily tell them the three layers of soil. You get them to go out and see them, and then you might tell them the names... And you know, they get it that way. So you're kind of putting the learning into their hands. That's the way I'd like to teach.

In this spirit of being inventive and keeping in mind the needs of the learner, the PSTs proceeded into their practica and incorporated a remarkable array of ways to bring increased awareness of Aboriginal cultures into their classrooms. These inclusive practices resonated with indigenous ways that honour the endogenous processes of the learner within the context of community. These practices are listed in no special order, and are paraphrased for the sake of brevity.

Indigenized curriculum. The PSTs were very aware of including cultural knowledge into the fabric of their curriculum as opposed to taking a surface approach. They talked about accessing the culture of the children in their classes, as well as finding out more about the local Aboriginal cultures of their school area. They spoke about rewriting unit plans that they had done in the past to include the deeper cultural awareness that they received in the EF course. The PSTs were aware that overall, the curriculum was lacking and consciously thought of ways to alter both the content as well as ways to include indigenous perspectives. In addition, the PSTs told stories from the EF course to their students such as the moons for each season and the history of the Coast Salish people. The PSTs added local topics such as residential schools to a more globally oriented curriculum. They also made efforts to include indigenous perspectives on issues that they were studying, such as hydroelectric dam use in British Columbia. One adapted a unit on the issue of cultural exchange between her class and an Inuit child to have more cultural depth and authenticity, as well as making it more experiential and developmentally appropriate to her grade one students. Many of these activities were seen by the PSTs as being useful in future classrooms.

Attention to language. Some of the PSTs became acutely aware of the importance of language in the context of the EF course and discussed how the spoken word holds many hidden messages. They realized that what the students in their classrooms would hear was not always what the teacher thought they were saying. The PSTs often took special care to choose their words carefully, for example using “Friends” instead of “Grade Ones” or “Classmates” to indicate a different kind of relationship and set a different tone within their classroom community.

Connecting with nature. The PSTs brought natural objects into the classroom for various projects and took the children outside on walks and field trips. They also discussed environmental issues such as global warming with older students. This type of activity was surprisingly limited in scope especially in view of some of the PSTs earlier expressions of having an environmental focus.

Good Hands. Many of the PSTs incorporated the idea of good hands into their classrooms, often using a similar phrase such as “keep positive thoughts” or “do your best work.” They felt that this inspired the learners to slow down and focus on their efforts instead of a final product, find a sense of internal discipline, and helped them to take pride in what they were doing. The PSTs acknowledged that incorporating good hands was based on developing strong relationships with their students and felt that this was hard to do in a short 8-week practicum, but looked forward to incorporating it into their long term teaching situations.

Bodies involved. The PSTs talked about ways of helping students to experience learning hands-on rather than just seeing it on the board. This included getting kids out of their seats to do work, active learning such as dissecting squid and working with

manipulatives in math. The PSTs also thought carefully about ways of teaching that engaged the whole child and allowed for student led learning processes by incorporating stories, drama and song.

Student choices. The PSTs gave students choice in various ways. Some gave options in assignments or on how they would write a test (written or oral). Others gave students opportunities for expression of competency through alternative texts such as music, art, presenting a play, and recorded oral presentation. One PST gave students behaviour choices, such as either staying quiet at the rug or working at a desk. One of the PSTs explored inquiry learning at her Calgary placement and felt that it held more merit than she had previously thought. In a similar vein, some of the PSTs supported learner detours as described earlier in the section on patience. However, some of the PSTs worried that too much choice could lead to an “inflated sense of self-esteem”, and they spoke of the importance of finding balance between student led and teacher led activities. Overall, the PSTs felt that giving choice helped their students play to their strengths, tap into their passion as learners, gain comfort with exams, and engage in learning topics that the students perceived to be relevant and interesting.

Variety. The PSTs spoke about the importance of incorporating variety in their classrooms including activities that were noisy or quiet, active or still, structured or hands-on, messy or neat, teacher guided or student led, etc. They felt that variety engaged students and gave them opportunity to learn in different ways.

Assessment. The PSTs thought carefully about assessment and ways that they could make it more useful to their learners. One technique they incorporated was to have their students work together to come up with the criteria needed on a given assignment.

The PSTs felt that this built a sense of community where the students were equal to each other and to the teacher as well. The PSTs included opportunities for combining self-assessment with teacher assessment, where the two marks were averaged. Some PSTs experimented with rating effort as well as academic ability. In an effort to take the emphasis off grades, one PST working with her mentor teacher, gave out checkmarks and comments on the assignments while keeping the grades out of sight in a grade book. They told the students that a check meant that everything was fine, and had occasional conferences with the students to discuss their growth. This technique forced the students to pay closer attention to the comments and to think about process rather than getting a mark.

Lesson plans are not in stone. One of the PSTs talked in length about how lesson plans could be looked at differently, as a fluid guide rather than something that had to be blindly adhered to. Many of the PSTs showed indications of shifting into a more flexible use of the lesson plan seeing it as a guide that could be detoured from. Reflection, of course, played a role in this.

Incorporating projects with group goal. The PSTs noted that the assignments for group projects needed to reflect the group rather than individuals in the group. An example of this is a project where the students worked together to study for a particular fieldtrip by making individual booklets to be handed in for marks. The assigning PST realized that it would be more useful towards her intent of building community to have the students do a group assignment such as a poster in the future.

Circles. The PSTs spoke often about incorporating circles within their classrooms that were similar to the opening circles in the EF course. They called them class meeting,

circle time or group time and typically happened at the beginning or end of the day. The PSTs saw the circle times as a way to open up communication with and between their students by creating a safe environment where students felt included, could share their feelings, and have their voices heard. The PSTs saw the circles as a way for their students to re-focus energy, re-connect with each other, get on the same page, build a sense of team spirit, and get everyone on the same level. Some used the circles to find answers to problems (both social and academic), to develop communication skills, and to discuss current issues and values, both in the school and larger community.

The PSTs experimented with rearranging desks or classroom space so it would be more conducive to a circle atmosphere, acknowledging that at times it was difficult to have circles given the limited space in many classrooms. Some PSTs adapted by forming U-shaped groupings, two half-circles, pods of four, or other creative solutions. Others thought they would wait until they had their own classrooms to move furniture, stating that it felt too risky to try in front of their mentor teachers.

The PSTs liked circle arrangements because no one stood out in a circle, everyone could see each other, it encouraged shy students to speak, and the teachers themselves could be part of the circle. Some of the PSTs spoke about their students being surprised to see them participate in this way, yet many felt it was important at times to be seen as being at the same level with their students. The PSTs acknowledged that this could bring up tensions over classroom control, etc. but felt that it made students more comfortable with them and more willing to participate. Overall, it was striking how determined and persistent the PSTs were to include circle activities in their classrooms in order to create a different and deeper sense of community in their classrooms.

Inviting learners' stories. The PSTs spoke often about ways that they could invite the stories of their students into the classrooms. Their practicum experience, along with the EF course reminded them that building relationships with students was in many ways more important than focusing on the curriculum. One way that the PSTs invited the stories of their students was through the sharing circles described above. Other ways of inviting stories included having students share family traditions and celebration, show photos, spending time with the students on the playground or at lunch, greeting the students at the door as they came in the morning or after recess, and life story writing.

The PSTs felt that listening to the students' stories changed the tone of their classrooms, made students feel listened to and welcome, and fostered a community-oriented environment that could be less structured and less content driven. They felt that the relationships developed by listening to students' stories helped the students to feel accepted and led to deeper learning due to a higher level of trust in the teacher-student relationship. The PSTs felt that knowing their students' backgrounds led them to understanding their needs better and to address the learning needs of the whole student more appropriately. Inviting learner stories also helped students feel more connected to each other, and established rapport between students. When troubles arose, such as playground disputes, etc., the PSTs felt more prepared to understand the social dynamics and there was a sense of trust that led to quick resolutions.

Inviting community stories. The EF experience really brought the importance of community stories to the fore for the PSTs and they sought out ways to invite community stories into their classrooms, especially when teaching about cultures or across cultures, because they believed first-hand community input was necessary and valuable. The PSTs

said that they were coming to realize that information can be gotten from people, not just books. Through listening to community members they were developing an understanding of cultural protocol such as asking before using a Coast Salish design in a classroom project, and they were transferring this understanding into their classrooms by revising their lesson plans.

The EF course made them feel more comfortable with the idea that different ages could come together within learning environments in fruitful ways and they saw how powerful it was for students to see other people teaching besides the designated “teacher.” The PSTs had a stronger sense of how having community members in the classroom might support their teaching efforts and saw the Wks as potential resources for them in their future classrooms. They talked about how inviting elders into the classroom was the best way to bring culture first-hand into the classroom and felt more comfortable approaching elders in the community. They also saw that members of white culture often seemed to take elders for granted, and wanted to model different behaviour to their students in this regard. They also recognized that Aboriginal Learning Assistants were resources who they would invite into their classrooms as well.

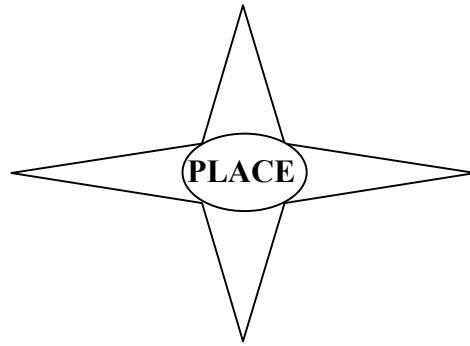
Inviting teacher stories. After watching the Wks share themselves with students in the EF course, the PSTs felt it was important that they be more real with their students in order to build stronger and healthier learner-teacher relationships. When they shared stories in their classrooms the PSTs found that the students often gave them immediate and undivided attention and saw the PSTs as being more genuine and honest. The PSTs said that when they shared their emotions, such as when they were having a bad day, it

felt like a risk that put them on the line a little bit, but that it also modeled a way for the students to do the same.

Many of the PSTs spoke of how they shared their stories of the EF course with family, friends, and students. Some felt that sharing their experience with the WK's culture was more comfortable than "teaching" specifically about Coast Salish people. By telling their own personal stories, they could stay true to an actual experience rather than to speak more broadly in ways that might generalize culture. Some of the PSTs brought friends and family to see the mural and shared personal stories in that context.

The PSTs felt that by sharing their personal stories they were also more genuine and real to themselves. They spoke about the difficulty of taking on the teacher as expert persona, or to play the "university game" when they often didn't believe in it themselves. By sharing their stories with their students the PSTs felt it helped their own mental state because they felt more authentic, and that they could be perceived as learners too. They talked about how some mentor teachers made this easier to do than others, and they also worried about what might be too much personal information to disclose.

In closing, I would say that the PSTs made a concerted effort to incorporate their experiences from the EF course in many ways within their practica classrooms. This is by no means an exhaustive list of their endeavours. It appeared that despite the constraints of their practica settings, the PSTs were committed to bringing forward the teachings that were shared by the WKs in the EF course.



Place Renewed

The true power in the wheel is in the centre...

- WK Lynne

And so, I leave the north corner of the wheel and return to place, in the centre.

The beads have been strung, the wheel has been walked and the three woven strands of the story, as I experienced them, have been told. I come now to present tense. For myself, and for the PSTs, I believe that through the experiences of the EF course, a new sense of centre has been located. It is a fresh place of knowing what is true of learning and teaching. Before moving into the discussion of the findings, I present a few closing comments from the PSTs, gathered from the post-practica focus groups. Their words, more than mine, show the impact of the EF course.

If I were to summarize the impact it would be that because of our course together I was able to experience, and therefore will incorporate, a foundation of community and relationships [in my own classrooms]. And I like the authentic word, you know, stressing authentic learning in my classroom. And it's because of the direct link to the class that we experienced, because we were able to experience the effects of that ourselves. (Lindsay FG 1)

I think that it is important to be able to *feel* the difference between regular courses and [the EF] course. Because people are always saying you need to create a sense of community in your classroom, but what does that feel like? What does that look like? So I think that was really huge for me to experience that and to be able to feel the difference between the community [type of class] and a regular classroom. (Tristain, FG 1)

Very simply, a real inevitable outcome was having a deeper understanding of Aboriginal ways of knowing as a non-Aboriginal person that I can now relate and bring into my classroom through a more authentic experience than what perhaps I experienced in my own K to 12 education. And that's a huge benefit, knowing that I'm supposed to be a teacher of this as well. So that's pretty big actually, when I think about it. (Lindsay, FG 1)

I think they should make this course mandatory for education students... simply for the indigenous knowledge, having that exposure because we're expected to teach about it but hardly anyone has experienced it. (Jamie FG 2)

Materialistically, I'm going to be able to do certain crafts that would not have been easy to have done before, such as sewing, and [it] provided me with some insight into the learning experience. (Ben, FG 1)

I really think that for me, something that I took out the most [from the course] is... to have that first-hand knowledge when at all possible and to really just be intentional about everything you teach. If you don't know why you're teaching it, you shouldn't be teaching it... You need to find a bigger picture and why is this going to be important, and why is this going to affect this 11-year-old in 30 years. Or why is this going to touch them in their lives now? Or how is this going to carry out somewhere outside of this class? Because if the only time that they look at this one thing is 20 minutes in your class because it's in the IRP, it's not going to stick. (Tasha, FG 2)

It's kind of cliché but I think that if you have such a big group together and you have a huge vision like we did, and you really get everybody on board and they put their minds to it, I think we can accomplish so much. So yeah, of anything I got from this course, that's probably the biggest one. (Darren, FGB)

I like what D. said about having a vision. Having a common goal but something that you can visually see, like a project. I was in a leadership group and we built a playground for a campsite out of nothing, and we had to do it ourselves... And I think implementing something like that in your class throughout the year, some sort of big vision or big project for them to all work towards and be proud of can have a huge impact on how the rest of the class goes. I think that can be a really neat way to build community. (Amber, FG 2)

For the PSTs the EF course was an authentic experience that gave them a deep sense of indigenous ways of knowing. In addition, it gave them opportunities as learners to experience the possibilities of self-direction within a community-oriented learning

environment. The PSTs have taken the experiences and embodied understanding of the EF course forward into their early teaching careers.



Figure 41: Cattails

Chapter 5 – Discussion

Towards a Different Kind of Learning Community Within the Classroom

My main intent when I began this study was to understand more about how Non-Aboriginal preservice teachers change their beliefs, values and attitudes towards other cultural perspectives within their classrooms. I was particularly interested in how teachers might become more inclusive of Aboriginal students, one of the fastest growing and most discriminated against populations in Canada. Before I started this project it was clear that classrooms were growing increasingly more diverse while the teaching population remains relatively mono-cultural. I knew that Aboriginal students weren't getting the right kind of attention in school settings, and other students were also compromised by the dominant positivist paradigm within the schools. I was curious to know more about what a healthy culturally rich learning community could be, as well as how teachers change their beliefs and practices to be more inclusive in lasting and meaningful ways.

The study has reaffirmed some of my original hunches around learning and teaching in cross-cultural settings and has also reinforced some of the issues that were raised in the literature review. Most notably, the study supports the notion of the eco/social/spiritual paradigm that is emerging in various ways around the planet, and that desperately needs to be included as part of our educational programs and institutions. The study began to address Cajete's questions around how are we going to care for the planet, live together, and take care of our inner lives – questions that are central in the eco/social/spiritual paradigm. In addition the findings confirmed some of the literature within adult transformative learning theory that says authentic change comes from

reflexivity within deep lived experience that require vulnerability and attention to emotions and passion on the part of the learner.

The study highlights five significant issues. First, it found that having an immersive experience with Aboriginal elders within the Earth Fibres course gave the preservice teachers a deeper awareness of the cultural ways of specific Aboriginal cultures such as the Coast Salish. This understanding went beyond a surface appreciation of culture *into the why* of the epistemological and ontological ground of an unfamiliar way of knowing and being.

Second, in addition to the deeper cultural awareness gained in the course, the preservice teachers were able to engage in reflective and reflexive processes that supported fundamental dispositional change. These practices moved them towards an increased awareness that they see the world with a cultural eye (Irvine, 2003) as well towards a deeper appreciation of culturally appropriate approaches to teaching. These processes were atypical in teacher education programs in that they were based on increased appreciation of learner autonomy and direction, as well as being deeply embedded in the preservice teachers' own learning practice.

The third outcome of the study was that it provided a description of how indigenous ways of learning and teaching can be incorporated within the context of a mainstream Canadian teacher education program. The preservice teachers later transferred this pedagogy to be used in their elementary practica classrooms. This is particularly important because as the literature indicates (Bishop, 2008; Brown, 2004; Kanu, 2005, Williams, 1997) an indigenous pedagogy is a vital and appropriate approach for Aboriginal students. By embedding themselves as learners within this pedagogy, the

preservice teachers were able to embody an understanding of indigenous ways of learning and teaching that they could then transfer into their own teaching practice.

Fourth, the study provided a kind of snapshot of a vibrant cross-cultural learning community within a teacher education program. Mi'kmaq elder Albert Marshall and Western trained biologist Dr. Cheryl Bartlett at Cape Breton University (Institute for Integrative Science and Health, 2000), refer to an educational approach that acknowledges the existence of different ways of looking at the world as taking on a *two-eyed seeing stance*. My study documents a learning environment that has at its heart the belief that there is more than one way to see the world. The Earth Fibres course is a viable and important illustration of how cross-cultural understanding can be deepened within a learning environment. This has implications for teacher education and also may be transferable into other cross-cultural situations.

The study shows clear indication that a two-eyed seeing approach is possible and useful in terms of changing preservice teachers beliefs, attitudes and values around indigenous pedagogy and cross-cultural learning. The Earth Fibres course is one example of a learning community that addressed the burning issues of education in real and important ways. However, there were many issues of tension identified around how this approach fits into existing teacher education programs.

Fifth, the study has implications for future researchers in that it describes a way of inquiry that is sensitive to cross-cultural needs, particularly in Aboriginal settings.

In this chapter I will discuss what I have learned about indigenous pedagogy through the process of the study. Indigenous ways were at the heart of the Earth Fibres course and need to be brought forward as an integral part of learning communities in

teacher education. This understanding of indigenous ways becomes a backdrop to a later section that focuses on key issues around the preservice teachers experience in the course. Tensions revealed by the data will be discussed in both sections in a conscious effort to disrupt the positivist notions of “what is” and provide teacher educators with possibilities of “what could be.” I then highlight specific implications for practice within teacher education as well as suggestions for policy. The next sections discuss the methodology in more depth and makes suggestions for future research, followed by a brief conclusion. I remind the reader that my role in the course was as participant-observer, and that my intent with the study was to stay embedded in my practice as a teacher educator. For this reason, the writing style remains somewhat personal and slips in and out of present tense.

Understanding Indigenous Pedagogy

This section describes what I have learned through the study about indigenous ways of learning and teaching. My knowledge of indigenous pedagogy has been gathered from many sources. Some of what I know is from listening to the wisdom keepers and preservice teachers speak in the interviews and focus groups. Some is from direct experience as a participant in the course as well as in the larger indigenous community, while some is gathered from the literature review. As stated earlier, this section is only my interpretation, and it is difficult to put this kind of knowing into the two-dimensionality of written words. I believe that it is important to try and express what I understand so that other educators can begin to see what might be possible within the realm of teacher education. As stated in the literature review, Futrell (2008), Cochran-Smith (2005) and other leaders in the field call for deep changes and a new paradigm within teacher education. Indigenous epistemology is strikingly different than the

positivist epistemology that dominates educational settings, and extends thinking within the progressive and social critique paradigms. Presented here are my thoughts about what would be helpful to other educators trying to move towards a more indigenous pedagogy.

We Are All Related on an Animate Earth

I recently attended a lecture by Blackfoot scholar Leroy Little Bear (2009) who eloquently articulated the indigenous worldview in a way that is useful to this discussion. I briefly paraphrase some of his main points here. Physicists tell us that the earth and everything on it is in constant motion, from tiny molecules to the vastness of heavenly bodies. It is the movement of these things, both large and small, that makes them come into their form of existence. This notion of constant flux is central to an indigenous worldview. Little Bear explained that people or objects are merely conduits for these energy waves of constant motion. From an indigenous perspective, these energy waves are known as spirit. Since everything is in constant motion, everything is animate and possesses spirit. And since everything is in flux, everything is in relation. Hence the expression, we are all related.

Little Bear described perception as being like radio waves. So, for example, from my perspective I can understand certain things, and an eagle from her perspective, can understand other things. Sometimes these perspectives overlap. Little Bear explained that the purpose of vision quests is to expand the range of perception by listening to another perspective that overlaps and also extends beyond what we already know.

Little Bear went on to describe how the English language reflects the positivist belief that there are animate and inanimate things. From this view the world is made up of dichotomous and polarized objects and thoughts. Positivist pedagogy seeks to label,

place in hierarchy, and examine one thing versus another. Little Bear suggested that racism arises out of this type of dichotomous thinking as it focuses on accentuating difference. These are very important concepts for educators to understand in the context of a multicultural classroom as suggested in the literature (Hollingsworth, Dybdahl & Minarik, 1993). As a non-Aboriginal teacher, I might ask, how can I expand my worldview by listening to an Aboriginal student in my class in this way?

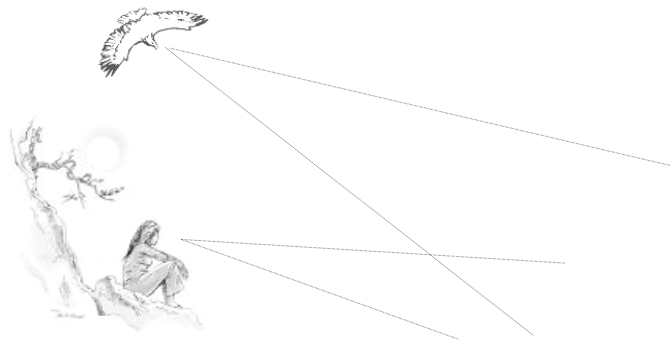


Figure 42: Overlapping Perspectives

The indigenous pedagogy of the Earth Fibres course was deeply concerned with relationships, as they exist in a non-hierarchical web of being. This is a perspective that acknowledges that everything is a thing which is becoming, as noted by Ross (1996/2006) in the introduction chapter. I believe that it is the process of focusing on relationships that is so significant to the success of the Earth Fibres course. The preservice teachers understood that they were not being judged in an either/or kind of way and felt, as Jenni said, that the course was “just a nice place to *be*” (I2, her emphasis). It is from this place of relational knowing that the true spirit of *give away* can be understood. If we are truly all related, then giving away only benefits ourselves. The relational focus of the Earth Fibres course helps to illustrate Bishop’s (2008) notion of a culturally responsive pedagogy *of relations* as discussed in the literature review.

Spirituality, Does It Grow Corn?

If, as Little Bear said, spirituality is the animate energy of everything that exists, it has to be addressed in educational settings. Within higher educational contexts, spirituality is rarely drawn on, yet may be useful in cultural studies (Tisdell, 2003, 2007). The wisdom keepers acknowledged that spirit is a part of everything and therefore everything should be engaged in with a sense of respect. This is what using good hands is about. If the wisdom keepers are an expression of spirit, and the preservice teachers are an expression of spirit, and the earth fibres are also an expression of spirit, then as Ben said in the findings chapter, there truly is sacredness in the mundane. Here, the work of transformative learning as a spiritual and cosmological process comes into play as discussed in the literature (Kremer, 2003; O'Sullivan, 2001; Tisdell, 2003).

Another important aspect of spirituality that was brought up in the literature review is that knowledge that endures is spirit driven (Aluli-Meyer, 2008). Knowledge, when it is connected to the life energy of all that is, sustains. It is not static, but responds to the needs of an Earth system that needs nourishment to survive. This is another important concept for educators to understand. If we truly want to make the world a better place for ourselves, our children, and the animate Earth we have to pay attention to the spiritual energy of what we think we know.

I am reminded of a story Wisdom Keeper Lynne told me about an indigenous elder named Sun Bear. A woman who was learning from Sun Bear was trying to sort through what choice she should make in terms of a major life decision. She laid out the pros and cons in great detail. After she was done, Sun Bear simply said, "yes, but does it grow corn?" In my interpretation of the story, the phrase 'growing corn' is not to be taken

literally. Growing corn has to do with eco/social/spiritual usefulness that echoes the knowledge as spirit notion introduced by Aluli-Meyer (2008). There is an underlying expectation of deep sustainability and wellbeing for our selves, our community, our earth, and all sentient beings.

I believe that as educators, it is useful to ask ourselves if we are we growing corn. Are we teaching knowledge that endures? Are our lessons about relevant topics that help us get along with each other and nourish the planet? One of the things that really stood out about the course is that the PSTs felt that the experience was meaningful and relevant in their lives as emerging teachers. In the context of the course, they were growing corn.

Spirituality was seen in this mundane and practical way within the course and everything then became spiritual. The preservice teachers resonated with this worldview, and were eager to discuss issues of spirit with me in their interviews, even though I never brought up the topic of spirituality. They were seeking ways to grow corn in their classrooms and the course opened up possibilities of understanding the enduring kind of knowledge that is so useful and needed today as described in the literature by indigenous scholars such as Aluli-Meyer (2008) and environmental theorists (Fisher, 2002; Capra, 1996; Stone and Barlow, 2005).

The preservice teachers heard this knowledge through the stories of the wisdom keepers and the whispers of the 100 year-old mats. They heard this knowledge through their emotional connections to others in the opening circles and through their hands as they worked the needle into the earth fibres. The preservice teachers accessed knowledge that has endured in this place for countless years. I believe that the preservice teachers understood this spiritual concept in an unarticulated way and struggled to put it into

words in our discussions. They intuitively knew that what they were doing in the Earth Fibres course grew corn for them as teachers.

Because they were actively engaged in the course and had ample time and space for reflective and reflexive practice, the preservice teachers were able to mine their field texts in the ways described by progressive theorists in the literature review (Carter, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As they spoke with me in the interviews, the stories of the earth fibres were woven together with the experiences in the course and the preservice teachers' own teaching narratives creating a rich description of practice that embedded spirituality at its core. In this way they were able to begin to reflect more deeply on the more nuanced and difficult to describe moral and ethical issues of teaching as suggested in the literature review by progressive and social critique scholars (Grumet, 2006; Pinar, 2004; van Manen, 1991; Zeichner, 1987).

Nourishing the Learning Spirit

The data strongly suggest that acknowledging and nourishing the learning spirit is central to an indigenous pedagogy as suggested by Battiste (2007). Although they used different terminology, the wisdom keepers referred to the concept frequently as they spoke about their gentle offering approach. While the idea was strongly embedded in the belief system of the wisdom keepers, the preservice teachers struggled at times to understand what was expected of them in this regard. Much of their previous school experience had been under the positivist reliance on a transmissive approach where the teacher is often in control of what is being learned.

The preservice teachers were used to relying on directives from the teacher in terms of how, when and where to proceed in their learning. Within the course, I noticed

that they had a period of adjustment where they had to sort through the new way of learning that was more self-directed. Once they got used to the process, they were excited and engaged in their learning. What I observed was the shifting of their awareness from what should be taught, to what might be learned. Their focus came to rest on the pedagogy of the question and how people learn – notions described as being fundamentally important for educators by so many writers in the social critique and transformative fields (Britzman, 1990/2003; Esteve, 2000; Freire, 1970/2005; Leonardo, 2004). As described by the preservice teachers, the process was a shifting out of a student teacher role into a role of *teacher student*.

As noted in the findings, there was tension around the issue of learning spirit when there was external stress placed on the learner. One strain came from time pressures where the participants felt they had too much to do in too short a time. The indigenous perspective is that things that are becoming progress in their own time, as guided by spirit. It is an internal motivation and sense of movement as opposed to movement based on an external schedule, structure or expectation. When working in harmony with the learning spirit, the rhythm and pace of the learner is an organic process led by intuitive understanding, skill level, and the nature of the task at hand within the context of community. External time structures conflict with this process.

Another tension around learning spirit that arose had to do with external requests that focused on product as opposed to process. Both the wisdom keepers and preservice teachers spoke of how the textile maker should pay attention to the earth fibres for guidance on how to proceed and at what tempo. This process was thwarted when external expectations were imposed. This tension was complicated by the fact that well before the

Earth Fibres course started, there was hope and intent that the mural would be a legacy left at the university.

The mural was seen as a vehicle for bringing forward the teachings of the female energy in order to balance the male energy of the pole (carved in the pole course). The mural was an ambitious project that tried to balance the needs of many; including the individual course participants, the small groups, the large group, the university community, and local First Nations. This is reminiscent of Eva's image in the findings chapter of the learner surrounded by concentric circles of influence. It was a complicated web of interactions to attend to within the course.

It was unfortunate that some participants felt overly stressed by these pressures. One of the important things this tension brought to the fore is the notion of reciprocity within a learning community (Lave & Wenger, 1991/2003; Wenger, 1998). The learning spirit is a personal individual process yet there is always a relational tie between the individual and the community. Overall, it was remarkable how the course addressed the needs of both the learner and the community. Despite the time and product pressures, all of the preservice teachers spoke of their learning process being nourished. As their individual learning spirits were cultivated, their actions moved out to strengthen the community as well. Through watching the wisdom keepers, the preservice teachers developed a deeper understanding of Aboriginal cultures and indigenous pedagogy, and they became more confident in engaging with Aboriginal people. The small groups were, as Wisdom Keeper Janet said, filled with the busy bee activity of cooperation. Working with the larger group, a remarkable mural was ultimately produced. Standing in the

Curriculum Lab amidst the activity of future teachers, Xaxe Siam Seetla continues to share the story of indigenous ways of learning and teaching.

Connecting to Nature

The vital importance of connecting to a natural place within an indigenous perspective was evident throughout the course. The experience was permeated with outdoor visits, stories of place, herbs in ceremony, and the daily handling of the earth fibres in the coursework. Both the wisdom keepers and the preservice teachers expressed personal feelings of being disconnected in their daily lives from nature and also noticed this disconnect with the children with whom they worked. Jenni's observations on the walk with Della were most revealing of the degree to which nature was objectified rather than seen relationally.

The Earth Fibres course brought to the fore the importance of paying attention to and interacting with nature, yet the preservice teachers reported very few times when they took the initiative of including nature in their practicum experiences. This is worrisome given the sense of urgency expressed by environmental educators (Stone & Barlow, 2005). Given the data collected, it is difficult to know why the preservice teachers' inclusion of a connecting-to-nature perspective was so limited. It is possible that the structures of the practica were such that incorporating nature was difficult. It is also possible that the preservice teachers will incorporate nature more fully into their curriculum when they have their own classrooms. The preservice teachers did indicate this intent in their interviews, however little was said about this in the post-practica focus groups. An additional factor that might have influenced the preservice teachers inclusion of nature more fully in curriculum is addressed in the section on closure.

The Importance of Closure

One of the strong messages in the data is that having a sense of closure is a very important element to the indigenous pedagogy of the Earth Fibres course. There was a lack of closure that was felt by the participants in different ways. The preservice teachers who were unable to attend the unveiling ceremony expressed a sense of the experience being incomplete. The wisdom keepers felt they were denied the opportunity to offer important teachings. They felt that they would have brought things to a sense of closure for the preservice teachers if a final gathering had been held around the installation of the mural. Charlene spoke of not being able to share final teachings around specific things such as the moons on the mural. This is somewhat ironic in that the moons tell the story of the seasons and are about cycles and coming full circle to completion and new beginnings.

One reason for the lack of a closure had to do with snowy weather that affected scheduling. Less tangible reasons may have included the pressures of product and time as described above in the section on learning spirit. As well, limitations around funding may have been a factor in following through with requests for the final installation. The lack of closure was unfortunate, as the data indicate that the stories and teachings offered at a final meeting would have strengthened the preservice teachers' overall cultural awareness, as well as their sense of the importance of bringing nature into the classroom.

The Preservice Teacher Experience

This next section of the discussion focuses more directly on identifying some of the key issues within the experience of the preservice teachers. The data show that the preservice teachers had a strong desire to make their classrooms more inclusive and

welcoming of diverse students. The preservice teachers were consciously looking for alternative pedagogy that responded better to the multi-layered needs of their students. Many preservice teachers expressed feelings that the Earth Fibres course reinforced what they already knew on an intuitive level. To some degree then, changing dispositions was really about reinforcing the existing knowledge that the preservice teachers already possessed. The data also show that changing preservice teachers' dispositions to be more inclusive required deepening cultural awareness beyond a surface level of understanding into the whys of cultural practices. Gaining this experience called for the preservice teachers to be willing to adjust their fundamental epistemic and pedagogic beliefs. The following discussion highlights what I learned about these issues from the preservice teachers.

Working/Walking Alongside

One of the most significant factors within the course that encouraged the preservice teachers to shift their perspectives was the engagement in a learning community that held concrete purpose and deep relationships. The authenticity of the experience engaged the preservice teachers as learners but also as active, reflective, and reflexive emerging teachers. Working and walking-alongside, the participants experienced a common purpose and felt the rhythms and spiritual knowing of each other as they went along. This fits with the notion that social justice work is a collaborative process for teachers where they are able to engage in dialogue across cultures (Bell, 1997; Grant & Agosto, 2008).

The Earth Fibres course became an invitation to the wisdom keepers and the preservice teachers to braid their stories together along with the stories of the earth fibres.

As reported by the preservice teachers, this was an unusual opportunity in the context of their educational experiences. The course was carefully designed and the wisdom keepers were persistent and stubborn in their efforts to hold a space within the university that supported the organic processes of the group. The Earth Fibres experience gave the preservice teachers a living, breathing, example of how a community could be different within a classroom. As a consequence they went into their practica eager to construct alternative community environments. This braided act of walking-alongside became an embodied understanding for the preservice teachers that they took forward into their teaching practice.

Putting Aside the Familiar, Connecting to the Unknown

Walking-alongside required the preservice teachers to notice the energy and intent of the Wks and to adjust their ways of proceeding accordingly. One obvious example of this had to do with the process of putting down the notebook that many of the preservice teachers described. This conscious release of a familiar practice helped them to attend to the wisdom keepers in other ways and served to expand their understanding of what knowledge could be. As the data reflect, many of the preservice teachers began to think of ways to incorporate other ways of knowing in their classrooms after this experience.

Another way that the preservice teachers began to expand out from their more intellectual orientation was to participate in the opening circle times. This aspect of the Earth Fibres course was one of the most talked about experiences in the interviews with the preservice teachers, and the circles appeared to impact the preservice teachers deeply. This activity gave the preservice teachers access to other ways of knowing as they came in contact with the energy of the herbs, drumbeats, songs and experiences such as being

wrapped in the cattail mats. The opening circle times gave the preservice teachers permission to leave their old ways of being at the door and access other possibilities as suggested in the literature (Delpit 1988; Kumashiro, 2008).

It was in this setting that many of the preservice teachers spoke about connecting to a sense of spirituality as enduring knowledge passed on for generations. In this space, it appeared possible for the preservice teachers to shift their deep-seated beliefs toward a more indigenous perspective. This brings up questions around the practice that elementary teachers refer to as ‘circle time.’ Could this be what the preservice teachers are referring to when they say that the experiences in the Earth Fibres course feel familiar? My experience as a preschool teacher, where circle times are a central focus in many classrooms, supports that this notion is worth further explorations.

Letting Go of Perfection

Participating in the circles, as well as the Earth Fibres course in general, was risky for the preservice teachers. In some instances they were giving up ways of being that had been held since childhood. These were ways that had been reinforced over years of engagement with positivist-oriented curriculum around notions of success and perfection. The preservice teachers were used to being in schools that privileged notions of success based in meeting external markers of achievement. In addition, many of the preservice teachers were haunted by a sense of needing to be perfect in their schoolwork.

At the beginning of the course, the preservice teachers scrambled to figure out what the rules were within the course. For some, it was an unpleasant experience to let go of years of patterning that had always focused on certain behaviours. The welcoming, non-judgmental and supportive environment offered by the wisdom keepers was

invaluable in helping the preservice teachers to feel safe enough to let go of their worries and redefine what it meant to be successful. The preservice teachers looked first for relevancy and engagement and assumed that improvement would follow. Through their personal experience, the preservice teachers began to understand this way of looking at the learner and shifted how they defined perfection to include new definitions of success based on the learner's needs.

Fear of Engaging in Emotional Territory

Another way that risk showed up in the data had to do with emotional engagement. The wisdom keepers were upfront about their inclusion of emotions within the educational setting of the Earth Fibres course, and this was not something that the preservice teachers were used to. As Tisdell (2001) and other scholars point out, the process of engaging in transformative work around understanding other cultures requires negotiating emotional terrain. This is true both for the preservice teachers as well as the students they teach. The preservice teachers understood this need, but some were hesitant and most felt unprepared to do what they saw as the work of counselors. The wisdom keepers modeled emotional acceptance for the preservice teachers who experienced a comfortable emotional setting first hand as learners. The preservice teachers were then able to value the need to transfer this into their teaching.

Supporting emotional work in the practicum setting was possible to varying degrees. Many of the preservice teachers saw this as a priority and found ways to set up circle types of environments where the children could share their stories and have discussions around issues that were important to them. Concerns about the role of the teacher as counselor were brought up and questions around what is appropriate within a

classroom setting were raised. The preservice teachers were thoughtful about this topic and aware of the nuanced approach that was necessary to make students feel safe about sharing personal emotions while at the same time considering the needs of the other class members.

The preservice teachers came into the Earth Fibres course wanting to increase their cultural understanding of local Aboriginal peoples and were looking for alternative ways to create inclusive classrooms. The preservice teachers also wanted to have genuine learning experiences and to promote lifelong learning in their students. To some extent they were aware of the positivist traditions in education that limit these efforts. The Earth Fibres course gave them a concrete example of one way that classroom communities can be different and this study illuminates this experience.

This brings up questions around how teacher educators might proceed. How can curriculum supportive of deep and meaningful cross-cultural awareness be taught? How do preservice teachers learn to make classrooms more inclusive and culturally sensitive so that a deficit view of Aboriginal learners can be left behind? Is there a way for classrooms to be living places where cultures meet and work together towards solving some of the troubles of the world? Can preservice teachers gain a sense of confidence and knowledge that helps them as teachers to take the lead in this endeavour? The following is a list of implications for practice that support the inclusion of indigenous pedagogy within teacher education.

Implications for Practice

Preservice Teachers Are Not Deficit Learners

A recently published review in the area of diversity awareness amongst dominant culture teacher candidates warns that conceptualizations of preservice teachers must be reframed (Lowenstein, 2009). Lowenstein concluded that teacher educators must replace images of preservice teachers as being a “monolithic and deficient group of learners with conceptualizations of teacher candidates as competent learners who bring rich resources to their learning” (p. 187).

Within the Earth Fibres course the wisdom keepers trusted and had patience that the preservice teachers could find their own learning direction. They also assumed that the preservice teachers would contribute in meaningful ways to the community. The preservice teachers felt that these innate expectations were different than what had been expected of them in the teacher education program more generally. The preservice teachers wanted to be trusted as the intelligent, thoughtful, energetic and emergent teachers that they were instead of being put into the subordinate role of student. The data suggest that when preservice teachers are looked at as *teacher learners* instead of student teachers, the preservice teachers rise to the challenge and exceed expectations in terms of participation and professional growth. This is an important yet subtle shift that is worth emphasizing, in that it demonstrates the negotiation and renegotiation of roles and of knowledge required in communities of practice as described by Lave and Wenger (1991/2003).

Intent Is Fundamentally Important

Teacher educators influence many young teachers who leave university to interact in the lives of countless children. Given the issues brought up in the literature around the fragility of today's social and environmental structures, it is essential that teacher educators be clear as to the intent within their practice. The wisdom keepers' notions around using good hands ties into the literature on clarifying purpose and address the need for teachers to be conscious on a fundamental level as to why they are doing what they do (Hansen, 2008). Is the school culture being reproduced or are new types of learning communities being supported? Are we growing corn?

In addition, it is important that teacher candidates be given opportunities to clarify, articulate and practice their own sense of direction and intent. This could be incorporated into the philosophy statements that many teacher candidates write. As in the Earth Fibres course, particular attention should be given to the ebb and flow between individual and community needs.

It is also important that teacher educators pay closer attention to the types of service projects and other community involvement that teacher candidates participate in or arrange for their students. The data show that an emphasis on the notion of *walking-alongside* suggests the specific intent of a certain kind of inclusiveness. The preservice teachers realized the importance of inviting indigenous stories into their classroom by having real people come and participate. This reflects a very different intent than a service project that intends to help Aboriginal people for example, by raising money for school supplies that are delivered to a local reservation. It's not that the latter project should be avoided. But teachers must carefully consider if the intent of such a project is

to *really* walk alongside. My observations of these types of service projects within teacher education contexts, is that they remain too often on a surface level of interaction with Aboriginal people, and give the “givers” a false sense of having contributed. This may give them a misguided sense of having made a difference, when they are really assuming that money or supplies alone will change things. If we really want to change a deficit view of Aboriginal peoples, we need to walk deeply alongside.

Learning Is More Than an Intellectual Project

The data strongly indicate that attending to the whole learner is a beneficial practice in terms of boosting the endogenous engagement of the learner, where learning extends from the inside of the learner rather than having an external motivating force. The processes of embodied knowledge (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999) and emotional knowledge (Brown, 2004) are increasingly being recognized as important factors for learners. In addition, as indicated in the literature review, indigenous scholars are exploring the role of spiritual knowing in learning environments.

One response to this concern in teacher education is to include theories on ways of knowing such as Gardner’s multiple intelligence approach (2006). This is a useful place for discussions to begin but thought needs to be given to the deeper intent of these types of frameworks. How do the categories such as those laid out by Gardner mesh within an eco/social/spiritual paradigm? Do they support the indigenous notion that we are all related, or are they tools for reproducing a culture of self-actualization that is narcissistic and dichotomizing? How do we learn to live with each other? Multiple ways of knowing must be acknowledged and reflected in the curriculum and the actual structure of the classroom, and the frameworks we use to describe these notions must be

rigorously examined. Indigenous models of pedagogy such as presented by the Canadian Council on Learning (2007) would be useful tools in this work in that they disrupt positivist notions of success and give alternative models for learning and teaching.

The data also suggest that preservice teachers feel unprepared to work with students on the emotional skills required for socially healthy learning communities. This area appears to be one of the swamps of important problems that Schön (1987) referred to in his work on reflection. Moving beyond learning as an intellectual process to include more of the whole learners' needs requires teachers to engage themselves in emotional work that might leave them vulnerable. The Earth Fibres course gave an example of how teachers might work in community on such issues, thus also partially addressing the concern over issues of teacher isolation in transformative practice (Wideen, et. al, 1998). The course also gave the preservice teachers a different sense of learning community as being a caring and nurturing family that is useful in this regard (Noddings, 2009).

Learning Is Uncertain and Requires an Inquiry Stance

If teacher educators acknowledge the importance of the learning spirit and the existence of many ways of knowing as suggested in the data, the notion of learning as an uncertain process must also be embraced. Everything is in a state of flux, therefore developing adaptive expertise and a professional inquiry stance serves to prepare teachers for the unknown and unpredictable aspects of their practice, as suggested in the literature (Hatano & Oura, 2003; Kumashiro, 2008).

Within the context of my teaching practice, student teachers often come into my classes asking for handouts that will give them specific steps to topics such as classroom management or writing lesson plans. Undoubtedly, there are useful documents that guide

teachers in this regard. But if the emphasis is placed on a method without thought to broader issues of why and how, these young teachers will be at a disadvantage. Giving them a formula without the skills to adapt and change that formula sets teachers up to repetitive reproduction of curriculum tied only to content. As educational scholar Noddings (2009) recently told a group of teacher educators, and I paraphrase: By all means teach them to write a lesson plan, but if at all possible, be sure that they choose not to use it.

Furthermore, the data suggest that an inquiry stance embedded in an indigenous worldview is particularly useful. Inquiry that is steeped in the dichotomous traditions of positivism limit the possibilities that exist as noted by hooks (1994), Tisdell (2001) and others in the literature. As hooks (1994) suggested, an over reliance on rational inquiry processes may lapse into a tendency to judge and place things in hierarchical order. An indigenous inquiry stance recognizes the relatedness of things and is sensitive to the intent of good hands and the inclusion of spirit (Aluli-Meyer, 2008).

Appreciating Spirit

The data show that the preservice teachers were positively affected by the wisdom keepers' acknowledgment of spirituality within the Earth Fibres course. As indigenous scholars are beginning to articulate, spirit is everywhere and therefore spirituality is important to be addressed in educational contexts (Aluli Meyer, 2008, Little Bear, 2009). It is important then for teacher educators not to shy away from this issue. Spirituality needs to be defined away from the dichotomous constructs of religion and understood in the context of relational energy that exists everywhere.

Knowing Nature and Place

The literature suggests the importance of fostering connections to nature so that people can understand the ecological interrelatedness affecting our very existence and sustainability (Orr, 2005; O'Sullivan, 2003). The data highlight the importance of having a reciprocal relationship to a specific place. The indigenous perspective of the wisdom keepers supports this and also adds a humble awareness that not only are we all related, but humans are not more important than any other Earthly thing that exists. The preservice teachers were able to gain some reflexive awareness about their positioning in nature through the Earth Fibres course. However, it is uncertain how strongly this insight was brought forward into the preservice teachers' teaching practice. The data suggest that careful attention be placed on embedding explicit experiences within teacher education courses that emphasize the importance of including connections to nature and place in curriculum.

Reflexivity Requires Safety

The literature suggests that it is important for teachers to supplement an understanding of the "what and how" of teaching, with a deeper understanding of the why (Labosky, 1994; Brookfield, 1995; Preece 2004). This is a decolonizing process that is uncomfortable and unpredictable (Apple, 2008; Esteve, 2000). The data strongly support the notion that undergoing a process of decolonization can truly boggle the mind (Kremer, 1997) and thus requires conscious reflexive practice within teacher education. Teachers' professional reflection needs to be more than a mirroring activity as suggested by Dressman (1998). Reflection must move into understanding personal location within the relational context of community. It needs to be an active process that stays mindful of

Aluli-Meyer's concept of specificity (personal) within universality (communal). As the literature and data indicate, this is a risky process (Howard, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Oberg, 2004). The preservice teachers stories highlighted the importance of feeling safe when engaging in reflexive practice.

To incorporate authentic reflexive practice in teacher education programs, the issue of assessment must be dealt with. The data suggest that courses designed with the intent of changing preservice teachers' dispositions must be assessed using a complete/incomplete format instead of letter grades. The preservice teachers spoke repeatedly about the fact that the Earth Fibres course being assessed as complete/incomplete left them to focus on their own learning. They took risks that they were unwilling to take in graded courses. The Earth Fibres approach took them out of a competitive mode with their peers and the preservice teachers relaxed into a co-operative community where they looked out for each other and for the good of the community. In this context the preservice teachers reported feeling more comfortable taking the kind of risks that are needed to support a reflexive practice that leads to changed belief, attitudes and values.

In addition, reflexivity is most effective when embedded in an authentic learning environment such as the Earth Fibres course. The data show that real interactions with real people in a walking-alongside type of cross-cultural community makes a difference in commitment and openness to change. Furthermore, the indigenous way of the wisdom keepers that accepted emotional, spiritual and physical knowing gave the preservice teachers a sense of comfort and increased their confidence to access these non-intellectual

knowledge resources. This in turn expanded their reflexivity to a deeper more embodied level.

Showing Is Effective

The indigenous pedagogy of the Earth Fibres course is difficult to fully grasp conceptually without experiential participation. If, as teacher educators, we want our students to set up classrooms that are healthy cross-cultural learning environments that respect and incorporate indigenous ways, we must do the same. Authenticity is key. The wisdom keepers showed the preservice teachers what they knew, and preservice teachers chose ways of proceeding from there that fit with their own learning needs. This approach addresses some of the concerns in the literature around the question of whether or not teacher education can make a difference given the influences of previous life and practicum experiences (Britzman, 1990/2003; Richardson, 1996).

The Earth Fibres course embedded authentic life and teaching experiences within the context of a teacher education class. The subtleties of how the wisdom keepers provided that kind of space for the learner is difficult to describe, as is the personal sense of finding direction that the preservice teachers reported experiencing. Within the teacher education program, the preservice teachers were very aware that some instructors were not practicing what they preached and found it difficult to learn in those situations, saying they were just jumping through hoops to get a degree. The concreteness of the Earth Fibres experience gave the preservice teachers an authentic understanding that could be brought forward into their own teaching practice. For example, as the wisdom keepers trusted the preservice teachers to find their own learning style, the preservice teachers engaged in a meta-cognitive process that observed the gentle offering style of the wisdom

keepers and at the same time, paid attention to their personal feelings as a learner. This lived experience as a learner/teacher was an important tool for the preservice teachers in terms of further developing a teaching style.

Implications for Policy

As with most educational research, the implications for policy are complicated. Certainly, teacher education programs must *gain clarity of intent*. In line with Orr's question about the purpose of education, professionals need to ask what is the purpose of teacher education? Cajete's questions are also foundational in this regard. How are we going to deal with the environmental crisis? How are we going to live together? How do we care for our inner lives? My reading of the literature together with the data lead me to the conclusion that these are pressing questions that need to be addressed immediately within teacher education.

It seems to follow then that by *adopting an indigenous eco/social/spiritual focus* teachers can more effectively attend to the needs of Canada's Aboriginal students as well as the needs of all children in multicultural classrooms. The needs of developing healthy communities and a healthy Earth must guide the specific intent and practice of teacher education. Teacher education programs with the defined purpose of being socially inclusive and environmentally oriented would do well then to *make available to their students at least one indigenous pedagogy experience* such as the Earth Fibres course. As Dr. Williams intended with the Earth Fibres course, additional courses should be designed and given space so that they can exist firmly planted in an eco/social/spiritual indigenous pedagogy, rather than adapting to or going along with positivist, or even progressive or social critique theory. As well, issues of *environmental awareness must be embedded*

throughout the curriculum with courses available to students on how to connect learners more fully with nature.

I am inclined to suggest that the courses mentioned above be required even though it seemingly goes against my focus on learner choice and autonomy. Teacher educators must take a close look at the intent behind the courses we require our students to take. As stated in the literature review by Aluli-Meyer (2008), “knowledge that does not heal, bring together, challenge, surprise, encourage, or expand our awareness is not part of the consciousness the world needs now” (p. 221). Teacher educators are poised to make a difference that can ripple out to many students who will become future leaders in the world.

Within a framework of clarified intentions, policy must reflect the need to *embrace uncertainty* within education. Reliance on a familiar positivist oriented structuring of courses and assessment that privilege a heavy content focus and subject-based divisions must be carefully reviewed. As well, a conscious effort must be made to *engage preservice teachers in an inquiry stance that goes beyond “rational” inquiry and is eco/social/spiritually sensitive*. A focus on reflexive practice with an orientation towards cultural awareness must be made a priority and safe environments need to be created and protected in the aggressive and competitive environment of university. Further, reflective and reflexive practices for preservice teachers must be made relevant to the learner through encouraging a variety of practices such as alternative text journals which engage expression such as poetry and/or collage, and roundtable journals which allow for conversation amongst peers.

Conversations across cultures, especially with the indigenous community should be supported and encouraged both formally and informally. This should be done in the *walking-alongside* consciousness described earlier. Course content should be assessed to see if teacher educators *practice what they preach* in terms of building safe cross-cultural learning environments, incorporating holistic assessment, engaging in deeply reflective and reflexive practice, and including indigenous perspectives in the classroom. Of utmost importance is that support needs to be provided to more indigenous scholars, teacher educators and teacher candidates.

Methodological Implications

As a researcher, I began this exploration framed by a social justice standpoint that looked critically at issues of power and equity in the classroom. However, the social critique paradigm was never a comfortable place for me. Originally my discomfort was around issues of social justice themselves and my position in relation to them. For example, in my past work as a reading teacher I became increasingly aware that my students lived in poverty, that I held relative financial wealth, and that this disparity had an effect on the learning in my classroom. I often felt guilty, sad, angry and uncertain how to proceed. As a teacher/researcher I began to look more carefully at issues of power and privilege. The social critique lens was an easy place to structure my inquiry, as it was a prevalent framework in the field of teacher education, particularly from my physical location in the United States (Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, McIntyre & Demers, 2008).

But my discomfort gradually extended to a discontent with the epistemological underpinnings of the fabric of social critique. Through the process of participating in the

indigenous pedagogy courses using a phenomenological/narrative lens, I have gained a deeper understanding of indigenous practices and have also been able to think reflexively around my own indigeneity. As a consequence – I have changed my researcher stance towards a less dichotomized view of the world. I now place myself as an educator and researcher within an eco/social/spiritual paradigm where issues of social justice are rooted within a sense of ecological place and spiritual awareness. We are all related. This position is in line with the work of some critical scholars who wish to re-vision the social justice framework towards a more eco/social/spiritual paradigm (Cajete, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Donald & den Heyer, 2009; Grande, 2000).

This new positioning as a researcher is also not always comfortable. It requires me to pay close and constant attention to my intent. Am I growing corn? What are the motivations behind my work in terms of career advancement or peer acknowledgement? Can my work be usefully embedded in both the literature and practice in ways that are useful? Am I keeping in mind the eco/social/spiritual implications of my work?

For me as a learner/teacher/researcher, the Earth Fibres project has had a significant effect on my practice as a teacher educator. It has certainly been about using personal practical knowledge to inform theory (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and vice versa. One example of this is in a course I teach on developing professional inquiry with graduating preservice teachers. I have brought forward some of the teachings of the Earth Fibres as I attentively shape the learning environment in my course. I continuously strive to nourish the learner direction of the preservice teachers within the context of the social milieu and larger ecological context.

One of the most important ideas that I take away in terms of methodology is around the notion of accessing alternative forms of narrative representation. Although I included some opportunities for my participants to express their thinking through images (first through talking and in the end jotting them down), I now see that these were extremely valuable sources that could have been accentuated. Because developing an indigenous awareness utilizes more than the intellect, alternative texts such as collage, are quite useful in representing complex processes of changing perceptions. My original hesitancy lay in the worry that images were somehow not rigorous enough. Again, I return to the messy territory described by Schön (1987) and his assertion that non-rigorous methods might actually be called for in the uncertain complexity of teaching.

I would also like to return briefly to Ahern's (1999) point that "it is not possible for researchers to set aside things about which they are not aware" (p. 408). Methodology that follows an indigenous path of phenomenology and narrative requires constantly paying attention on an intellectual level to assumptions and hidden beliefs. Perhaps more importantly however, is for a researcher to pay attention with other modes of sensing, such as I tried to describe in the findings section with the story of the 100 year-old mats. What do my emotions tell me about my positioning? How do my hands sense how to proceed in a good way? With what awareness am I creating my figure/ground face/vase? If we are to make a way into deeper shifts of cross-cultural and eco-centric awareness within the realm of teacher education, we must seek to use methodology that taps into multiple ways of knowing to enhance our intellectual understanding.

Implications for Research

This study suggests five specific topics that need further consideration by educational researchers. First, a follow-up with the preservice teachers in this study would be useful in terms of understanding to what extent the Earth Fibres course influenced them to include indigenous pedagogy once they became established teachers in their own classrooms. Second, issues around nature deficit must be examined along with identifying useful ways of connecting students to nature within the context of schools. Third, there needs to be more work on expanding PST reflection into a more reflexive practice that deals with the deeper issues of cultural beliefs, values and attitudes. Fourth, scholarly conversations around issues of how non-Aboriginal people might be included in conversations and frameworks of indigeneity need to continue, along with clarifying practical issues such as identifying appropriate language. While some scholars are willing to suggest that we are all related and that we are all indigenous (Aluli-Meyer, 2008) there are still many scholars who would disagree. This leads to the final suggestion for research that scholars in the area of social critique need to take a closer look at how dichotomous thinking might colour their perspectives of social justice, as well as what it might mean to indigenize a worldview.

Conclusion: Stories Intertwined – The Course As a Touchstone

Touchstone: 1. A very smooth, fine-grained, black or dark-coloured variety of quartz or jasper used for testing the quality of gold and silver alloys by the colour of the streak produced by rubbing them upon it; a piece of such stone used for this purpose. (Oxford English Dictionary)

b. *fig.* That which serves to test or try the genuineness or value of anything (Oxford English Dictionary)

The intertwining of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural stories in the Earth Fibres course led to an experience that was deep and significant for most of the participants. Chambers (2006) describes this type of encounter as being about *visiting* sites of cultural importance rather than *touring* them. This type of visiting is “a way of renewing and recreating people, places and beings, and their relationships to one another” (p. 35). For the preservice teachers, the Earth Fibres course was a place to visit rather than tour and the preservice teachers picked up touchstones along the way. Lindsay (I2) articulated how a deepened awareness was “awakened” through one of her touchstones within the course:

L: Now every time it rains I think of [Charlene]...I don't even know how she worded it, but the concept of rain being these cleansing tears from above. And there are these little catchphrases that are now in my head that weren't [before]. There was no PowerPoint lecture or anything, but they stick with [me]. And I was thinking gosh, that's true teaching, when something that you say sticks with your student and they think of it when they're out and about on their own daily busy lives.

M.: So why did those things stick like that for you?

L: I don't know. I'd like to know. I think of a couple of reasons. Perhaps because they are true, but it's a truth that's kind of awakened in yourself, that I've never taken the time to think of. You know, gosh, rainfall it's really cleansing. Or gosh, it's the changing of the seasons let's take a moment to be aware of that for a second. And I *know* the seasons change so it's nothing new, but to be [truly] aware of it.

This deeper sense of awareness is a significant theme that many of the preservice teachers expressed. For them, the Earth Fibres course went beyond a surface intellectual understanding to strike a deep chord in their being. The liminal space between cultural stories required the preservice teachers to shift their understanding of Aboriginal peoples. And the depth of the experience created a salient touchstone from which a deeper two-eyed seeing approach was possible. The practicality of this experience is reiterated in the

words of Nigerian storyteller Okri (1997) who said “ if we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives” (p. 46). Perhaps the same can be said for the field of teacher education, and if so, what kind of difference might that make?

The touchstones that the preservice teachers carried forward from the course took on many forms. Some were stories that the wisdom keepers shared, or stories that were created in the context of the course. Others touchstones were tangible things such as the cattail mats that the preservice teachers wove or the beadwork in a medicine pouch. Some of these touchstones were given away. The mural is a touchstone for some, as are the appliquéd Huy’ch’ca hands along the bottom edge that lift up the work of women from around Turtle Island (see Figure 17).

The experience of the Earth Fibres course gave the preservice teachers opportunities to feel the smooth grain of cedar bark as they split it, smell the aroma as it soaked, and sense how it could be fashioned into a ring or bracelet – they heard the accompanying stories that the wisdom keepers often shared. Stories about gathering the materials, how the weather was that day, who was with them, what they had learned from watching their own elders, and any number of related stories of experience. This brought the preservice teachers at least a bit closer to what it means to listen to the wisdom of this place some call Turtle Island.

Basso (1996) wrote, “When places are actively sensed, the physical landscape becomes wedded to the landscape of the mind, to the roving imagination, and where the latter may lead is anybody’s guess” (p. 107). This then ties back into the horizons of understanding that Greene (1978) writes of, and how we in teacher education might open spaces where the shifting of emerging teachers’ landscapes of learning can take place.

Greene writes “to be in touch with our landscape is to be in touch with our evolving experiences, to be aware of the ways in which we encounter the world” (p.2). In the Earth Fibres course, participants are exiled from their familiar landscapes enabling them to gain a different perspective on their beliefs and identity as a teacher (Strong-Wilson, 2008).

The Earth Fibres course helped the preservice teachers to move beyond a tourist experience of Aboriginal culture to a deep, more meaningful understanding into the why of a different worldview. Through a new dispositional stance that embraced a two-eyed seeing perspective, the preservice teachers brought forward their understanding of indigenous ways and were able to imagine new possibilities for encouraging healthy learning communities in their classrooms.

In the process of writing up this study I have tried to remain true to the lived experience of the participants of the course. Similar to the approach of Norberg-Hodge (1991) in her book, *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh*, “I have primarily dealt with relationships and connections, I have tried to describe the shape and feel of [a] way of life rather than focusing on isolated factors” (p. 133). I hope that I was able, in some small way, to shed light on Charlene’s underlying question, “how can we bring the strength of the old teachings into the modern?” Building on the gentle offerings of the wisdom keepers, the preservice teachers move forward with a stronger sense of the ancient wisdom of the past embedded in their beliefs. The Earth Fibres course offers hope that these young teachers really can make a difference in the lives of the many unique and related children they will teach.

All my relations.



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Appendix 1: Course Outline

EDCI 499(1.5) Fall 2006
 Earth Fibres, Weaving Stories: Learning and Teaching in an Indigenous World
 Dr. Lorna Williams 472 5499, email: lornawil@uvic.ca
 or Mary McQueen 721 7826. email: mmcqueen@uvic.ca
 Office: A321 MacLaurin Bldg

Sessional Instructor:
 Charlene George

Location: D211
 Time: Wednesdays 4:30 – 7:30

Grade: Complete/Incomplete

Course Description

In this course you will be engaged in an experiential educational practice. You will learn first hand how teaching and learning occur in an Indigenous world. Undergraduate and graduate students will work along side an artists-in-residence and wisdom keeper/mentors to witness, experience, learn, and work with a variety of traditional Indigenous fabric and textile arts. The learning community will engage in hearing the traditional stories and songs associated with each of the textile pieces. The course will integrate hands-on practical activities with theoretical and academic goals. Students will experience the principles of traditional Indigenous ways of teaching and learning such as: mentorship and apprenticeship learning; learning by doing; learning by deeply observing; learning through listening and telling stories and singing songs; and learning as a member of a team; learning by sharing and providing service to the community. Graduate students will assume the leadership role in each project area.

Course participants will work in a collaborative team environment to:

- **Learn various types of textile making, Learn the traditional ways to pick and prepare materials for weaving.**
- **Research cultural protocols, First Nations traditions, art, symbols, materials, and philosophy surrounding the making of textiles**
- **Document background material for each textile piece and develop a curriculum package for one piece of the mural**
- **Participate in planning and organizing all the ceremonies and celebrations – opening and completion**
- **Research and develop the education materials to share this experience with the community**
- **Learn the labels for the textiles and other relevant vocabulary in the Sencoten and Hul'qumin'um languages**
- **In each of the projects the participants will discuss and learn how Indigenous people work together in community.**

The class will be divided into 5 working groups and each group will work with the following textile materials.

- A. Cedar Bark
- B. Wool
- C. Button Blanket
- D. Buckskin
- E. Métis sash

Groups: Graduate students in each group will take the leadership role in the group. The groups will be formed at the first class. The curriculum groups will be formed when the final textile pieces have been determined. One group will be assigned the introduction and formatting of the document.

Group Assignments

Each group will be responsible for designing and creating one of the textile pieces.

A small group will create a curriculum, drawing from the BC curriculum that will include the stories and songs associated with the piece, the history and science involved in each piece.

The whole class will create the final mural by combining each of the textile pieces into one story, that will hang in the MacLaurin building. Other acquired pieces will be an Inuit tapestry, a Haudensonee wampum belt, and moose hair tufting.

The entire group will be responsible for planning, organizing and hosting the ceremonies to meet with the protocols of the local First Nations and the University of Victoria

Individual assignments

All participants are required to keep a learning journal, to record what you are learning about Indigenous ways of learning and teaching. You will share this in a paper at the end of the class.

You will also include in this paper how you will apply what you have learned in your work or discipline.

Each individual will collect, prepare and weave a cattail sample to learn the techniques and protocols of collecting and working with materials from the earth.

The course is guided by these principles of Indigenous teaching and learning, other principles, learned from the elders, will be added throughout the course:

Cwelelep – being in a place of dissonance, uncertainty in anticipation of new learning

Kamucwkalha – the energy indicating group attunement and the emergence of a common group purpose

Celhcelh – each person is responsible for their learning, it means finding and taking advantage of all opportunities to learn, and maintain an openness to learning. Each person must take the initiative to become part of the learning community by finding their place and fitting themselves into the community. It means offering what knowledge and expertise you have to benefit the communal work being carried out

Emhaka7 – each person does the best they can at whatever the task, and keeps an eye on others to be helpful. To work respectfully and with good thoughts

Responsibility – each person is responsible for helping the team and the learning community to accomplish the task at hand in a good way

Relationship – throughout the course each person will be conscious of developing and maintaining relationships - with the people, the pole, the teachers and guides, and the communities beyond the learning community. It also means relating what you are experiencing to your past knowledge and to what you will do with what you are learning.

Watchful listening – an openness to listening beyond our own personal thoughts and assumptions

A7xekcal - how teachers help us to locate the infinite capacity we all have as learners. Developing one's own personal gifts and expertise in a holistic manner.

Kat'il'a - finding stillness amidst our busyness and need to know

Appendix 2: Stories of the Moons

Interview with Charlene, January 28, 2007 (unedited)

C: When I looked at the year, which is done in a cycle of 13 moons I looked at the Sencoten calendar, which you'll have to grab a copy I couldn't find mine when I came here today, from Lorna. Lorna has the Sencoten calendar. And I looked at that, and I also compared how it is in T'Sou-ke because our languages are very similar, although not exactly the same from Wsanc to T'Sou-ke. So, accordingly I made changes to how things were addressed in their calendar. The year that we're setting up, it's not like the understanding of how everybody else sets up a calendar, what it is, is it's a year cycle. So the year cycle is looked at in terms of activities that would occur in each time period, or what should be occurring. That doesn't necessarily mean that's what's happening nowadays. Many things have changed and gone off kilter.



(1.) So, we always start the calendar with the new. We have the new. This represents many things, and while I wouldn't publicly share some of the things that the new season represents, but we do have a season where we have a new, renewing season in our ceremonies in the long house. So part of this representation in drawing a baby inside this first moon's mouth is representation of that. It's looking at maybe, the time when we all go within and are new again. There are many other kinds of activities that are happening at this time but that's the one I wanted to promote most when I was looking at the first moon of the year. And, in each of the moons, I made their mouths look really, really big because I wanted throughout this whole year cycle, to show that this has great importance. And it's done in a circle, which means that this way of hearing or understanding or giving information, comes from the creator because when you have a mouth with a circle, that's really where the essence comes from. And very much, when I sit to draw, those are the things that come out. And I never edit or criticize what it is that comes out and the reason why it needed to be there. So where it might be different than some other artists have depicted this is from a feminine perspective more than the masculine perspective. I found the Sencoten calendar to be more defining of the male activities that might occur in the months.



(2.) So, the second one which shows the mouth being a wakus, it's the frog. And it's very much, to me about transformation. We are making a big change in season. Just at the end of this moon we would be looking at, the frogs are singing, we are transforming into the next part of our season. And Wakus is represented a couple times in the year, in the spring and in the fall time. And when I make the big calendar up, that's what would make the change, is there would be a wakus holding the first part of the year, and a wakus holding the second part of the year. So that it shows how we've gone from light to dark, and dark to light. So, Wakus is telling us that wintertime is coming to an end. We are needing to make a change.



(3.) So then we move into our third month, our third moon actually. And the moons and don't always follow those calendar months. So, this is when we start to have our blossoms. What I've drawn is the creator's hand, or the grandma's hand, ends up being the earth, and it's out of the middle of the hand, the palm of the hand that grows the blossoms. And so, the Earth is being represented by the circle in the middle of the palm. This is the hand here, the thumb and the finger. And the back part of the hand has no beginning and has no end, it's represented by a dark design, so that is where things come from spirit for me, when they get drawn like this. So, I've shown the blossoms, the first ones that come up there. They are kind of the V-shaped, and so that's what the flower is, and it has the first pollens that come out. So it's done with crescents and S. shapes, and the hand is really decorated because it wanted to show the importance- that this is a very important hand, it's not just a hand. It has great significance. So, somewhere between Wakus, and the hand of the creator bringing the blossoms is when we would have the equivalent these days, of what we would call an equinox. The change when were starting way more towards our light time.



(4.) So, then we're moving into our fourth moon and I represented five bull heads, which are the little fish, another little brother to salmon, but a little bit different, that come back because everything has its season when it returns. And in Wsanc , I also wanted to recognize that there are differences, and later on I put smelts in a different moon because those are the ones that return on our side. So it's a different from Wsanc to T'Sou-ke, there are some climate differences. But one of the things to make note of, is that there are different formations of stars that happen in the springtime. And so the stars are represented in this moon's mouth because I wanted to tell of that change that happens. And on our west coast side we have a little bit more of the beginning of when we would peel Cedar bark. You know, if this was the right time of year and the weather had cooperated, this would be the time that we would start pulling our cedar bark. So, in this moon's mouth I represented that - a creator's hand, or a grandma's hand that's beginning to peel the cedar bark from the tree. And then, on the side of that are the bullheads. (M.: so is this about returning?) Yes, it's about many things that are returning. There's only a certain window of opportunity when you're gathering different things, and for instance, the bullheads. Although were very wealthy with our beaches and our food supplies, this would be one where some of our fish are fresh and coming back and available to us. So, that would be part of that cycle. And I've represented the cedar tree in here, with the five wings of the cedar tree so that it looks at the different aspects of our selves. It also balances the number of bullheads I've represented in the picture as well, so there's a balance between the male and female. (It is) the beginning of rutting season, and men come into a very strong sense of themselves – and women as well. There's a whole bunch of words for this kind of season that happens, in a kind of lighter way that's what I represented.



(5.) So, in the fifth moon we're talking about beginning harvesting because we've had enough time now, in our new season, in how our year is progressing, how are moon cycles are progressing. We are able to go back out on our canoes, we are able to start harvesting and collecting some of the things that we need. So I represented to things. I represented

Skweet-si which is the small sea urchin, and Camas. But also to consider that these are the times when you would be getting, seagulls they like to lay their eggs around this time of year too, and that's generally close to where the Camas bulbs would be growing, if it wasn't an old cycle. And on this moon's mouth I represented Skweet-si being crab like, because to me it's so sweet, the eggs from inside, the inside of the urchin. It tastes like a sweet crab. I also represented a canoe on this mouth because this is a good time of year when the storms are not going to be very much. We are now in a calmer season, when traveling, it's a good time to start again. So, we're starting between here and that next moon, starting to look at mid-summer. So, when were having a balance of the year in how much light, we are now having much more light than we had in our wintertime.



(6.) And so, this is the moon when sockeye generally are welcomed back into our area. They will start to become much more evident out off of our beaches, not at the mouths of rivers yet. They're kind of starting to think about coming home, so this is a good time to net them. So that's what I portrayed here. First of all, the Hychka hands and being really thankful for the return of that that nourishes us. I've represented the salmon design as a very beefy because sockeye is very rich, and very big feeling. I don't know how else to describe it, other than that's the feel that comes from inside in the salmon design. And the Hychka hands are represented in actually making movement, that's why they are the pieces that are off into the fingertips there, because the hands are moving. They're actually dancing and being very, very thankful for the return that has come because this means that we can replenish so much of our stores. While sockeye is not going to last through our winter, it's a really good, big feed of protein stuff that we really need to for us to come back. And we usually had netted that. And the nets can be made in quite a few different ways depending on which area and how we needed to be netting, whether it was from one of our canoes, whether we had our fish traps. There were a number of ways that this capturing of salmon happened, although in this representation I put it as being a net. And so one of the things that could've come from the cedar bark would be the ability to make cedar rope, which is very, very strong. The other thing that would be used for making rope would be stinging nettle vines – they make a very strong rope. It's spun kind of the same way as wool is spun. Or a combination of fibers can make a very, very strong rope. Anyways, that's a very important part. So, remember that we've moved in to summertime, a busy time.



(7.) And what is represented in the seventh moon is that busy time, and the joyful, and the cool sharing time. So this would be when we would be traveling, we would be doing much feasting, we would be doing bone games, canoe races, journeying by canoe to go see family. Because the season is really good for traveling, it's very abundant for food. You're not to bring harm or hardship to your relatives by visiting them in a season where it's not plentiful, as it is in the summertime. And you might be stopping to gather more things as you're going along. You might be trading sockeye, you might be doing whatever visiting that tends to happen. Prior to the bean counters being here, that visiting was a regular cycle. And visiting meant that you would spend a minimum of a week, maybe even a couple months, you might even spend the whole winter with your relatives from whatever communities that was, because that's what you need to do. So, life had a bigger cycle than just how we think about things being so quick these days. It was definitely a lot more drawn out, more relaxed. And then you'd be having people to come and help when you're doing different gatherings for different things. Say for instance, your family was planning, usually some time ahead they'd be planning for when they were going to be doing a memorial, or another kind of celebration. Maybe there was going to be a joining of two families with a wedding, or a marriage, there's all kinds of possibilities of parts of life that could happen throughout a year in the moon cycles. So at different times of the year it would be important to gather what it was that you would need ahead of time. Because it's not like going to the grocery store these days – you had to plan ahead, you had to be always busy. That's where some of the teachings about always having good hands, about always being productive and busy and helpful towards the whole of the structure. And remember, part of our ideas and our culture from this area here and in many areas on the coast as well, are about giving. And so you had to have been prepared ahead of time to have enough to be able to give away. But if it ever came to it, you always gave absolutely everything away anyways, because you would never be poor, because there is enough around, and enough people that have you given all of that away, it would've been their honor to give to you. So, along with that, all the different family connections in the seventh moon, there would be large gatherings. I don't know if you've ever seen in some of the old pictures where you would see massive amounts of canoes all lined up on the beach? So, that would be this time of year when you would be seeing stuff like that. You would have temporary shelters, and you would have homes that are just filled to the brim with all your guests, family that's come from different places. So, I featured the pinks the humpees (salmon), they've come back. In this month here they tend to be around our coastline, swimming by the coastline here. It's also around this time when we were talking about gakmeen, it's time for collecting different medicines. I didn't put that in here, but it

is that time in here where you're at the beach, you're doing all kinds of traveling around and collecting and trading, and getting prepared.



(8.) So, then were moving into our eighth month, our eighth moon and this is where we are starting to have some rains. Before this we didn't have too much rains. And this is where we have the starting of the spawning cycle, because there are enough coming down from all kinds of places. And I've represented that by the little tiny raindrops that are coming at the top. This also encourages the berries that were going to be collecting, to be getting right and plump enough so that we can make our food that is like fruit leather. Smash them up, and dry them out. And this is also when you would be having cod and some other things. But, the one that I chose to represent, because I was trying to keep it simple for the ability to cut these designs for the mouths, this is when the Coho starts to spawn. And also, in Coast Salish culture there is a lot of representation of the hooks. And how fishing happened for each kind of fish is different. And remember those Skweet-si that we were talking about before hand, in this moon you'd be spending a lot of time looking for cod. So you'd be going out with your hooks, they have a very elaborate system of how to get a piece to go down to the bottom. And it's kind of like this twirly piece. And you'll see them described in many different parts, and they actually have the hooks on the bottom and you pull up your line and you've got your cool bottom fish. And it's a really rich fish, that and halibut. And so again, it's a time to start getting your body ready, beefing it up a little bit more because you're getting in to, pretty close to a season where you're going to start having to be quiet. And again, these are not fish that are necessarily going to keep very well, so they are for nurturing you for the now.



(9.) So then we are moving into our ninth moon, and it's somewhere around this time, depending on the year, where we are going to celebrate our change to this is going into our fall time. In this moon here, we are going to be having on our ninth moon lots of big rains. This is when our creeks and our rivers fill so much that the big fish can now go up and be spawning. So this is when our dog salmon is going to be going up, the ones with the big

curved faces for the males, and that's what I've represented on here. But what I did, not only did I represent in this moon mouth the bigness of the rain, because it's represented by really big teardrops, but also that we've got our dog salmon that's being smoked because this is one of the best fish for keeping for the year. So this is a really important supply to be gathering up, because these ones can be hung in the rafters in your home, or they can be put in one of those big storage boxes. I have one of those at home – it no longer smells like fish. I put my books and other things in there. But the heads of the salmon, I represented one here to show you what kind of salmon it is. But also, it's really important, and this is the only place I could figure out how to do this in the year of moons, that the fish heads and other pieces were all used for different parts. In one of the previous moons, in the summer time there is also a time where things like octopus, it's a good time to be collecting crabs with rakes and things. It's not like you had to have a big array of tools, things could be very simple in how to gather. So, it depends on the season. You have to be careful into which time period, how warm your water is. It depends on what time you're going to be collecting. And that's kind of individual for each year, so that's also why I didn't put some of those gathering parts into this year cycle. So also in here, just to remember that the head was considered our big food and could be made into soups quite a lot. This could also have been in the spring time although I've represented the head in the fall, in this ninth moon.

(M: is this a hand?) Yes, that's a hand to that's bringing up and holding a head, absolutely. Because it has significance, that's why it's done that way.



(10.) Now, in our 10th moon we are moving into, definitely into fall time. Our leaves are starting to turn white. That means we're starting to get frost. That means that we're starting to get some cold time. And that means also it's the perfect time for going hunting s'mylth (deer) because before then, if you take their skin, you can't reuse all the pieces that you might need to use. I mean yes, if you had need in the summertime you could go hunt a s'mylth but it's very hard to make a summer skin into a good drum. The hooves and the antlers and the meat – and incidentally, some of the best medicines are collected from around the tummy that will help with eczema – there are many parts, including the fat of this one that's used all the time. There are many other animals that people might have chosen to honor in part of their medicine by taking and using those pieces, but I wanted to acknowledge that the s'mylth is right here. And, it has a big heart because one of its really cool attributes is its ability to be very strong, very agile but very strong. And it has a big heart so it can run really, really a lot. And that's an important thing because in order to hunt this you have to be very agile and strong yourself. So this is also a way for

us to talk about how important it was to have that really good health. And it's done by collecting and eating the things that are within season, it's done by collecting and taking care with medicines that we would need to be having. And there are generally things that everybody would be collecting, and then there are things that only people with certain gifts would be collecting so that they are the caretakers for when somebody needs that. So, I don't want to un-acknowledge that part of that. That is what is represented in the 10th moon which is about the s'mylth and the leaves turning white.



(11.) Into the 11th moon, the next moon, we're moving into a huge storm season. And where we might have had storms before... oh! Somewhere between the ninth and the 11th moon there is a way of defining approximately how many storms will be through our wintertime. And it's after we have our change of season, and between there and the next moon, depends how things fall, generally will define or give you a clue as to how many deaths we will have, how many storms we will have and to what severity. You can also tell by looking at some of our different plants that are around, like how things are spaced, and how the animals might be behaving. Like, our brothers and sisters might be making a really big home, or they might be taking off. So, it will help you to define how cold your year is going to be, and maybe give you an understanding of how much preparation you might need to make for your season because we have light seasons, and we have really heavy seasons. So, one of these defining things is our huge big winds and storms, and it's so interesting that this year we went through so much of that part of it. I kind of felt bad for knowing all these things some of the time. We have, I pictured here at the creator's face, and the creators face is blowing the wind, and the wind is blowing tree branches, it's blowing leaves, it's blowing a whole bunch of things. And, it's said to be this is the time of the year when some of that heaviness we might have been feeling from other times, the winds start and they take all of that away, they make things fresh and new again. They take away all the old and it's a time for clearing out.



(12.) And then, when we get into our 12th moon we are looking at putting away our paddles because not only is the wind blowing, but the storms and the sea, and it's getting

to be quite dark now. We have very little time to that's got really, lots of light left during the daytime. Oh, I forgot to tell you, in the 11th moon not only are there storms, but we're looking to make ourselves really ready for being inside, which is why the longhouse is pictured. But it doesn't have a fire started yet. So, what I've done in the 12th moon, I showed that the fires are started, and it's time for our innocence, our houses to wake up for our winter ceremonies. And on this here, I've acknowledged the Hychka hands with the two paddles. And the two paddles are very different, one is a egg and dart design, and one has a killer whale design. That is because I wanted to show that we have differences in each one of our homes, and that we have great appreciation. And this is again, where we might be having our relatives visiting from another place, so of course some things might look a little bit different maybe that time, that moon, and going in and being together with our relatives. And, this house is really much more emphasized and decorated because I'm starting to show that that's the main focus, and I wanted to show that by drawing the design that way. And, that we have started to send our prayers out with our winter ceremonies because our smoke is coming out through the roof. So, somewhere between there and our final moon of the year, is where we have our change of season again. So where we have our more dark time, we're going to come into the darkest parts of our days.



(13.) So, what I wanted to represent here, this is called the elder moon. It's such a time of gathering, and being only inside, and the small bits of our travel would only be absolutely necessary for getting to where our winter ceremony might be happening with the neighboring relative, or a neighboring community. It would be just a very short journey to get them because really, the travel out on the open ocean would have been way... while we were strong people, it would have still been way, way too much to consider doing unless absolutely necessary. So, what I pictured in here was trying in a very understated way to show a little bit of winter ceremony time for us. And, nowadays there is much more public acknowledgment of some parts of this. And so, I wanted to be respectful of myself, and my relatives, but also to still show a little bit. So what I've done is I've pictured the creator's hand, it's the one that is actually holding up the long house. And there are two figures inside, one on either side of the fire, and both have their tears, which is the prayer. And both are different, because that represents individuality that we have within our winter ceremonies. While we have generally, things that are similar, we also have individual gifts. And this is the time of year when those things might be acknowledged. So, you'll see that there is smoke inside the longhouse, and the smoke goes out of the longhouse out through the smoke hole and goes to the creator, and the needs

come back to the people because the creator is blowing that back towards them. And that completes our year cycle. And then we would go back into our new, and the year would start again.

...I've depicted the flow that it is, going in the direction that we dance. And on this post here, although not by everybody, we tend to go in this direction here. When we go to our mainland relatives and over further, way further, they go the other direction. And so it's always an interesting comparative part.

I didn't put in here where the wool is traded, but throughout the summer months part of the journeying and gathering and trading, it would be for things that represent wealth, and so part of that for us would've been trading for the mountain goat wool. We would have always been combing our dogs throughout all of these moons seasons so that when it comes time in the 12th moon, and we're putting our paddles away, and some of the other times when we sit and actually have our looms stationary, and make blankets. We make those things for our ceremonies that are coming up. It's not only that, but it's all the other pieces that we would have been prepared to do and get, everything that we had needed for the ceremony. I just have forgotten to tell you about the wool parts, and that was a really important part to tell you about. So there were the dogs, and the wolves, and of course the steps that May showed us throughout the class period and equally the same, if you were to make some garment with leather then you would have done the processing... And that's just a small part so go read the moons in the calendar of the Secoten and it will give you even more.

Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form #1



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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM #1 – *Whole Group Participants*
Transforming perspectives: The immersion of student teachers in Indigenous pedagogy

You are invited to participate in a study entitled, Transforming perspectives: The immersion of student teachers in Indigenous pedagogy that I (Michele Tanaka) am conducting through the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria. As a graduate student, I am conducting this research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction. It is being conducted under the co-supervision of Dr. Ted Riecken and Dr. Lorna Williams.

The purpose of this research project is to tell the stories of transformation that the student teacher enrolled in the Indigenous pedagogy course (Earth Fibres, Weaving Stories EDCI 499) may have in regards to their attitudes values and beliefs about teaching and learning. Research of this type is important because Canadian classrooms are increasingly diverse and cross-cultural understandings are crucial to effective teaching and learning. Additionally, Indigenous ways of teaching and learning can be effective pedagogical tools for all students, whether Aboriginal or otherwise. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are enrolled in the Indigenous pedagogy course. The research addresses a gap in the knowledge within the field of teacher education around perceptions of learning and teaching. By participating in the study, you will be contributing to new knowledge that will inform teacher educators by describing the learning and teaching experiences you have in the course.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, you will be observed during the regular hours of the course. Researcher field notes will be taken along with some video and photographs. Learning journals and written assignments will be gathered and looked at to identify key issues and themes of the experience.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including self-consciousness or distraction during a course that you are enrolled in. There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. 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. Your decision to participate in or not, or to withdrawal from this study will in no way effect your status in the course. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be impossible to remove from the database due to the group nature of the study. To make sure that you continue to

consent to participate in this research, I will re-request the consent of the group at circle sharing times periodically throughout the course.

In terms of protecting your anonymity no names will be included in my fieldnotes. Due to their visual nature, video and photos cannot be anonymous. Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by storage of data in locked file cabinets and/or computer files with passwords. Data from this study will be disposed of by erasing all electronic files and shredding paper copies at the end of five years unless related future studies are anticipated.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: a written dissertation; presentations at scholarly meeting and/or university education courses; published articles; directly to the participants; to Indigenous communities; and possibly via internet and media such as newspaper.

You may contact me if you have further questions at 721-4186 (home). Or you may contact either of my supervisors at: 721-7757 (Dr. Riecken) or 721-7826 (Dr. Williams). In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ovprhe@uvic.ca).

Thank you for your interest in my project.

Sincerely,
Michele Tanaka

I agree to be a general participant in the study.
In addition, I agree to have my:

- photos and/or video used as a data source
- photos and/or video used in dissemination materials
- learning journal used as a data source
- written course assignment used as a data source
- data used in future related researcher projects

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

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

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

Appendix 4: Participant Consent Form #2



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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM #2 – *In-Depth Participants*

Transforming perspectives: The immersion of student teachers in Indigenous pedagogy

You are invited to participate in a study entitled, Transforming perspectives: The immersion of student teachers in Indigenous pedagogy that I (Michele Tanaka) am conducting through the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria. As a graduate student, I am conducting this research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction. It is being conducted under the co-supervision of Dr. Ted Riecken and Dr. Lorna Williams.

The purpose of this research project is to tell the stories of transformation that the student teacher enrolled in the Indigenous pedagogy course (Earth Fibres, Weaving Stories EDCI 499) may have in regards to their attitudes values and beliefs about teaching and learning. Research of this type is important because Canadian classrooms are increasingly diverse and cross-cultural understandings are crucial to effective teaching and learning. Additionally, Indigenous ways of teaching and learning can be effective pedagogical tools for all students, whether Aboriginal or otherwise.

You are being asked to participate in *a more in-depth level* of this study because you are enrolled in the Indigenous pedagogy course *and you will be enrolled in a student teacher practicum shortly after the course is completed*. The research addresses a gap in the knowledge within the field of teacher education around perceptions of learning and teaching. By participating in the study, you will be contributing to new knowledge that will inform teacher educators by describing the learning and teaching experiences you have in the course. *You will also have an opportunity to reflect more deeply on your experiences in the course.*

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, you will be asked to take part in two individual interviews – one at the beginning, and one at the end of the course (approximately one hour each). You will also be asked to take part in a focus group with other student teachers who have also just finished a practicum (approximately two hours). In addition, I will ask you to read over the transcripts of these interviews to check them for accuracy.

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including *the time involved in the interview and focus group process, and the possibility of some emotional or psychological discomfort due to the nature of describing personal transformative experiences that may have occurred during the course*. There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

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. Your decision to participate in or not, or to withdrawal from this study will in no way effect your status in the course. If you do withdraw from the study *and you request it, I will not include your interview data in the analysis phase of the project. Data from the focus group discussion is impossible to remove because of the group nature of the process.* To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will re-request your consent at the beginning of each interview and before the focus group.

In terms of protecting your anonymity *you will have the option of removing or including your name from the interview transcripts. You can make this decision now or after the focus group.* Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by storage of data in locked file cabinets and/or computer files with passwords. Data from this study will be disposed of by erasing all electronic files and shredding paper copies at the end of five years unless related future studies are anticipated.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: a written dissertation; presentations at scholarly meeting and/or university education courses; published articles; directly to the participants; to Indigenous communities; and possibly via internet and media such as newspaper.

You may contact me if you have further questions at 721-4186 (home). Or you may contact either of my supervisors at: 721-7757 (Dr. Riecken) or 721-7826 (Dr. Williams). In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ovprhe@uvic.ca).

Thank you for your interest in my project.

Sincerely,
Michele Tanaka

I agree to be *an in-depth* participant in the study.

I agree to have my interviews audio recorded.

In future dissemination of the data, I would like my name (first name only) to be:

included confidential I will decide after the focus group

I agree to have my data used in future related researcher projects

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

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

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

Appendix 5: Participant Consent Form #3



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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM #3 – *Instructors*

Transforming perspectives: The immersion of student teachers in Indigenous pedagogy

You are invited to participate in a study entitled, Transforming perspectives: The immersion of student teachers in Indigenous pedagogy that I (Michele Tanaka) am conducting through the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria. As a graduate student, I am conducting this research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction. It is being conducted under the co-supervision of Dr. Ted Riecken and Dr. Lorna Williams.

The purpose of this research project is to tell the stories of transformation that the student teacher enrolled in the Indigenous pedagogy course (Earth Fibres, Weaving Stories EDCI 499) may have in regards to their attitudes values and beliefs about teaching and learning. Research of this type is important because Canadian classrooms are increasingly diverse and cross-cultural understandings are crucial to effective teaching and learning. Additionally, Indigenous ways of teaching and learning can be effective pedagogical tools for all students, whether Aboriginal or otherwise.

You are being asked to participate in *this study because you are an instructor in the course*. The research addresses a gap in the knowledge within the field of teacher education around perceptions of learning and teaching. By participating in the study, you will be contributing to new knowledge that will inform teacher educators by describing the learning and teaching experiences that occurred in the course. *You will also have an opportunity to reflect more deeply on your experiences in the course.*

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, you will be asked to take part in one individual interview at a time that is convenient to you during the course (approximately one hour). In addition, I will ask you to read over the transcripts of these interviews to check them for accuracy. Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including *the time involved in the interview process*. There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

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. Your decision to participation in or not, or to withdrawal from this study will

in no way effect your status in the course. If you do withdraw from the study *and you request it, I will not include your interview data in the analysis phase of the project.* To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, I will re-request *your consent at the beginning of your interview.*

In terms of protecting your anonymity *you will have the option of removing or including your name from the interview transcripts. You can make this decision now or after the interview.* Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by storage of data in locked file cabinets and/or computer files with passwords. Data from this study will be disposed of by erasing all electronic files and shredding paper copies at the end of five years unless related future studies are anticipated.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: a written dissertation; presentations at scholarly meeting and/or university education courses; published articles; directly to the participants; to Indigenous communities; and possibly via internet and media such as newspaper.

You may contact me if you have further questions at 721-4186 (home). Or you may contact either of my supervisors at: 721-7757 (Dr. Riecken) or 721-7826 (Dr. Williams). In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ovprhe@uvic.ca).

Thank you for your interest in my project.

Sincerely,
Michele Tanaka

I agree to be *an instructor* participant in the study.

I agree to have my interviews audio recorded.

In future dissemination of the data, I would like my name to be

included confidential I will decide after the interview

I agree to have my data used in future related researcher projects

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

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

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

Appendix 6: Interview Questions #1 (Early Course Experience)

Interviews will be done in an informal conversational style. Effort will be made to keep the pace unrushed and silent pauses will be appreciated as a necessary step for participants to formulate their answers. The questions below are only a guide. To a large extent the interview will follow the course set forth by the participant and questions will be generated from statements made as the interview proceeds.

Hi. Before we start, I want to remind you that you can opt out of this interview at any time – just let me know if you want to stop.... Ready to start?

Great. The purpose of this interview is to give you an opportunity to tell me about your initial experiences in the Earth Fibres course. I have provided coloured felts and paper for you to use if you prefer to draw or explain something visually. I would like to have a conversation about the things that *you* consider to be important and interesting.

1. Let's start with you telling me about your experience in the course so far.
 - a. If needed: What has it been like for you? What are you noticing? What catches your attention? Can you tell me more about _____ ?
2. As a researcher, one of the things I am interested in is the process of teaching and learning. If you were to use an image to describe the process of learning, how would you do that? You can tell me verbally, or use the felts and paper.
 - a. If needed: give example, e.g. an absorbent sponge, vessel to be filled, etc.
3. What kind of learning suits you?
4. What kind of teaching?
5. The Earth Fibres course is atypical for a university course. Tell me about your choice to enroll in the class.
6. What learning opportunities do you see in the course?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share with me at this point?

Thanks for taking the time for this interview. I'm looking forward to continuing this conversation with you as the course goes on!

Appendix 7: Interview Questions #2 (Post-Course Experience)

Interviews will be done in an informal conversational style. Effort will be made to keep the pace unrushed and silent pauses will be appreciated as a necessary step for participants to formulate their answers. The questions below are only a guide. To a large extent the interview will follow the course set forth by the participant and questions will be generated from statements made as the interview proceeds.

Hi. Before we start, I want to remind you that you can opt out of this interview at any time – just let me know if you want to stop.... Ready to start?

Great. The purpose of this interview is to give you an opportunity to tell me about your experiences in the Earth Fibres course. I have provided coloured felts and paper for you to use if you prefer to draw or explain something visually. I would like to have a conversation about the things that you consider to be important and interesting.

8. Now that the course is over, what can you tell me about your experience?
 - a. If needed: What has it been like for you? What stood out? What caught your attention?
9. What can you tell me about any learning opportunities you had in the course?
10. During the last interview, you described the process of learning through the image of _____. Is this still a good image for you? Would you like to change or elaborate on it now? You can tell me verbally, or use the felts and paper.
11. In a similar course last year, some of the student teachers noticed changes to their values, attitudes and beliefs about the process of learning. What can you tell me about transformations you may have experienced around this topic?
12. What are your thoughts and feelings about learning now?
13. What are your thoughts and feelings about how this might affect your teaching?
14. Is there anything else you would like to share with me at this point?

Thanks for taking the time for this interview. I'm looking forward to continuing this conversation with you at the end of your practicum experience!

Appendix 8: Interview Questions – Focus Groups (Post-Practicum Experience)

The focus group will be done in an informal conversational style. Effort will be made to keep the pace unrushed and silent pauses will be appreciated as a necessary step for participants to formulate their answers. The questions below are only a guide. To a large extent the conversation will follow the course set forth by the participants and questions will be generated from statements made as we proceed.

Hi everyone. Before we start, I want to remind all of you that you can opt out of this interview at any time – just let me know if you want to stop.... Is everyone ready to start?

Great. The purpose of this conversation is to give you an opportunity to tell me about your experiences in the Earth Fibres course now that you have had a practicum experience in the public schools. I have provided coloured felts and paper for you to use if you prefer to draw or explain something visually. I would like to have a conversation about the things that you consider to be important and interesting.

Confidentiality

1. To begin, please take a moment to think about what you noticed about learning in the context of your practicum. What stood out? What caught your attention? Jot down a few words or images about this. (Give 5 minutes (or as needed) for this.)
2. We will now go around the circle and share what you noticed. After each person has had a turn, we will open up a general conversation. During the sharing portion, please feel free to jot down notes as you listen if you want to remember a point or comment to share later.
3. During your interviews, some of you described changes to your values, attitudes and beliefs about the process of learning. What can you tell us about these transformations in the context of your practicum?
4. What are your thoughts and feelings about how this might affect your teaching?
5. Is there anything else you would like to share with the group at this point?

Thanks for taking the time for this focus group. I've really enjoyed our conversation about learning and teaching!

Appendix 9: Interview Questions – Instructors

Interviews will be done in an informal conversational style. Effort will be made to keep the pace unrushed and silent pauses will be appreciated as a necessary step for participants to formulate their answers. The questions below are only a guide. To a large extent the interview will follow the course set forth by the participant and questions will be generated from statements made as the interview proceeds.

Hi. Before we start, I want to remind you that you can opt out of this interview at any time – just let me know if you want to stop.... Ready to start?

Great. The purpose of this interview is to give you an opportunity to tell me about your experiences in the Earth Fibres course. I have provided coloured felts and paper for you to use if you prefer to draw or explain something visually. I would like to have a conversation about the things that *you* consider to be important and interesting.

15. Let's start with you telling me about your experience in the course so far.
 - a. If needed: What has it been like for you? What are you noticing? What catches your attention? Can you tell me more about _____ ?
16. As a researcher, one of the things I am interested in is the process of teaching and learning. If you were to use an image to describe the process of learning, how would you do that? You can tell me verbally, or use the felts and paper.
 - a. If needed: give example, e.g. an absorbent sponge, vessel to be filled, etc.
17. What kind of learning suits you?
18. What kind of teaching?
19. The Earth Fibres course is atypical for a university course. Tell me about your choice to enroll in the class.
20. What learning opportunities do you see in the course?
21. Is there anything else you would like to share with me at this point?

Thanks for taking the time for this interview. I'm looking forward to continuing this conversation with you as the course goes on!