Horse Whispering in High School:

Developing Teacher Savvy

by

Daryl Wayne Drew

M. Ed., University of Victoria (Curriculum Studies), 1999
B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1972

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Abstract

Disconnection in teacher-student relationships caused by the alienating processes and goals of the public school system is the most pressing challenge facing high school teachers today. Disrupting this disconnection and subverting the forces that produce it are the primary goals of the savvy teacher.

In this dissertation I claim that teachers require two distinct yet interconnected kinds of abilities to achieve this disruption. They need the curriculum teaching skills they are taught in teacher education programs, and they need additional skills not formally taught which would enable them to build and sustain relationships with students, in the face of school structures and processes that produce fear and isolation. These relational skills I term 'savvy' (Parelli, 1993).[i] I contend that teachers who are savvy can establish and sustain teacher-student classroom partnerships that ameliorate the fear produced by the social, political, and economic forces that shape the institution of schooling. The following research describes how I adapted my horse whispering savvy to teaching in a high school setting.

Being savvy in the classroom involves the ability to win students' trust, to form partnerships with students, and to sustain those relationships through continuous changes

i The term savvy is an Anglicization of the Spanish verb *saber*, to know. When used by horsemen it carries a connotation of practical wisdom.

that threaten to disrupt them. While the development of teacher savvy is a very individual process, that process must lead to the acquisition of three vital abilities: the ability to develop teacher-student partnerships, to sustain those partnerships, and to track behavior indicating changes in relational rhythms. These abilities can be developed only in concert with an awareness derived from personal experience of the need to change teaching practice. Acting on this desire to change, the savvy teacher must be able to utilize the inadequate processes of schooling to educate students about the problems produced by our way of living that is neither compatible with our planetary systems, nor sustainable over the long term.

To practice horse whispering savvy in the classroom teachers must learn to see the teaching environment as a complex interaction of systems, that is, as a network of interconnected reciprocal relations that function well as long as its interacting systems unfold harmoniously. They must learn to track this relational system from within, immersed in the web of classroom relationship, being sensitive to shifts in relational rhythms, and aware of the patterns and needs of other systems that compose the learning setting. Savvy teachers must be willing to educate students to understand the influence of the corporate agenda in the process of schooling and, to this end, abandon typical prescribed curriculum plans, and rely instead on teachable moments that occur within the classroom setting, all the while camouflaging their intent to educate students to think for themselves.

It is important for the savvy teacher to realize how being powerless can make students and even student teachers feel fearful and disconnected, unprepared to handle what occurs in the school setting or even influence the outcome of events. The savvy teacher needs to help form solutions to problems, encouraging and enhancing self-sufficiency in the classroom in order to disrupt dependency on the processes offered to us by the corporate way of living.

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Dedication

Eso está dedicado a los caballos y los sabios que me ayudaron realizar mi sueño.

Chapter One
Introduction

The Need for Teacher Savvy

Teaching high school for thirty years has made it clear to me that teachers require two distinct yet interconnected kinds of abilities. They need the curriculum teaching skills they are taught in teacher education programs, and they need additional skills that enable them to build and sustain relationships with students in the face of school structures and processes that produce fear and isolation. These relational skills I term 'savvy'[i] (Parelli, 1993).

Being savvy in the classroom involves the ability to win students' trust, to form partnerships with students, and to sustain those relationships through continuous changes which threaten to disrupt them. Ironically, these threats come from the school system itself as it reproduces social, political, and economic forces prevalent in society. Not surprisingly, relational skills needed to counteract these forces are rarely part of teacher preparation programs. I learned my relational perceptiveness during 30 years of horse whispering practice. Teaching horses requires similar skills of building and sustaining relationships under conditions that typically produce fear and isolation.

In this dissertation I claim that teachers require savvy to counteract the negative impact of social, political and economic forces on teacher-student classroom relations, which, if not addressed, can lead to violent incidents such as the 1999 Columbine High School shootings. I contend that teachers who are savvy can establish and sustain teacher-student classroom partnerships that ameliorate the fear produced by social, political, and economic forces prevalent in our society that can lead to violent outcomes. The following research describes how I articulated and adapted some of my horse whispering methods to teaching in a high school setting.

The Teacher-Horse Whisperer Connection

I began this research into the application of horse whisperer savvy to classroom teaching from the position of a high school teacher entangled in a mesh of contradictions. For 30 years I have worked with horses and learned how to disrupt forces that cause

disconnection and fear in horse-human relationships through the use of horse whispering skills, which are collectively termed savvy (Parelli, 1993)[ii]. A savvy horse whisperer understands that horse behavior is a silent language containing messages about the emotional state of an individual (Roberts, 1996). For a time, while I practiced the art of horse whispering outside of high school, in my classroom I continued to apply conventional teaching practices that my horse whispering experience told me would most assuredly lead to disconnection in some of my relationships with students. The simultaneous occurrence of two events brought this contradiction to a head and made it unsustainable.

I was called to help deal with the results of a well-meaning grandfather who had bought a colt from me for his granddaughter and thought that tying it to a stout post with a halter and rope would force it to work out its confinement fears. The grandfather was a retired rancher and had used this method many times. This time, however, the colt snapped the metal clip on the lead rope, reared, then flipped backwards, and fell into a fence. As he struggled to become free of the fence in which he had become entangled he broke his leg. I could do nothing to remedy the situation. The young horse had to be put down by a veterinarian. It was clear to me that the death resulted from the use of a standardized teaching process that did not take into account the colt's particular fears of entrapment and silenced his voice concerning those fears. It was a prime example of disconnection between student and teacher. The colt's behavior language had been ignored in the interest of adhering to a standardized method of teaching. Like many students caught up in fear and disconnection, this colt was placed in a situation that did not respect his perceptions or take into account the depths of his fears of the schooling process.

Within a short time after the colt's demise, I became aware of other senseless deaths when two students carried out the deadliest school shooting in US history. Teenage students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold went on a shooting rampage at Columbine High School in Jefferson County, Colorado, April 20, 1999, leaving 13 dead and 24 wounded before turning their guns on themselves. As I watched the terrifying Columbine event unfold on the TV news, I started to search for similarities between the

processes and structures of the two learning environments that disconnected students from each other and from their teachers, resulting in violent ends. It appeared to me that both the colt and students felt powerless in the face of a centralized system that controlled their learning environments. Like the colt, Eric and Dylan were left alone to suffer with their paranoia and fears, ostracized by their peers. As Dylan Klebold wrote in his journal, "I'm an outcast and everyone is conspiring against me" (Murphy, 2000, p. 309). Like the grandfather, Columbine teachers were caught up in schooling processes and systems that accept violence as "normal." The teachers' very disconnection from the students left them powerless and unable to address the situation. The young colt was unable to cope with his fears and injured his leg so badly he had to be put to death. Dylan and Eric obviously felt such a degree of disempowerment and alienation within the school system that they took matters into their own hands, ending not only student and teacher lives, but also their own.

Fear from Standardization: The Root of the Problem

In my analysis I view the root cause for the colt-trainer and teacher-student relational disconnection and disempowerment as the same. They both are generated by imbalance between standardized methods and individual needs, combined with a lack of awareness concerning the implications of this action. In my dissertation research I have found that school system processes and structures are derived from a society dominated by corporate consumer values that centralize power in the systems and disempower individuals. These values are experienced in society as hierarchies of power centralized in corporations and in schools as standardized evaluation techniques and specialized school subjects. Both corporations and schools, in addressing their own agendas, conflict with the needs of individuals for autonomous identities and supportive communities. Corporations appear to meet these needs by offering products such as cars and clothing which promise identity and belonging within school groups. However, the promise is empty. The result is a sense of disempowerment and a lack of belonging. When teachers are perceived as agents of a schooling system, students understandably distrust them and fear for their chances of success.

Student fear is exacerbated by cultural values that suppress the natural emotive processes for coping with the emotional pain of disconnection (Moore, 2000). Kindlon and Thompson (2000) term this situation applied to young males as a culture of cruelty. This culture allows young males the options of solitude, silence, or anger/violence as the only means by which to deal with emotional problems (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). An all too common reaction to this situation is the violence that has reached catastrophic levels in American schools. In 1999 alone, 10 percent of US schools experienced incidents of robbery, rape, suicide, or murder (Linedecker, 1999). Between 1996 and 1997 the U.S. Department of Education reported that 6,000 students had been caught and/or expelled for bringing guns to school illegally during the school year (Linedecker, 1999). I would suggest that this problem is intensified when our society condones violent behavior to create economic opportunities for marketing products such as violent video games and movies that offer simple and, I would say, ineffective solutions, to the emotional pain produced by disconnected relationships.

Boys are particularly susceptible targets for corporate created disconnection because of their culturally-induced emotional disconnection. Condoning violence as a cultural act is brought forward through time by the veneration of various cultural icons. The icon of particular interest to me in this research is derived from the mythology of the American West. This image of a young man with a gun and a cause deemed worthy of extreme sacrifice, particularly death, developed in the American West (Cawelti, 1999; Rosa, 1969; Slotkin, 1992; Wright, 1975). This icon, often portrayed as an outlaw, concerns me since it is most often associated with young American males and has been utilized by some school shooters. Since school shooters are predominantly male, I have limited my research to male high school students.

The Case for a Relational Worldview

I choose to work from the premise of horse whisperer savvy in my classroom because I am not comfortable embracing the worldview theories most often used to prescribe how schools function. The primary goal of right wing political interests in public schooling is to expand the markets available to the forces of consumerism. The primary goal of left wing political interests is to de-centralize the wealth produced by

corporate economic activities.[iii] De-centralizing power does not stop the destructive processes of consumerism. Left wing forces seem bankrupt in their ability to bring about improvement in this regard because they are a product of the same economic system as the right wing forces.

In keeping with my work in horse-human relationships I feel more comfortable embracing "relationalism" (Carter, 1999), a worldview premised on interrelationship and respect for all beings. Relationalism is consonant with the Indigenous and ranching roots of my horse whispering practice that originated in the North American West (Dorrance, 1987; Ponyboy, 1998-2). Indigenous teaching is focused upon sustaining relationships with other systems (Cajete, 1994). The Indigenous knowledge that forms some of the basis of horse whispering suggests that the key to sustaining relationships is building a sense of trust and interconnection among individuals. Indigenous educator Martin Brokenleg explains that the web of interconnection to which all things belong traditionally includes animals and plants as well as people (Capra, 1996). The web of life configures uniquely depending on the specifics of place. Through stories Indigenous children are taught to attend to the wisdom of their specific places (Basso, 1996; Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990; Cajete, 1994).

From Round Pen to High School Classroom

At the onset of this study I was competent in the methods of horse whispering as applied in a particular place, namely the horse whisperers' teaching setting, which is a round pen. To transfer these methods to a new place, namely the more complex high school setting, I required further research. I reasoned that, with a deeper understanding of horse whispering and the way of life that produced the practice, my adaptation of its teaching methods from the round pen to the classroom would be more effective (Basso, 1996). Recognizing that I too had been raised and conditioned into a society dominated by corporate consumer values that centralize power and disempower individuals, it became necessary to implement a unique research method that utilizes the horse whisperer's learning mode.

It was clear that what I needed to know could not be learned in a typical classroom. Rather, it required that I explore the way of living that gives rise to and

grounds the teaching methods of horse whispering, in order to make my teaching methods sufficiently robust to survive transplanting into an environment incompatible with them. My primary method of research was to document what I had learned as I rode horseback through wild areas of the North American West, acquiring savvy through my experiences associated with various places and mentors (Basso, 1996), and then to distill the essence of the horse whispering teaching methods out of the stories that my experiences produced. I suggest that entering wild places, respecting their power and the knowledge these places communicate to us, reconnects us to the practices of living that allow us to sustain relationships (Basso, 1996). Lessons learned in these wild places about sustaining relationships would not normally be confronted in a classroom because of the disconnecting nature of that setting. For purposes of this research, in partnership with my horse and accompanied by mentors, I chose to ride the 19th century Outlaw Trail that still exists between Saskatchewan and Alberta and extends into Mexico. I chose this site for two reasons. This country's remote and wild nature is similar in complexity to a high school classroom, and, because it is primarily a horse trail, it gives access to the ways of living that developed the practice of horse whispering. The trail also represents a system of resistance against the same corporate values that I find objectionable in the school system and, not surprisingly, is the place of origin of the mythical outlaw, one of the principle icons that venerates violence in this system. I was keen to explore a trail with a historical power struggle that is similar to that experienced by a horse whisperer working in the school system.

I needed the help of mentors to tap into Indigenous knowledge and certain ranching practices developed in the North American West. Traditionally the methods of horse whispering are passed on from one generation of practitioners to the next through direct teaching, indirect teaching, and student reflection on personal experiences. Methods taught through direct instruction are modelled by the teacher, then applied by the student apprentice under the mentorship of a master practitioner, and practiced to attain proficiency. Indirect teaching entails discussion between the mentor and the apprentice concerning insight gained from the apprentice's experiences. Mentors typically use narratives to assist the apprentice in gaining insight. Individual reflection is

undertaken when the apprentice strikes out on his own to practice his teaching skills. During my apprenticeships my mentors offered overwhelming evidence that this combination of approaches, because it has endured and been tested over time, is worthy of great respect (Brody, 1981; Parelli, 1997). Some of these extended apprenticeships with Indigenous elders and experienced horse whisperers took place over a period of several weeks, some over several months, and some over a number of years. On these journeys I came to understand that the knowledge I required to alleviate the sense of disconnection created by the dominance of corporate values in the school system was available to me from human and non-human systems that I was dependent on during my travels. My task in this research has been to articulate this knowledge and to show how it works, both with horses and with high school students.

I had to find a way to present in written form the results of research based on an oral and experiential tradition without compromising the nature of the teaching practice itself. The key problem was to distill and synthesize the methods of horse whispering savvy from the stories and reflections that carried the teachings about the practice. To address this issue my research is presented by weaving together stories of my direct learning experiences, stories of my indirect learning experiences, my reflections and explanations.

Dissertation Overview

I contend that if all teacher-student disconnection—whether with horses or students—shares a parallel cause, there is potential to apply a parallel solution. In this research I show the relevance of the methods used by horse whisperers for developing and tracking changes within their teacher-student relationships, and how this relevancy can be extended to a high school setting for the same purpose. I suggest that by developing this unique awareness, savvy, teachers can approach situations that could otherwise cause relationship breakdowns as opportunities to strengthen those relationships. Connection between the teacher and student is enhanced when the savvy practitioner reads the student's behavior language, uses that information to disrupt the source of fear, and creates what van Manen (1997) calls the teachable moment. The teachable moment is born out of curiosity and is analogous in horse whispering to the

instant when the fleeing horse stops moving and turns to see what scared him. A savvy teacher seizes the opportunity to disrupt fear by encouraging curiosity about its causes.

There were several specific stages to this research. First I brought forward my skills of horse whispering, learned through years of practice under the controlled conditions of the round pen, and articulated the concepts and principles of that practice. Then, to deepen my understanding of the practice, I travelled by horseback into wild areas of the West, particularly sections of the Outlaw Trail, where I apprenticed with various Indigenous and cowboy mentors. There, in addition to receiving direct instruction, I reflected on my experience. Through narrative writing, I recorded my experience and the insights gained from them, thus producing new knowledge about the practice and how it is taught. Then I tested my understanding back in the round pen and in the classroom. This dissertation is a distillation of the knowledge gained through that process. In taking up the practice of the principles of horse whispering in a high school classroom, this dissertation transposes an educational practice from the ecoharmonious setting of the round pen to the nonharmonious setting of the public school system.

The second chapter of this dissertation expands on the reasons behind the need to develop teacher savvy in the classroom. This chapter should be read as an investigation into the factors that create fear and disconnection in teacher-student relationships, including teacher apathy towards the problem and resistance to change. A more specific examination of events that have disconnected teachers and students in the British Columbia school system appears in Appendix 1.

Chapter three examines horse whispering theory and history, its terminology, and Indigenous methods of teaching. I include examples from my own experiences in the round pen.

Chapter four should be read as an examination of my application of savvy in a high school setting. I focus on the awareness that horse whisperers develop and that teachers can tap into to improve classroom relations with students, as well as specific techniques that can be utilized in the classroom to alleviate the feelings of disconnection and fear suffered particularly by adolescent boys. A case study demonstrates these techniques.

In the final chapter of this dissertation I provide a detailed analysis of a case study concerning a critical absence of teacher savvy. The case is the violence that occurred at Columbine High School in April, 1999. I address reasons students become violent, the signs of disconnection, and the problems inherent in the school system that prevent teachers from recognizing problems in relationships before it is too late.

Chapter One Endnotes

[i] The term savvy is an Anglicization of the Spanish verb *saber*, to know. When used by horsemen it carries a connotation of practical wisdom.

[ii] North America's corporations have three fundamental goals for their preoccupation with an investment in North America's schools. The first is to secure the ideological allegiance of young people to a free-market worldview on issues of the environment, corporate rights and the role of government. The second is to gain market access to the hearts and minds of young consumers and to lucrative contracts in the education industry. The third is to transform schools into training centres producing a workforce suited to the needs of trans-national corporations. (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 78)

[iii] The concepts of horse whispering developed through traditions that blend First Nations knowledge and vaquero/cowboy wisdom to form unique perceptions about relationship compared to corporate views of relationships (Dary, 1981; Iverson, 1994; Hunt, 1978; Dorrance, 1987). The most effective way to gain market entry is through policies that under fund schools. Such reductions create fears of declines in schooling quality, which corporations offer to alleviate in exchange for access to the school as a market (Barlow & Robertson, 1994).

Chapter Two

Disconnection in the School System and the Need for Teacher Savvy

Facing the Need to Change Practice

In researching the way of living that gave rise to horse whispering, I apprenticed under several Indigenous elders and long time ranchers. Part of my apprenticeship was participating in the sweat lodge, which is a place to cleanse, take in spiritual instruction, and receive elder advice. One of my mentors, a Navajo Elder called Hosteen, prior to my first sweat lodge ceremony, asked why I had come to participate. I was with my Navajo friend Steve.[i] Hosteen, Steve, and I sat on the desert sand, our bare skin touching the earth, as he waited for me to answer. I said I wanted to know more about horse whispering to help change the way I worked with horses. I told him this story about an accident that occurred just after I completed an equestrian science diploma at Meredith Manor College in Waverly, West Virginia, and began plying my trade as a horse trainer when I was not teaching school:

> On a warm spring day I was working with a young bay gelding that I had been training for about a month. Things were going well. We were beginning to develop a trusting relationship and he seemed very willing to accept everything that I introduced to him with only minor reactions of concern. As we worked I could hear the ravens, nested in the trees bordering my round pen, chattering and calling to each other. I did not think anything amiss in the fact that on this particular day the ravens flew above us more actively and spoke more loudly than usual. I was concentrating on the horse, and for the most part, the ravens' voices blended into the background. It did not occur to me that the adult birds were being more protective of their territory than usual because their young were learning to fly. Even though the young horse felt quite balanced and solid as I walked and trotted him, I sensed more tension in his back than usual. I ignored the colt's behavior and urged him on into a lope because I was under pressure from the owner to get his horse ready as quickly as possible. He pushed forward into the trot to the point where loping was more comfortable, and I could feel the rising surge of his body as he tentatively made the upward transition into the faster gait on the left lead. We made two clear circles in the round pen before a large raven rose up from the ground and landed on the round pen wall right in front of us. Its talons were wrapped around the edge of the top board of the enclosure, its wings were spread, and its mouth was open in a threatening posture. The horse spooked at the sight of the flared wings of the black apparition that so suddenly and so silently appeared in front of him. He bolted off balance from an easy lope into a

> run. In the process he caught his right front foot behind his left and put us into a cartwheel-like fall. The wreck, as riders call such events, seemed to happen in slow motion. I tried to free my right foot and kick out of the saddle but I was too slow. It felt as if I was headed over a waterfall as I watched the sand of the round pen floor come closer. I imagined the air rushing in my ears was being cupped in the wings of the raven as he rose up from the wall. I ended up with a concussion, badly bruised ribs, and temporary damage to the femoral nerve in my leg. During the time it took me to heal, I questioned where the science-based teaching process that I had learned at school and followed in the round pen had gone wrong.

When I finished my story Hosteen explained the round pen incident was my first lesson about Coyote the trickster. Coyote is one who always thinks about his belly. He doesn't pay attention and tries to take too much too soon. Hosteen said I was acting like Coyote by paying more attention to the owner's instructions than to the horse's behavior. The result was that I broke the young horse's trust in me. If I wanted to teach like a horse whisperer I would have to learn to teach in a way that maintains horse-teacher trust.

Looking back I realize I made two crucial errors in this teaching situation. I did not listen to the messages in the ravens' behavior and I did not make a connection between the tension I felt in the horse's back and the ravens' behavior. I should have paid more attention to what was going on around me, but instead I conceded to the owner's pressure to get his horse ready as quickly as possible. If I had tracked the changes developing in our relationship quickly enough, I could have pulled the horse up and prevented the fall before the colt disconnected from me and bolted. But I was startled rather than savvy and as a result my fear led to a violent accident instead of opening to a teachable moment.[ii]

Although at the time I wasn't quite sure what Hosteen meant about behaving like Coyote, the more I learned about horse whispering and reflected on my ways of teaching, the more I realized I had become overly focused on teaching to schedule, and somewhat disconnected from many of the relationships around me. When I explored further, I began to see my over-reliance on school processes and procedures as an extension of a school system that has become so standardized and rigid that it is making it difficult for teachers to develop and sustain classroom relationships with students. Teachers are being forced into inflexible teaching that cannot respond to individual needs because the school systems within which they work are in a state of continual upheaval. People in the school

systems are subject to tensions created by the constant power struggles between external political-economic forces, and by internal conflicts resulting from clashes between individual needs and standardized processes. As Scholfield (2001) contends, disconnection and fear can develop to critical levels in a school system that has become like an oversized factory: too large, too centralized and too complex.

Much of this upheaval is the result of the struggle between corporate systems—those embracing right wing political agendas struggling to maintain their economic domination by controlling schools, and left wing forces favoring the de-centralization of economic/political power (Barlow & Robertson 1994; Gurian 2001; Kilian 1985; Toffler, 1980). As opposing economic-political systems fight for power, teachers and students are continually confronted with increasing rigidity in the school system (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Hirsch, 1996; Kilian 1985). This rigidity takes the form of escalated standardization as a means of demonstrating political accountability through centralized control of curriculum and evaluation processes. Perpetuating the rigid status quo reduces teacher flexibility in meeting the needs of students. Corporate models of schooling with this goal in mind have proven detrimental to creating awareness about sustaining relationships with other living systems.[iii] [iv]

The Prevalence of Fear

The most dangerous result of tension in the school system is heightened fear, which so disconnects teachers and students that teachers cannot see when behavior changes in their students may indicate the possibility of violent actions.[v] In the emotional pain resulting from fear and disconnection many students, especially boys, respond with anger and violence. As Cajete (1994) explains, "The psychological result…of imposed isolation…is usually alienation, loss of community, and a deep sense of incompleteness" (p. 26).

Disrupting the pattern of fear is challenging because it is so widespread and prevalent in our society. For example, a comprehensive study of fear and violence undertaken in the United States by John Lott (2000) of Yale University's law school indicates the extent to which fear-violence is entrenched in American culture.[vi] His study of American gun culture concluded that the increased presence of more guns reduces

violence because they act as a deterrent against criminal behavior.[vii] This deterrent is an understanding between potential victim and potential victimizer as a possibility for reciprocal violent behavior. The fear of uncertainty exists for the criminal as well as the potential victim because the victim might be armed, and, in many cases is armed (Lott, 2000). Such deterrence, however, only works in a nation that has embraced both fear and violence as a normal daily expectation.[viii] With the expectation and fear of such conflict so widespread in American culture, it is not surprising that armed conflict among American high school students occurs (Linedecker, 1999; Murphy, 2001)[ix]

Fear is made pervasive by the continual representation of American life as located on some kind of frontier characterized by uncertainty and violence (Furniss, 1999; Slotkin, 1992). To live on a frontier is to be in a constant state of movement and uncertainty about what lies between the familiar and the unknown.[x] The desire to conquer frontiers to alleviate fear forms many values in mainstream American culture, such as the widespread acceptance of violence as a justifiable reaction, which creates a self perpetuating cycle (Bond, 1995; Lipset, 1996).[xi]

A society that perpetuates violence plays into the hands of corporate powers that use the fear that violence produces to expand capitalism and to open market opportunities. Products are developed to fill these markets that are maintained by the media through diverse methods ranging from advertising to news broadcasts. In the corporate worldview, violence is an essential part of the economic quest that requires, in terms of resources and markets, actions to keep what is already controlled and to obtain more needed resources. Co-operation between corporate forces and military forces also serve to deter encroachment from competing systems (Lott, 2000). A secondary function is to effectively divert our attention (Glassner, 1999) from situations that we should be very concerned about, namely the way North American male icons valorize violent behavior to enlist the loyalty of young males to produce and to consume products, as well as to extend corporate influence through the military. Young males are particularly motivated to perpetuate fear and violence because it centralizes power in them. Often this behavior is perceived as a characteristic of male gender rather than as a construct of a consumerist society.[xii] Schools produce potential "warriors," familiar with competitive

power hierarchies characteristically found in political, economic, and military systems structured for the benefit of economic growth. Since males dominate the corporate system it is easy to perceive that it represents what is characteristically male, rather than what is produced by a system that colonizes successive generations of young males for the purpose of economic expansion.

The Culpability of Corporate Systems

Teachers fall victim to corporate contrived fear, such as that produced by the Fraser Institute school ratings related to provincial exam scores. A belief promoted by such right wing interests is that nothing but rigid restrictive schooling based upon mastering a standardized set of facts adequately prepares young people for survival in a corporate world (Hirsch, 1996). Faced with the authoritative reports of think tanks such as the Fraser Institute, school systems fear to deviate from their customary rigid forms. Reinforcing this fear is the belief that a paucity of the correct facts, combined with reduced rigor in schools, is responsible for social injustice and poverty (Hirsch, 1996). Right wing forces do not accept that social injustice and poverty change the nature of which facts are most pertinent and meaningful to acquire. Nor do they pay attention to the forces that determine the relative importance of various types of information. A savvy teacher knows that the disparity between students able and those less able to cope with standardized indicators of achievement and processes of learning creates further disconnection and fear. For example, some students recognize centralization of choice and standardization in learning as familiar forces of assimilation.[xiii] Resisting such forces puts them in opposition with themselves in terms of success in the school system, as well as separating and alienating them from other students and their teachers.

In schools, fear is "nurtured by corporate interests making schools vulnerable to becoming the designated scapegoat for all our social ills"[xiv] (Barlow & Robertson 1994, p. 9). The public is informed that these so-called social ills can be corrected only by more corporate-styled intervention in the schools, which is carried out most efficiently by more standardized curriculum, quantitative methods of evaluating learning, and the implementation of more expensive technology. While on the one hand officials tout the value of individual learning processes and the value of flexibility in teaching methods, on

the other they create policies promoting rigidity. For example, students with a provincially designated learning disability receive an individual learning plan (IEP) but still must write provincial exams even if this is deemed disadvantageous in terms of their disability. The learning strategies for aiding the student in the individual plan are often in conflict with the strategies necessary for passing a standardized comprehensive exam. These exams count for 40 percent of a student's final grade in grade 12 and 20 percent of a student's final standing in grades 10 and 11. This clash of values creates a dichotomy that makes it often impossible to succeed at goal, flexibility, or standardization. The resulting failure is then cited as a rationalization for yet another spasmodic wave of restrictive reforms. These reforms are experienced as a myriad of conflicting policies, which entangle teachers and students in a web of irreconcilable contradiction.[xv] Disconnection in teacher-student relationships increases as individuals become aware they are not empowered to cope effectively with the rigidity of the school system. Eager to escape their lack of empowerment they become vulnerable to radical reformations. However, these faux changes spiral the system into further rigidity because they invariably have little impact on the causes of fear and disconnection.

Government is complicit in this fear-producing system. It too criticizes schools for low exam scores and urges more standardization and centralization. However, the hidden agenda behind government attacks on the school system is to promote frequent modifications in place of the complete and much more expensive reform that is required (Scholfield, 2001). Such attacks are also designed to get teachers focused on schooling students in corporate values and less inclined to educate students to question the conditions of their lives.[xvi] Only a small percentage of the public is aware of the impact of these assaults because only a small percentage seems to understand the difference between schooling and education (Gatto, 2003). Generally parents want their children to be schooled in the facts because that is what they experienced; that is what they understand and that is what they think that their children need as well.[xvii] Yet the difference between schooling and education is significant. Schooling replicates the status quo, which separates already disparate socio-economic classes further, while education

develops critical awareness that enables all students to make informed choices about their lives, thus tending to reduce class differences.

Fear experienced by teachers is further heightened when the various levels of centralized authority place the responsibility for creating solutions back onto teachers without providing adequate resources, such as marking time for increasing numbers of students, the availability of learning assistance teachers and ESL support. Teachers can be drawn into perpetuating disconnection, fear, and violence by a shortage of resources because they often become more restrictive as they are restricted. They resort to standardized rules that require layers of bureaucracy for enforcement, diverting scarce teacher time for this purpose.

At the same time that there are calls for increased standardized testing, critics also talk of the need for students to acquire cooperative work skills and creative problem-solving capability. These contradictory requirements generate more teacher distrust and fear. There is little incentive to think critically in a test-driven situation that does not extend learning beyond the reuse of regurgitated facts. There is no real push to develop critical thinking. In fact, textbook publishers who often create and market standardized tests based on their textbooks state that their materials are "teacher proof; just follow the text and scores will improve" (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 121). Teachers who see instruction as a form of mediation that uses innovative strategies determining inquiry-based questions feel out of place in a system that reduces teaching to sorting people by percentages and their futures by test scores. Without studying what the existence of standardized testing tells us about ourselves it "cannot inspire creative change because innovation becomes too risky and too dangerous a deviation from the curriculum as tested" (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 120). Most teachers do not have the savvy required to be aware of the powerful conservative corporate system at work in shaping the public's perception about the purpose and potential usefulness of public, schools, or the more specific student fears that need disruption.

Lack of an Available Means for Changing Practice

In a system in which impossible-to-implement school reform is thrust upon teachers in the interest of political mileage, it is not difficult to understand why teachers

resist change. It is not unusual for teachers to be asked to implement inexplicable policy changes that cannot possibly be carried out in the system as it is presently configured, and that are sometimes contradictory to other reforms being introduced at the same time. There is often resistance from teachers to find new solutions to the problems they face because they resent the downloading of more social responsibility without having the appropriate resources. They are becoming increasingly reluctant to support change of any kind, even though flexibility derived from change is fundamental to disrupting the disconnection generated by a rigid system.

Teachers are also continually frustrated by the apparent inability of policy makers to understand the complexities of the school system they are empowered to regulate (Barlow & Robertson, 1994). Many teachers feel that much of the problem with social responsibility in schools actually originates with government policies regarding class sizes and special needs programs for students with learning problems and behavior issues. They do not see the school environment as the right place to add more parenting responsibility, without more accountability on the part of parents. Some teachers feel inadequately trained in the skills they would need for such a role. Many teachers are just too busy schooling students in specialized subjects to be worried about students' educational or parenting needs as a whole. Some are reluctant to take on more responsibility because of predictable confrontations with centralized authoritarian approaches to school problems (Barlow & Robertson, 1994).

These fears aside, teachers cannot deny the reality that confronts them in the classroom every day. Sometimes students show up in class harboring incredible problems communicated through their behavior.[xviii] In such cases there are many issues to cope with, before, for example, strategies for dealing with multiple-choice questions become particularly relevant to such individuals. Often the only stability that students have in their lives comes from the fact that a teacher is in a predictable place every day, and a place with a number on the door that is consistently there. Sometimes the fact that a student comes to class is progress, and the only reason that she or he will do any work at all is that they find a connection to the teacher.[xix]

As the system continues to reduce opportunities to effectively individualize, it becomes harder for the teacher to be flexible enough to develop the trust that sustains teacher-student relationships. In theory, there is supposed to be room for professional judgment in choosing an approach to cope with the complexities of a classroom. However, new teachers find out quickly that the safest route for them to take in an era of increasing standardization is to let the curriculum guide answer the question of what is worth knowing (Hirsch, 1996). Curriculum materials are supposed to be approved, pre-packaged, and not very controversial. In a system that is always under close, politically-motivated scrutiny, teachers learn to anticipate what approaches and materials will cause a political backlash from parents, administration, and trustees, not to mention students. Teachers who do not anticipate sources of controversy, or build the support network they need before tackling something controversial, usually end up getting censured, and so begin to invoke self-censorship that flourishes under and plays into the fear dominating the school system today.[xx] The few teachers who develop critical awareness of this state of affairs sometimes dare to share with students why certain approaches or topics are controversial because they know such openness does much to alleviate teacher-student disconnection. They understand that the process of questioning unites teacher and student in a shared understanding of the problems in trying to become educated in a schooling system.

The problem with this type of overt resistance is that the teacher's motives can easily be construed as political rather than educational. Standardized processes like provincial exams have been represented as objective and quantitative measures much like those of business success that the public is familiar with. Ironically, it is the implementation of more standardization that is politically motivated: teachers fear that their abilities and worth will be measured against the outcomes of standardized tests—a powerful political tool. While standardized evaluations work for perpetuating the goals of schooling, they do little to enhance such educational values as curiosity, judgment, empathy, aesthetic appreciation, knowledge itself, place of nature, or respect for difference, which are all a necessary part of education.[xxi]

The Vulnerability of Young Males

Male students are perhaps the most vulnerable to the forces of corporate schooling. They are the most likely to experience a disconnected teacher-student relationship. Corporate schooling operates in opposition to their emotional needs; it serves to make them vulnerable to a marketed sense of belonging through owning various products (Moore, 2002). Corporate society also allows for the colonization of succeeding generations of boys to expand that economic system at the expense of other systems.

> The education industry in Canada is larger than the mining, forestry, food, beverage, rubber, plastics and clothing industries combined. It employs one in ten Canadians and will grow dramatically as communities see the presence of high-quality educational facilities as a powerful advantage for economic development. The commercialization of the classroom and the corporate intrusion into the education system are working very well. They are producing a generation of children who, as Ralph Nader describes them, are "growing up corporate." They are treated—and often see themselves—as consumers-in-training, pre-workers, future entrepreneurs. Such children ask few questions and do not challenge the culture of competitiveness. (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 85)

Conversations I have with boys, outside of class, who do not do well in school, reveal an undercurrent of distrust for the system, its processes, and its goals. These boys do not see any connection between their everyday experiences and classroom learning, and they have little faith that the answers to this disparity can be found in books or in classrooms.[xxii] Other boys state that their principal problem in school is "boredom…they say that they want to do something real…to reap economic benefits…or do something that has…purposeful meaning." Schools with their longterm, cell block style—emphasizing forced confinement of both students and teachers—make schools virtual factories of…resistance" (Gatto, 2003, p. 33-34).[xxiii] It is little wonder then that many boys have backed away from the challenges of school life and "retired to a leisured existence of watching televised sports and playing electronic games" (Clarke, 1997, p. 2).[xxiv] North American society has created a boy culture that, in many ways, encourages them not to cope with emotions like fear, which results in behavior that provides political ammunition against teachers and students. That fear opens vectors for marketing products from the right wing perspective, and it produces opportunities for political leverage from the left wing perspective, leaving boys caught somewhere in the

middle (Sommers, 2000). This situation also opens opportunities for supporting extreme ideologies that offer simple solutions to complex problems, and it is an incredibly powerful marketing ploy for supporting consumerism. As boys become increasingly unsure about their identities, purposes, and societal roles, they are more responsive to consumer-driven representations of them. They change their identities to meet each new products that can be purchased. In an effort to meet consumer-driven expectations of boys, and attain status among peers, they buy cars. They work long hours to pay for them, come to class exhausted, and end up eroding their chances of obtaining a post-secondary education. Very few students can study for provincial exams effectively and also work a 40–hour week. Lost in the symbolic demands of the system, these boys end up entering the economy in low-paying jobs. However, getting boys to even talk about their fears concerning identity, status, and success is difficult because they know that teachers often equate their resistance to studying to a sense of disloyalty. This, despite the fact that studying does not seem to lead many boys toward attaining their goals. The result is another layer of fear and emotional tension. At the same time many boys are ill equipped to handle intense emotions such as fear.

In our society males are acculturated to reject expanding their awareness for coping with fear through an increased use of their senses to read and understand emotions (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). Such development is deterred to the point that many young males are considered to be emotionally illiterate, and boys in mainstream culture are schooled into emotional isolation (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). This has resulted in a situation for young males in schools that some researchers have labeled a culture of cruelty (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000).

The Construction of American Masculinity and the Culture of Cruelty

In American schools masculinity is constructed around a set of values, a code of behavior called a culture of cruelty (Kindlon &Thompson, 2000). The culture of cruelty allows young males the options of solitude, silence, or anger/violence as the means by which they deal with emotional problems. This situation is not exceptional. Most young males in American society are systematically excluded from developing acceptable methods of expressing the emotional pain that results from chronic fear and constant

abuse (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). For a male within the culture of cruelty, disconnection and fear lead to a lack of empathy beyond his band of brothers. The results can be catastrophic. "The most terrible situations occur when empathy is systematically trained out of boys, when they are taught to see themselves repeatedly in situations in which they do not have to empathize" (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000, p. 213). Horse whispering taught me that many boys need education in the life skill of being empathic. Boys must be de-schooled from corporate values by being taught a sense of kinship with others. I learned about this missing link in the education of young males by working with boys and their horses. I maintain that such skills need to be a major component of a young male's education. Further, I contend that, by adhering to the rules of the culture of cruelty, the school system compromises boys' emotional health thereby leading to behavior problems.

Teachers need to be savvy enough to realize this culture of cruelty exists, and track changes in relationships when they occur, knowing that the best defense is strong sustainable teacher-student partnership. The problem is that teachers are part of the school system and for the most part they uphold the values of that system. Very little, if any, teacher training is devoted towards understanding boys' school life, or how boys are set up to approach their emotional problems. Thoughts concerning boys' feelings and related coping strategies are approached awkwardly because of emotional ignorance and isolation (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000).

Boys have two general patterns of response to emotional stress: they can fight, or they can run away. The bottom line, however, is that the only truly acceptable choice to avoid a loss of status is to fight.[xxv] This choice is inherently linked to the gunfighter image that has become an icon of American masculinity (Slotkin, 1992) and it promotes the concept of death before dishonour. This value is continuously perpetuated in the media where the icon's message is clear. Power can be acquired by standing one's ground to the point of martyrdom. Retreat is equated to cowardice and leads to disconnection and ostracization by peers. That the boys who committed the shootings at Columbine knew this is shown in their belief that movie directors would compete for the rights to tell their story.

Long established cultural icons from the mythical American West[xxvi] encourage young males to escape a sense of kinship and empathy towards other human and non-human beings.[xxvii] When marketing puts forward those icons as culturally available examples to follow, disconnection, fear, and violence are perpetuated. The icon of the brooding gunfighter allows boys to withdraw emotionally. When this happens, some become potential time bombs because of the culturally-recognized meaning in the symbol of an angry young man with a gun and cause to fight and die for. That cause can be as personal as attaining power, gaining self-esteem, or maintaining the respect of peers.

An example of the effect of this iconic image is the symbolism associated with the long trench coats Columbine shooters Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold wore to conceal their weapons before they opened fire.[xxviii] These dusters, or rain slickers, resemble a trench coat that was worn by soldiers during World War I (except for the shoulder cape) and have been popular among cowboys since the 1800s. They are still advertised in many equine magazines. Aside from their practical application as protection from bad weather for cowboys (Linedecker, 1999), the movie industry lends them a certain outlaw or rebel symbolism as part of the mythical West. For example, outlaws wore them in the Italian Westerns of Sergio Leone, such as *Once Upon a Time in the West.*[xxix] In more recent movies such as *The Matrix*, a favorite of Klebold and Harris, the long black coats are clearly associated with the acquisition and demonstration of lethal power.

> The Matrix is a virtual reality ode to killing, a hyper-violent video game brought to life on the silver screen…it is an example of how movie special effects can serve to create a "virtual reality" world of mayhem in which those who have difficulty discerning reality from fantasy can be irretrievably lost. (Murphy, 2001, p. 307)

What is more important than the so-called outlaw coats themselves, and the fact that they are a practical way to hide weapons, is what their symbolism tells us about a culture that has outlaw icons, especially the icon of the American gunfighter, as cultural heroes whose normal actions involve violence (Rosa, 1969; Slotkin, 1992). Such icons are so pervasive that they are not considered an anomaly and their range of extreme behavior is considered to be acceptable. The effect is a constant background of violence that seems normal and is only considered anomalous when its traumatic effect is

personally experienced. In fact, the gunfighter as cultural hero has become so much the norm that it is difficult to soften the eye enough to see this icon as an indication that something is amiss in American culture at large. This difficulty is clear from the focus on Klebold's and Harris' coats in the Columbine investigations. Before the shootings took place the coats were all considered to be within the usual variations of adolescent clothing styles and behavior, even though they had attached to them a certain violent symbolism. It was only after the shootings that some authorities focused on that symbolic meaning, but in the process they merely reinforced the existing symbolism. They failed to recognize that the coats are not warning signs of potential shooters in isolation from the individuals that choose to give significant meaning to them. By focusing on the coats investigators were focusing on the symptom rather than the problem. The problem was the school system itself and the way of living it perpetuates that produced shooters.

Teachers need to remember that the most powerful expression of anger is violence and in the culture of cruelty, anger and violent behavior are the acceptable expressions of emotional stress by boys (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000).[xxx] For example, more boys than girls tend to experience and create problems in elementary school. Boys as teenagers drink sooner and more heavily than girls. They drive drunk more frequently and their suicide rate is higher (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). "Nowhere is the difference between boys and girls more extreme than when it comes to physical violence against people and property. Nowhere is it clearer that the emotional education our culture gives boys is failing them"[xxxi] (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000, p. 222). I contend it is failing them because corporate-based consumer culture puts limits on their emotional literacy.

In contrast, males in certain Indigenous cultures have various sensory, perceptional, and emotional capabilities for coping with constant changes in relationships, and these capabilities are valued by their societies. They live from an organic rather than mechanistic viewpoint and these abilities have largely been lost and even denied to many males in modern societies. As a result, males often resort to methods encouraged by our culture, such as anger and violence, to cope with their fear and disconnection (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). Fight or flight still remain the most

culturally acceptable responses for young North American males and flight is a very distant second choice.

The Results of Lacking Emotional Education

Once the right set of circumstances is in place for a violent event to occur, all that is needed is the pathological trigger event to push the susceptible individual into a violent response. Experiencing the culture of cruelty teaches boys to expect hostility in their interactions with others. When boys display aggression, it is usually a response to a perceived threat or a reaction to a real threat. In American culture, security is the rationalization for aggressive action. "Violent boys are not testosterone laden beasts as some would suggest; they are vulnerable, psychologically cornered individuals who use aggression to protect themselves" (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000, p. 222). In fact, research suggests that testosterone is just as closely linked to withdrawal as it is to physical aggression[xxxii] (Gurian, 2001). In essence, boys are primed to see the world as a threatening frontier. When experiencing fear they are conditioned by cultural icons that encourage being "quick on the draw" to respond to threats with aggression.

Boys are caught in the trap of trying to meet the impossible requirements of the traditional masculine self image, and they react to any slight against their self esteem in the process (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). Boys on the defence are difficult to counsel because they will not acknowledge the source of their anger. From the boys' perspective, to be anything but capable in all circumstances is to fail. The resulting frustration denotes a certain inability to cope and the only truly acceptable face-saving response is seen to be aggression. As a result of their schooling, "boys are often unaware of the source or the intensity of their internalized anger. They are prone to engage in explosive outbursts or direct their violence toward a neutral target" (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000, p. 224).

Studies of aggressive behavior indicate that different brain structures are involved in different types of aggression (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). In predators, for example, the necessary aggression for killing food is processed along different pathways than is dominance behavior, such as mountain sheep rams butting heads. However, boys in American schools have trouble distinguishing between the emotional cues for different types of aggression. The most difficult distinction for them to make is between the need

for offensive versus defensive reactions (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). What we commonly see as physical aggression in schools is a reaction to an emotional injury that will escalate into further physical aggression. A boy will perceive a threat and react to it using aggression as a protective reaction to physical and/or emotional pain (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000).

The teacher has to be able to perceive what it is that the boy in question finds threatening, has to see things from the student's perspective to know what is seen as the threat. Boys still duel with each other and a central factor in the American corporate male identity is that one must defend continually against being "dissed" or put down. Boys who have endured teasing and abuse are always prepared for an attack of some kind. They are conditioned to see peer relationships as potential sources of emotional and/or physical attacks in the culture of cruelty for boys:

> The culture of cruelty and the emotional mis-education of boys teaches them to startle at shadows and see threats where none exist…this misreading of emotional cues makes boys more likely to miss or misunderstand the meaning of other's actions or words…when someone perceives the world to be this hostile, his resulting violent actions are a little more understandable. (Kindlon & Thompson 2000, p. 229)

Aggressive boys make less use of relevant information and they rely more on what they expect to happen than on what might actually be happening. They are not good trackers. For example, they don't see the subtleties in facial expressions, or detect slight changes in voice intonation. They are also more likely to see an ambiguous situation as a hostile one (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000, p. 229). When they are not sure about a particular situation, they will often assume the situation is hostile. Boys who display outward aggressions also typically fail to recognize any positive efforts that are made towards them (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). They generate more hostile reactions to these situations rather than engaging in emotionally competent responses, such as negotiation and compromise. A boy who perceives hostile intent accepts that hostility as usual and will give it back in greater volume to gain or maintain power. In the process he views all of those involved as disconnected from each other.

In the same way that angry boys have difficulty accurately reading other people's emotional messages through behavior language,[xxxiii] they also have difficulty reading their own emotions. "Boys who have been emotionally mis-educated can have an inner landscape that is as foreign to them as the dark side of the moon" (Kindlon & Thomson 2000, p. 233). They misunderstand their own feelings and the best they can do is look to a cause close at hand, which leads to transference of their anger onto someone else. When boys bundle together a collection of negative emotions, it can be quite dangerous because they will likely look for an outlet for that negative tension. If there is no release for that emotion it can lead to the type of explosion such as occurred with Klebold and Harris at Columbine.

In fact, high school boys are working against two problems when dealing with emotion. There is the struggle between the images of masculinity in American culture compared to their own self image, and their low threshold for emotional pain. Those boys who do not have well developed psychological resources for managing their feelings tend to be very vulnerable to emotional pain and do not cope well with stress. They do not cope well with anxiety and sadness, which are feelings that accompany most close human relationships at some point, and so they are guarded in their relational behavior (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). When they encounter emotional stress, it is often experienced as an acute sensation, like stubbing a toe, and they lash out in anger at the closest target. Boys do not distinguish well between causes and emotional cues, which they experience as hurt feelings and degradation.

We are all complicit in the exploitation of succeeding generations of boys by the way that we raise and school them. In terms of values, many boys are left with nothing else to believe in than the hierarchies of power inherent in the corporate system as it offers opportunities for them to attain power. Many of those who have disconnected from stereotyped identities without developing a new sense of identity cannot seem to accept relational responsibility. They are not sure to what and to whom they are expected to be responsible because such awareness has not been a part of their school experience. They certainly are not loyal to a school system that causes them to experience failure. Nor do they want to be part of a society that creates and markets an alternative culture that

celebrates pathological images of boys. Therefore, we should not be surprised if some act out in extreme ways. Boys are not rejecting the worst values of this society, nor are they developing new coping systems to move away from the disconnection in their lives. They are establishing for themselves a sense of belonging through mythical identities and their common experience of relationship disconnection. In the process, they are buying into the corporate system and its products, which promote violent stereotypes most pervasively through various forms of entertainment, but are eventually projected as military interventions and industrial expansion resulting in widespread environmental degradation as violence against other systems.

Conclusion

Teacher-student disconnection is exacerbated when teachers seek rigid, standardized solutions to school violence. When a problem is revealed by a tragic event, such as the shootings at Columbine High School in 1999, teachers look for rigid, standardized causes and solutions because that is the type of system within which they have been trained. The factors in the many school shootings I have researched are as varied as the number of incidents themselves, and the only significant common traits are that they occurred in North American schools, and that someone had the will to kill at a particular moment. From a horse whisperer's perspective, Columbine High School is a classic example of a school that is part of a system which embraces fear, disconnects relationships, and venerates violence. Clearly, the shootings occurred when they did because nobody was paying attention to how the relationships in that school were disintegrating. Still, teachers want a standardized list of characteristics, or some formula, that can be used to identify which students are likely to commit acts of violence. They have the perception that such violence is caused by some anomaly that has invaded an otherwise well functioning school system. It is difficult to convince teachers that the problem lies with the system of which they are a product, that the problem is the school system itself and the society that supports it. Any explanation that locates the sources of violence within the system goes against the grain of a teacher's experience. [xxxiv]

I contend that teachers need a broader understanding of how the school system impacts relationships between people and what forces are at work behind those impacts

in order to deal with the problem behind teacher-student fear and disconnection. Just as in this chapter's opening story, when I learned to listen to the messages in the ravens' behavior and to make a connection between the tension I felt in the horse's back and the ravens' behavior, teachers need to understand how their teaching affects their student-teacher relationships and how those relationships are affected by factors beyond their classroom doors. They need to know how to follow and derive meaning from changes in student relationships and how and why the school system disconnects relationships. Most importantly, they need an example of how to learn to be savvy in their teaching in order to survive in a system that is in constant turmoil. In the next chapter I explore just such an example in the practice of horse whispering and how its techniques and principles can be used to build teacher-student connections.

Chapter Two Endnotes

[i] Ceremony was a life-long introduction to sacred and environmental knowledge, graduated so individuals were presented new levels of knowledge when they were physically, psychologically, and socially ready to learn. (Cajete, 1994, p. 34)

[ii] In Mircea Eliade's (1964) work concerning shamanism and the role of the horse in shamamic healing, he states, concerning life's choices, that often,

> Cases of spontaneous vocation are manifested, if not by sickness, at least by an unusual accident…such as a fall…that seriously injures the future practitioner" (p. 45). "Sometimes the animal that wounds…the human…becomes the future…practitioner's…helping spirit. (p. 44)

Eliade notes that such accidents constitute an initiation in that they transform the individual to seek out the spiritual sacred aspect of a vocation or practice.

Our own specialized world focus is increasingly narrower so we lose a sense of panoramic awareness. Pathology develops when we feel isolated for extended periods of time.

> Our relationships are antagonistic, controlling or submissive. As we continue to move towards increased specialization and separation of disciplines, people are becoming increasingly disconnected to the broad connecting conceptions within disciplines, to the patterns that bridge disciplines, to the natural world and, to each other. (Bloom, 2002, p. 1)

> To address this American schools must move from specialized schooling to educating through holistic knowledge; from a focus on structures to understanding of processes, from objective science, to systemic science, and from building to networking. (Cajete, 1994, p. 27)

[iii] Education must find new ways of helping Americans learn and adapt in a multicultural, twenty-first century world. It must come to terms with the conditioning inherent in its educational systems that contribute to the loss of a shared integrative metaphor of Life. This loss, which may ultimately lead to

a social/cultural/ecological catastrophe, should be a key concern of every American. (Cajete, 1994, p. 25)

[iv] The idea that embracing a rigid worldview better prepares one to cope with many other worldviews does not seem realistic (Doll, 1993) and seems unlikely to reduce tension. When students and teachers fail to cope with this rigidity, governments use this failure to invoke even further restrictions. However, many high school students sense to varying degrees that there is a disparity between the schooling they receive and their perception as to what constitutes the education that they need (Illich, 1970). This is because our schooling is blatantly directed towards acquiring knowledge for some future that is pre-determined by others in order to perpetuate the corporate system.

[v] Education is an art of process, participation, and making connections. Learning is a growth and life process; and Life and Nature are always relationships in process. (Cajete, 1994, p. 24)

...in traditional First Nations education the processes are preparing, asking, seeking, making, understanding, sharing, and celebrating the special wisdom of American Indian Tribal education. Environmental relationship, myth, visionary traditions, traditional arts, Tribal community, and Nature centered spirituality have traditionally formed the foundations in American Indian life for discovering one's true face (character, potential, identity), one's heart (soul, creative self, true passion), and one's foundation (true work, vocation), all of which lead to the expression of a complete life. (Cajete, 1994, p. 23)

[vi] This study examined over 54,000 incidents across 3,000 counties over eighteen years (Lott, 2000).

[vii] American culture is a gun culture—not merely in the sense that 86 million people own a total of approximately 240 million guns, but in the broader sense that guns pervade our debates on crime and are constantly present in movies and the news. We are inundated by images through the television and the press...our kids are fascinated by computer war games and toy guns. (Lott, 2000, p. 1)

Over the last decade, gun ownership has been growing for virtually all demographic groups, though the fastest growing group of gun owners is Republican women, thirty to forty-four years of age, who live in rural areas. National crime rates have been falling at the same time as gun ownership has been rising. States experiencing the greatest reductions in crime are also the ones with the fastest growing percentages of gun ownership. (Lott, 2000, p. 19)

[viii] U.S. Department of Justice's National Crime Victimization Survey reports that each year while there are "only" 110,000 actually defensive uses of guns during assaults, robberies, and household burglaries...3.6 million gun owners state defence as the primary reason for ownership suggesting that defensive gun use is perceived to be an extremely common...potential occurrence. (Lott, 2000, p. 11)

[ix] When crime becomes more difficult, less crime is committed. Statistically...allowing citizens to carry concealed handguns reduces violent crimes, and the reductions coincide very closely with the number of concealed-handgun permits issued. Mass shootings in public places are reduced when law-abiding citizens are allowed to carry concealed handguns...and...the largest drops in violent crime from legalized concealed handguns occurred in the most urban counties with the greatest populations and the highest crime rates. (Lott, 2000, p. 19)

[x] Members of the dominant culture who define success in terms of personal wealth and possessions are usually unable to view positively the Native values of simplicity, generosity, and non-materialism. Yet, this value system has enabled an oppressed people to survive generations of great economic and personal hardships, and has made life more meaningful. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 59)

[xi] Shaping our perceptions so we believe that we are threatened comes from such suggestions as:

> The police cannot feasibly protect everybody all the time, and perhaps because of this, police officers are typically sympathetic to law-abiding citizens who own guns…it appears that those most supportive of restrictions…or gun control in the United States…also tend to be those least directly threatened by crime. (Lott, 2000, p. 13)

[xii] As yet, however, it seems that we have fallen behind in our efforts to teach boys that their lives will be enriched if they too expand their role descriptions" (Marshall, 2000, p. 130)….The belief in innate differences in parenting ability remains a formidable obstacle to encouraging boys to redefine their future role in family life. (Marshall, 2000, p. 131)

[xiii] The problems of America's schools are those of inequality, and the blame for real and imagined problems resulting from inequality is consistently dropped at the the feet of classroom teachers and school administrators. (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 56)

[xv] The corporate-based American economy has no real need for universally effective…education…for all. There is no economic need in a profit-driven system for equity claims on educational resources, or for open admission to college, or for reversing the shrinking number or minority teachers, or for empowering teachers and parents in local school governance councils or the many other progressive reform options available. (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 59)

[xvii] The goals of schooling and industry are compatible. Both want:

> Speeded-up production, work teams become highly competitive; demands peak performance at all times, management by stress, workers to produce above capacity; job "restructuring," which means job loss; deskilling, in which professional and skilled jobs are analyzed and broken down into minute tasks, the less skilled of which are given to less skilled workers, thereby reducing the number of skilled jobs; multi-skilling, whereby workers learn one another's tasks, which enables the company to reduce job classifications and lower wages; and the downloading of management tasks with no extra compensation. Schools are being pressured to train students into this corporate culture, by indoctrinating them in individual competitiveness and loyalty to company policy. Above all, high-tech corporate interest in education reform expects a school system that will utilize sophisticated performance measures and standards to sort students and to provide a reliable supply of such adaptable, flexible, loyal, mindful, expendable, "trainable" workers for the twenty-first century. This, at bottom, underlies the corporate drive to retool…away from any education…and retool human capital. (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 89)

[xviii] Fathers who were prone to exhibiting poor self control and whose behavior was aggressive and inconsiderate of others were likely to have sons who displayed comparable characteristics years later. Other studies tell us that when conflicts between parents lead to verbal or physical aggression, sons are far more likely than daughters to develop similar patterns of behavior. Finally, a combination of authoritarian, coercive child-rearing practices and lack of supervision outside the home places boys at particularly high risk for becoming involved in negative peer groups that condone and reinforce aggression. (Marshall, 2000, p. 130)

[xix] The primary means of influencing what schools do and whom they serve is related to controlling what is taught. Curriculum guidelines attempt to answer the difficult question "What is worth knowing?" This question is political because of the other questions that determine how it is answered. Who decides what is worth knowing? How? Why? (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 124)

[xx] Curriculum directly validates particular points of view and teaches assumptions about privilege and power through the topics it evades as well as those it addresses. (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 125)

[xxi] Standardized testing can measure only what students already know or can correctly guess; such test results measure only the frequency with which students give the same answer as other students to questions posed by someone else, questions for which the answer has already been pre-determined. Standardized tests measure more about what has been remembered about what has been taught rather than what has been learned over and above what has been taught…such assessment has its place, but few of us believe that education should be devoted exclusively to teaching other people's answers to standardized questions. (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 119)

[xxii] Boys need to see, "How things really are in the world around them…they need to see what that aggression…that many of them have built up…actually does in the world. (Gurian, 2001, p. 14)

[xxiii] The idea of taking time to just be with students I learned from working with horses (Ponyboy, 1998-1). Just being around the horses I was to work with just made them more relaxed in my presence.

> My own experience had revealed to me what many other teachers must learn…yet keep to themselves for fear of reprisal: if we wanted to we could easily and inexpensively jettison the old, stupid structures and help kids take an education rather than merely receive a schooling. (Gatto, 2003, p. 34)

[xxiv] Perhaps it is not "cool" for older boys to focus too much on school work; to do so would put them at risk of being labelled a "geek. (Marshall, 2000, p. 125)

[xxv] A great deal of violence happens among young persons who feel that their lives will end in a cul-de-sac. They may come from depressed communities and lack father figures or caring adults. Without human comforts and outlets for wholesome recreation, they may turn to drugs for excitement and seek status or security in guns and knives. They desperately want to count but take shortcuts to gaining respect. If you can't be recognized for doing good, maybe people will take notice of you if you are troublesome…we must surmount the "us and them" syndrome. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. x)

[xxvi] A prime example is the venerated icon of Billy the Kid who has come to represent the young man with a gun and a cause to die for in American culture is explored by Tatum (1982). He explains the process of creating the icon and imbedding it in the community consciousness.

[xxvii] The male brain secretes less serotonin than the female brain making males impulsive in general and boys fidgety in class…differences in vasopresin and oxytocin are also substantial…oxytocin is linked to the ability to make immediate empathic responses to others. (Gurian, 2001, p. 28)

> It would be interesting to note if this changes with shifts in one's living practices.

[xxviii] When courage has been denied, people lose that sense of harmony with self and others that Karl Menninger once called 'the vital balance.' (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 66)

[xxix] After Columbine, some investigators considered the coats to be a uniform for shooters. Students wore similar coats in the shootings at Moses Lake, Washington, and Thurston High School in Oregon as well (Linedecker, 1999). Prior to these shootings the coats raised little if any concern for anybody, yet their use both symbolically and practically goes back to icons derived from myths in the 19th century West related to outlaws.

[xxx] Fear and mistrust can be delivered by two distinctly different messengers, "the unfamiliar" and second "the familiar." Horses bring about fear in people generally because they are unfamiliar with them and have not taken the time to get to know that, although horses are large and fast, they normally have no

desire to hurt anything. Fear of parent, your spouse or your boss, on the other hand, might follow from the knowledge that they have a propensity to act violently. (Roberts, 2001, p. 87)

[xxxi] The goal of Native education was to develop cognitive, physical, social, and spiritual competence. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 49)

[xxxii] In terms of crowed classrooms and hallways it is worth knowing that,

> Some evolutionary biologists argue that the most important determinant of hormonal gender difference is population growth…the greater the population the greater the competition an therefore the greater the testosterone levels…as they are required to constantly compete for resources…given that testosterone levels are going up as is the population it is understandable that are brains and therefore our hormones anticipate the necessary increase in all the ways we can compete as individuals, communities and a species…it is important for educators who try to androgynize students to know this. (Gurian, 2001, p. 40)

> Surges of testosterone at puberty swell the amygdala…the part of the limbic system that generates feelings of fear and anger…which is more pronounced in boys…and explains the rise in aggressiveness seen in both sexes at adolescence, especially in males who become high risk. (Gurian, 2001, p. 41)

[xxxiii] Language as prayer and song has a life energy. (Cajete, 1994, p. 44)

[xxxiv] We have been taught, that is schooled, in this country to think of success as synonymous with, dependence upon schooling. Historically that isn't true in either an intellectual or financial sense. Plenty of people throughout the world today find a way to educate themselves without resorting to a system of compulsory secondary schools that all too often resemble prisons. (Gatto, 2003, p. 34)

Chapter Three
The Practice of Horse Whispering

This chapter contains material on the origins and nature of savvy, its methods of developing awareness, and its methods of mediating problems. The purpose of these methods is to develop and sustain a teacher-student partnership strong enough to subvert the effects of corporate schooling. Some of the lessons by which I learned savvy are contained in Appendix 2. The goal of the horse whisperer's way of teaching is to strengthen the horse-human relationship into a source of solutions to problems. The primary problem addressed by this practice is the disconnecting effect that the emotion fear has on relationships. Horse whisperers see fear occurring from a threatening event that produces certain physical changes, feelings, and impulses to action in an individual as a response. The specific responses of interest in this research are termed flight and fight, responses which can lead to relationship disconnection and violence.

Horse whispering entails a complex way of perceiving a situation and responding to what is perceived. Perception is honed through the practice of certain skills. Practice in this case means living through an alternative way of knowing, not just acquiring a set of skills that can be mastered without living in accord with the values of harmonious relationship articulated in my previous chapters. Practicing the skills of horse whispering hones sensitivity to surroundings and awareness of the degree of trust or fear that organizes relationships in a given setting. Because horse whispering is always situation-specific, each manifestation of it is unique. Consequently, descriptions of horse whispering require details of particular events. In this chapter I describe the skills required for being savvy that I developed as a horse whisperer, through my apprenticeship experiences with Indigenous elders and non-Indigenous mentors. I begin with the origins of horse whispering to give an idea of the alternative way of knowing in which these skills are embedded.

Origins of Horse Whispering Practice

Horse whispering is derived from Indigenous knowledge as well as from insights drawn from ranching in the North American West (Clark, 1966; Dorrance, 1987). The practice is called horse whispering because traditionally practitioners blow softly into a horse's nose and ears as a means of familiarizing the horse with the human scent (Richardson, 1998). Horse whisperers believe that breath represents the spirit in all living things, that it connects all living things in direct relationships, and that language is an expression of that spirit (Cajete, 1994). Exchanging breath with a horse connects the practitioner to the horse's spirit just as conversing with my students connects me with their hopes and fears. The close proximity of the practitioner to the horse when blowing gently into its nose and ears and the soft tone of voice used to reassure the horse led to the horse whispering title. However, this name is only symbolic and does not describe the entire practice. Blowing into the horse's nose and talking softly are just two of the techniques used to build a complex sense of awareness and understanding shared by the whisperer and the horse. The practice of horse whispering is composed of many ritual communication behaviors essential to sustaining the horse-human relationship. To be savvy about this relationship requires being attentive to the messages that indicate when there are threats to this relationship (Bateson & Bateson, 1987; Parelli, 1993; Roberts, 2001).

It is not surprising that horse whispering is rooted partly in Indigenous knowledge when one considers that the main focus of First Nation education is to sustain relationships and the primary classroom is the community (Cajete, 1994). Since the land is home to a community of relationships it serves as both the source of Indigenous knowledge and an indispensable classroom setting for teaching that knowledge. Learning focuses primarily on how to live in relationship and is based in personal experience of both learners and teachers. Perception, experience, and wisdom are passed along by tribal elders through apprenticeships and through ritual ceremonies that maintain the continuity of knowledge (Cajete, 1994; Witherspoon & Peterson, 1995).

The efficiency of this approach to learning is well documented. When the horse first came to First Nations people it took them less than twenty years to develop methods

for teaching essential information about horsemanship to the next generation (Farren, 2004). First Nations youngsters were guided in their skill development in very small groups or one-on-one with an accomplished mentor and always on the land, in the context of becoming savvy about relationships in everyday living. Sometimes they learned indirectly through stories told by mentors regarding their own experiences. Other times the learning took place as part of play or races and competitions.

Horse whisperers practice their teaching based on the belief that a web of interconnected relationships underlies all of life in a given setting. They believe that humans and animals have knowledge that can be communicated to other entities that are aware and know how to access this knowledge (Stevens & Stevens, 1988).

Qualities and Skills That Enable Awareness

A well functioning learning setting is an unfolding network of mutually beneficial reciprocal relationships. The ability to participate in and to monitor these relationships simultaneously requires that a horse whisperer have smoothness of mind, resilience and steadiness of mind, as well as an ability to see with "other eyes" (Basso, 1996; Bowering, 1994; Swift, 1985). Each of these abilities must be continually honed to remain effective in disrupting disconnection in teacher-student relationships.

In Apache tradition smoothness of mind is the primary mental condition required for acquiring and applying wisdom and it develops with the application and acquisition of savvy. Smooth minds are able to focus with what horse whisperers call their "other" eyes (Bowering, 1994). Through a hard eye he observes a present occurrence and with the soft eye he locates hidden possibilities for teaching when dysfunction can be replaced with curiosity about its causes as teachable moments (Basso, 1996; Swift, 1985; van Manen, 1997). When I sense something out of place in the rhythm of my surroundings I engage the narrower but sharper vision of my hard eye. I focus intently, concentrating on detail and taking in information accurately (Swift, 1985). To use my soft eye I relax my senses and extend them as I would my peripheral vision to scan the widest possible expanse. I try to be aware of everything rather than anything specific. I have the feeling of going within myself as my senses encompass everything that comes into proximity with me (Swift, 1985). Complementary use of soft and hard eyes is a "method of becoming

distinctly aware of what is going on around me" (Swift, 1985, p. 11). Some horse whisperers often practice riding their horses bareback and blindfolded to strengthen their ability to cope with external distractions and internally-derived fears which compromise their ability to see with a soft eye (Parelli, 1993). Seeing with a combination of hard and soft eyes, a practitioner locates a potential cause of a change in the relationship between himself and his horse. In this way I sense fear and disconnection as it develops. I am called to the moment, focusing upon the knowledge I need in order to deal within the present situation.

Teaching with a smooth mind allows a practitioner to sense potential problems as they emerge. The Apache people believe that mental smoothness comes from reducing the interference of distractions that interrupt calm and focused thought (Basso, 1996). Distractions arise from both external and internal sources. Resilience of mind strengthens a teacher's ability to ignore external distractions, while steadiness of mind helps eliminate internal distractions. A resilient mind resists pressure from outside forces like a tightly woven basket, strong but flexible (Basso, 1996). Resilient minds guard against fear that can disconnect relationships and interfere with solving problems (Basso, 1996). Steadiness, on the other hand, is like a post in the ground. "The post is stable, it does not wobble, and therefore it is reliable. But the post itself is not responsible for these desirable attributes. The post's steadiness is imparted by the hole in which it is lodged, and this is the notion of a supportive and accommodating space" (Basso, 1996, p. 132). In the round pen or the classroom a supportive space is a web of supportive relationships. To maintain this supportive space it is necessary to teach in a manner that creates trust in teacher-student relationships and to track with my soft eye possible disruptions to that relationship. This is teaching with savvy.

In Indigenous knowledge the consequence of teaching without savvy is often shown through stories about Coyote, the trickster. Such narratives compare a savvy character, whose mind is insightfully aware or smooth (Basso, 1996), with one or more characters whose minds are not, such as Coyote. Coyote fails to understand the true nature of his situation and acts impulsively, nearly to the point of disaster (Basso, 1996). Coyote narratives show that acting without savvy brings about conflict in relationships

(Basso, 1996). Smooth-minded individuals remain calm and unperturbed when faced with fear and disconnection because, as Basso (1996) points out, "They grasp the situation for what it really is, and avert misfortune by exercising the clear and wary vision that is the hallmark of wisdom" (p. 135).

Interpreting Behavior Language

I learned to pay more attention to what is going on in my teacher-student relationships by learning to decode the messages transmitted by my horse's behavior. I learned that much of my increased awareness about what is happening in my relationships "is tied to…his greater sense of what is out there behind the trees, in the rocks and beneath the land" (Budd, 1999, p. 171). His behavior language, termed *equus,* is comprised of actions and expressions that communicate the horse's emotional responses to relational interactions. Although equus is associated with the horse, it is founded on universal language,

> that is older by far and deeper than words…a language of bodies; of body on body, wind on snow, rain on trees, wave on stone. It is a language of dream, gesture, symbol, and memory. Most of us have forgotten this language…and for the most part…we do not even remember that it exists. (Jensen, 2000, p. 2)

Monty Roberts (2001) learned about behavior language by watching wild horses in the Nevada desert. He noticed that their communication is silent and comprised of gestures that all horses understand. For example, when one horse squarely faces another horse and looks directly into its eyes, that gesture means "back away." Changing body position to a 45–degree angle welcomes another horse back into the herd. Roberts noted that the language is action based and comprised of directional movements, variations in speed, and numerous gestures that communicate information (Roberts, 2001).[i] The multitude of motions and gestures that comprise an extensive equine vocabulary can be tracked for meaning about the state of a relationship (Roberts, 2001).

This type of communication is not limited just to horses. Take, for example, the two eagles that return to sit in an old tree near my round pen every summer. Flying low over the fields and looking for mice or rabbits that the horses' feet might startle into the open, they re-establish communication with our horses as they float above. Their

shadows represent a type of behavior language. My horse responds initially with a skyward glance because he is aware that, in wildness, danger can come from above or behind. He communicates that concern as increased tension in his body and I communicate reassurance with a stroke of my hand on his neck that disrupts his disconnection and fear.[ii] [iii] When my horse carries me on his back he shares knowledge with me that I use to enhance my awareness of the world around me.[iv] I sense messages from my horse's actions because riding is like a conversation between partners about how our relationship is being affected by the elements in the world around us. For example, I remember an incident where he warned me of potential danger on a portion of the Galloping Goose Trail. He suddenly became alert and tense and I noticed further on in some mud that there were fresh bear tracks crossing the trail. Such experiences taught me to pay attention to changes in behavior as actions that inform.

Savvy teachers understand that behavior is a variable and sophisticated language carrying meaning about the emotional state of an individual. I contend teachers have to learn how to listen to this type of behavior message in their classrooms in order to build and sustain positive teacher-student relationships. To speak this language requires us as teachers to open our senses to perceive what the behavior of those around us means in the present and could mean in the future, and perhaps detect relationship changes as they begin to occur. Armed with this type of understanding we can look for previously unseen or forgotten solutions to disconnection and fear (Jensen, 2000).[v]

Sensing Relationship Rhythms

Relationship has its own particular rhythm. The rhythms are the ebb and flow of changes in the degree of interconnectedness among participants in a relationship. These changes are caused by the impact of complex events and forces on our lives that in turn increase or reduce our fear. When I become aware of an impending disconnection I seek out the cause. When I locate it I can then act to avert or solve the problem and restore the harmony of interrelationship.

In the Navajo tradition sweat lodge ceremonies remind about and re-harmonize relationship rhythms. Direct instruction in necessary knowledge and indirect instruction gleaned by reflecting on experiences are all bound together by the rituals of a sweat lodge

ceremony. The sweat lodge connects direct and indirect teaching and adjusts the rhythm in relationships through ceremonies and teachings. Singers in the sweat lodge use a drum to mediate imbalances in the relationship rhythms of participants during a sweat. Just as a horse's hoof beat rhythm's change with its behavior, so can the rhythm of the drum change the emotional state of a participant (Eliade, 1964). In the darkness and heat of the sweat lodge the drum's rhythm has the effect of harmonizing the rhythm between individuals through its consistent repetition.

Sensing Impending Disconnections

The practice of sensing impending disconnections, as in paying attention moment by moment to the unfolding pattern of relationships, is essential both in avoiding disconnection in a relationship and in deciding which teaching techniques to apply in a given moment. As a case in point I recall one instance in particular when I learned the dangers of not paying attention. I was working with a young bay stallion for about a month and everything seemed to be going quite well. Then one day, when I turned my back on him to leave the arena, he knocked me down and got in some pretty good bites to my neck and head before the rider could pull him off of me. Upon reflection I realized he had been sending me anger messages through his behavior, but I was not paying attention. I was not seeing, with my soft eye, changes occurring around me that affected my relationship with the stallion. Through my soft eye I would have noticed that a gelding had been placed in a paddock between the stallion in the arena and the brood mares in the field. The gelding's posturing in front of the mares was enraging the stallion. The stallion was so mad he took his anger out on me because I was most available. I could have avoided the transference of anger and being attacked by being savvy about how a stallion thinks, and by paying attention to the subtle changes in his behavior which indicated a change in the setting.

Tracking Changes in Behavior

Horse whisperers track behavior to understand messages about the emotional state of individuals in a teacher-student relationship (Roberts, 2001). To track is to notice subtle changes in behavior and to read the meaning of that behavior for the information it

contains about an individual's emotional state. Tracking engages all of the complex cognitive and intuitive abilities of humans. It is both an ancient and a practical art and is a crucial process for seeking wisdom (Cajete, 1994).

Through both the direct and indirect teaching methods, I was taught to perceive a setting and its relationships from the perspective of the individual whose behavior I was tracking. In the round pen or out on the trail I had to change my perceptions to that of a horse in order to understand its emotional reaction to a given situation. I use the same techniques in the classroom, where I have to shift my perceptions to see and feel from my students' points of view. As I learned to track changes I also learned that I needed to adapt my teaching to different circumstances. I learned that the reason that a horse becomes a better partner is because I become a more adaptable mentor (Roberts, 2001). For example, when my horse spooks at something in the shadows, I stroke him on the neck rather than treat it as a discipline issue. He is less likely to jump at shadows and our mutual trust is then deepened. The horse whisperer's belief is that in teaching to sustain relationships, the practitioner must keep altering his approach as configurations of relationships change. When I run out of approaches, the challenge is to come up with something new. Tracking enables me to gain a sense of how my changes in approach affect my teacher-student relationships. My teaching effectiveness is dependent upon my ability to sustain my positive teacher-student relationships no matter what kinds of problems arise.[vi]

The horse whisperer's ability to track changes in relationships lies in knowing the behavior constants that characterize an individual and in the fact that the whole horse as an individual is reflected in its tracks and gestures (Bortoft, 1998). I have to be aware of the difference between how prey animals think and behave and how predators think and behave. For example, "Predators usually think in linear lines, while prey animals think laterally" (Parelli, 1993, p. 22) to evade pressure. When a linear thinker like a mountain lion goes to get a drink of water, he moves towards the pond without really any fear unless he encounters a more threatening predator. With that singular possibility in mind he continually scans his surroundings alternating between a soft and hard eye. However, when prey animals like horses go to drink, for example, they do so with caution and

trepidation, continually scanning with their senses for danger that for them can come from many sources. I have seen the thirstiest of wild horses hang back and wait for the lead mare to move towards the water gingerly a step or two at a time, while the stallion stays back on guard. While a predator for the most part makes decisions on immediate wants and needs, a prey animal has to make sense of all the data available to him before he will put himself in a vulnerable, trusting position like putting his head down into water. Prey animals, whether bird, mammal, reptile, amphibian, or insect, all hop or leap into motion, while predators walk into running. That behavior can be read from their tracks. Stalked prey may remain motionless right up to the predator's strike. Then they leap away or change direction from any heading that throws pursuers off their scents and thwarts the predator's more linear travel. Predators usually rely on stealth, steadiness, and tact to trick their prey into making a mistake. They travel nose to the ground and follow paths more suited to walking, stalking, and sprinting (Song, 2003). All of these behavior constants are present in the tracks left by a prey-predator encounter and can be read by a savvy tracker. In the classroom the tracks of students' past encounters are presented in the patterns of their behavior. Often this behavior reflects a sense of disconnection resulting from the fear generated by feeling like prey in any given learning situation. Fear-generated behaviors, such as withdrawal, resistance, and anger are becoming constants in North American schools.

Mediation Methods for Forming a Partnership: Seizing the Teachable Moment

A teachable moment occurs when curiosity can be stimulated about something that causes fear. When a savvy teacher can be an ally and mediate through the fear by offering a way to cope, a partnership can form. A state of partnership is achieved when a relationship is a source of solution to problems faced by the individual partners, as opposed to being a cause of problems. Mediation is important to a partnership because it allows the horse and the human to join together in selecting solutions to their problems. This commonality is expressed as a new herd of two or partnership. Using the behavior language of equus I begin to mediate solutions by offering options to the horse. The goal is to move forward so that the prey animal does not feel trapped. This is the same option I

offer my students. In the classroom I begin to develop students' confidence in me so that I can help them move forward to solve problems together.

Becoming the Anomaly Predator

In order to begin the join up process with a horse, which, as a prey animal, I present myself as an anomaly, a bi-pedal bifocal predator that speaks the behavior language of the horse and is therefore outside of the behavioral constants the horse uses to discern predator from prey (Bateson & Bateson, 1987). As a teaching persona the anomaly predator arouses a sense of curiosity even though the horse remains extremely wary until trust is warranted. The savvy horse whisperer knows the way to overcome a horse's concern about safety is to deal with its concerns over feeling secure and feeling threatened. He understands that every communication with a horse has an impact on its comfort in some way and that showing the way out of discomfort is critical to developing the horse-human partnership. An ear-shy horse, for example, one who won't let a human touch his ear, will happily rub it on another horse or on a fence. The ear is not the problem. Rather it is the human's past predatory behavior towards the ear that has produced the problem.

The origins of the anomaly predator in my practice are found in Navajo culture. As Navajos prepare to hunt they enter the sweat lodge and, through songs and prayers, shift to a level of consciousness that is referred to as pre-human flux.

> Pre-human flux…a term pertaining to a hunter ideology, refers to man's primeval kinship with all creatures of the living world and to the essential continuity among them all. In pre-human mythical times all living beings existed in a state of flux—that is their external forms were interchangeable. (Luckert, 1975, p. 133)

In this state of consciousness they take on the predator's perception as a hunter. For example, they sing wolf songs and chant the appropriate prayers. In effect, they reshape their perceptions in order to see the world as a hunter such as a wolf. This process functions to sharpen their sensory intuitive skills (Luckert, 1975). The Navajo believe that, in pre-human flux, the identities of animals are not set and can be changed, and that all animals can communicate with each other through behavior language. By

returning to this state of pre-human flux through the sweat lodge, they can see the world from another animal's viewpoint.

Making Connections Through Place

The roundness of the circle of the round pen tells a story for it is the shape of herdness. In the round pen behavior language is used to establish a herd of two and this place is where there is an exchange of understanding about a new horse-human relationship termed a partnership. Its shape is understood as a continuous commonality that binds us with a unity of meaning and completeness (Gadamer, 1996). To have understanding the partners need something in common to their particular situation (Gademer, 1996). Our shared isolation binds us together.

The Apache people choose place names to tell a story about a place. Speaking the place name becomes a teachable moment that can be engaged at will to study the connection between place, self, and our relationships (Basso, 1996). The names relate the meaning of the actions that took place there to continually remind people about relationships with their neighbours (Basso, 1996). Teaching from the character of a place in order to understand the self makes relational wisdom as close to the present as the telling of a story. In this way of teaching the lesson is constructed for the needs of the moment and brought forward in creative moments of imaginative thought (Basso, 1996).

Joining Up

When a horse whisperer enters into a relationship with a horse in such a way that the horse decides voluntarily to work with him or her, the result is called *join up* (Roberts, 1997). Achieving join up requires altering the normal rules of horse-human relationships. Normally, in the wild, humans and horses relate as predator and prey. Acting like a predator causes the horse to become afraid and to seek disconnection either through a flight or fight response. The horse whisperer disrupts such disconnection and fear by changing his/her predator-like behavior. The phenomenon of join up is based upon herdness or the web of interconnected mutually beneficial relationships among horses. Within such a support system fear can be replaced by curiosity and with curiosity

comes teachable moments. When we feel safe we can be curious, raise questions, and begin to inquire about the sources of our fear.

This concept of opportunities to learn about a dilemma through curiosity is common in Indigenous knowledge and forms the basis of some ritual practices. For example, in drought conditions, Shoshone Shamen in the dry Great Basin country of Nevada ritualistically depict mountain sheep as a symbol of rainfall (Roach, 1998). The idea is that the paintings entice the sheep, the bringers of rain, to come to the dry world out of curiosity about the paintings. In essence, the shamans are using curiosity to disrupt the sheep's fear about the dry world. The sheep try to join up with the paintings in the dry world to form a herd. The ability to entice a horse to join the herd is an important aspect of a horse whisperer's practice.

Once the horse has joined up with the human, it is important to teach in ways that will not betray the horse's trust. Part of being savvy involves creating a shared purpose, which is usually to solve a problem in ways that lead to success and disrupt fears. For example, in the round pen the horse whisperer and the horse work to solve their isolation by forming a new herd of two that is a more beneficial than being alone and vulnerable.

In forming a herd or partnership with horses, the horse whisperer must connect with the deepest awareness or spirit of the horse (Dorrance, 1999) and come to see the world from the horse's paradigm of perception. Tom Dorrance, a key mentor of present day horse whisperers, states, "An understanding of the spirit of the horse is a key to successfully working with them" (Dorrance, 1999). Chris Irwin (1998) agrees and believes that connecting the horse and human spirits begins by letting go of pre-judgments thereby creating an emotional link. By exhibiting certain behavior the practitioner indicates that he understands and respects the perceptions of the horse and the rules of herd behavior.

Direct Teaching

Teaching horses directly is to show them what to do without the use of force that creates fear, disconnection, and resistance. For example, teaching a horse how to remain tied can be fearful when they discover that flight, their primary means of defence, has been taken away. This can result in a violent reaction. By using a long rope through a

ring and patiently returning them to the position of standing close to the ring every time they step back, they feel no pressure to resist. Forced confinement on the other hand often leads to fear and violence.

Indirect Teaching

Indirect teaching is focused upon learning to make choices about actions that are in the best interest of the partnership. Initially these choices are from the horse's perspective as to what is the horse's best choice of action. This eventually must equate to taking the best course of action for the partnership. Practitioners often use the analogy of open and closed doors to explain how this shift is accomplished. We make actions beneficial to the partnership easy, like going through an open door, and make the less beneficial choices more difficult, like closing a door. As long as the practitioner maintains the trust of the horse that the partnership is more beneficial than being alone, the horse will try to make mutually beneficial choices. The most critical use of indirect teaching is the first time the practitioner sits on the horse's back.

Reflection

When a horse reflects and accepts a certain situation it finds itself in, it will often lower its head and licks its lips as it thinks about its next reaction (Parelli, 1993). When a horse exhibits this reflective behavior, the practitioner rewards it with a soft voice or a stroke of the hand to strengthen the partnership bond.

Advancing and Retreating to Build Partnership

In my horse whispering work I model a colt's probing behavior as a series of advances into the cause of fear and retreats when the pressure from the interaction becomes too strong (Parelli, 1993). Teachers can "speak" behavior language in a series of advance and retreat gestures to show empathy and pique students' curiosity to motivate them to take part in a learning situation. Based on the belief that both horses and students look to natural leaders to reduce their fears, I pursue a series of probing games designed to lead to a calmer, more confident and responsive learner.

The initial probing interaction with horses, called **The Friendly Game** (Parelli, 1993), is designed to show the horse that I will not act like a predator and can be trusted.

In the round pen I touch the horse gently everywhere on his body, noting areas where he is defensive. Advancing where he is comfortable and retreating where there is resistance, I gradually gain his confidence. I advance to swinging a rope over his back and all around him, and then touch him all over with a blanket and my coat to help him become braver and more confident. I rub with hand or brush rhythmically like a mare grooming a foal. I always wrap my arms around a horse's neck before saddling it for the first time. Then I place the saddle on in a circular motion. I have to do everything in a friendly way, like the way horses groom each other or stand and swish flies for each other (Rashid, 2005). Eventually, as the horse comes to trust me, I am able to gently throw a soft lead rope over its body like another horse's tail swishing.

In the next interaction with horses, called **The Porcupine Game** (Parelli, 1993), I teach horses that it is acceptable to react to pressure in their usual way by moving away from it. This prepares them for the proper response to rein, bit, or leg aids. I apply steadily increasing pressure to various parts of the horse's body with my fingertips until the horse responds by moving away, at which point I instantly release the pressure.

I use the **Driving Game** to help the horse move out of the security of the herd (Parelli, 1993). Through equus, I communicate the need for my horse to turn away from me and continually refine the communication until he does so with merely a look or a gesture.

When I put these first two games together, I then have **The Yo-Yo Game** (Parelli, 1993), which teaches my horse how to come into the herd and also leave the herd with confidence. In the round pen I wiggle the lead rope as a cue to move back, and to invite the horse back into the herd, I turn sideways with a downward glance.

The Circling Game (Parelli, 1993) is played in the round pen where the practitioner sends the horse out on a circle travelling forward. The horse is sent out by a circling motion of the rope that duplicates the action of another horse's tail, indicating the desire for some greater space between individuals. This game teaches horses to feel confident about moving away from close proximity to the partner while still enjoying the security of the partnership. They learn independence with security, for they are always

coming back to a point on the circle, when they can rejoin the herd of two in the centre of the circle.

The Sideways Game (Parelli, 1993) is used to move horses away from pressure by wiggling a rope while the practitioner and horse are facing each other. This teaches them that giving to pressure does not reduce their security in the herd and is used in conjunction with the circling game

One of the most important games for building confidence in the partnership is the **Squeeze Game** (Parelli, 1993) because it teaches students to trust the partnership when under pressure. The goal of the Squeeze Game is to help a horse overcome his natural claustrophobic tendencies and to encourage him to become more confident in the face of fearful situations, especially when he is disconnected from the herd. This is accomplished by helping him through continually narrower spaces until he becomes confident that he will be able to get out of trouble. Eventually he has enough confidence and trust in himself and practitioner to navigate difficult circumstances on his own.

In playing the games teachers have to be careful about what they communicate so that the intended meaning of their messages is clear. Even then recipients might reject what is said and/or separate it from the meaning that is intended. If a teacher acts like a predator, even though it is not his intent, that is how his behavior language will be interpreted. When the honesty of a message is suspect, students learn to evade the sender by running away, by disconnecting from the teacher-student relationship. The ability to disconnect is part of a prey animals' opposition reflex. When prey animals are threatened they start to move their feet towards safety. This reflex in the face of opposition is part of their complex adaptive systems (Parelli, 1999).

Harmonizing the Partnership

A partnership is harmonious (Parelli, 1993) when it reaches a state of dynamic balance in facing challenges that must be mediated between the partners. At this stage the partnership remains mutually beneficial no matter the situation. Partnerships are harmonized (Parelli, 1993) through interactions that deepen the reciprocal benefits of the partnership through a deep sense of trust. A partnership is said to be in harmony (Parelli,

1993) when it functions in dynamic balance in coping with emerging challenges via solutions mediated by the partners.

In the Apache view the partners at this stage are like two posts supported by the fence rails of their savvy. Harmonizing relationships with horses is often developed simply by spending time together, sharing space while they eat and eating with them as informal behavior language conversations, by giving formal behavior messages such as scratching their withers, and through informal interactions, such as play (Parelli, 1993; Ponyboy, 1998-1).

Refining the Partnership

The harmonious partnership is refined (Parelli, 1993) as the behaviors of the partners become a mutually understood language regarding their emotional response to the challenges they face. A refined harmonious horse-human partnership is considered a whole system whose unity cannot be reduced without it ceasing to function as a mutually beneficial human partnership (Laszlo, 1996; Parelli 1993).

When the harmonious partnership is refined (Parelli, 1993) the actions and behaviors of the partners becomes a mutually understood language that is consistently understandable through all situations faced by the partners, like a constant conversation. Through this language the partners are able to communicate information about their emotions and so feelings of disconnection can be mediated as they emerge.

Camouflaging the Intention to Educate

Occasionally there are situations where the horse-human relationship has disconnected to such a degree that owners believe that force is the only way to correct what they perceive as negative behavior. In that situation a practitioner often has to educate the owner as to how to form a partnership without directly explaining that necessity first. An explanation is given only after the desired results are attained and the owner becomes curious, opening a teachable moment. Such a situation is discussed in the following case study.

Case Study—Forming a Horse-Human Partnership

In this section I describe a particular experience to show how the skills and awareness of horse whispering are engaged to form a horse-human partnership.

As the truck drove through the gate the owner maneuvered to unload her horse into my round pen, I could hear the mare kicking at the trailer wall. I could see the frustration rising in the mare owner's expression as she struggled to turn the steering wheel with a broken left arm. I could tell without asking that the owner had already decided that the fault in this relationship originated with the horse. I knew I would have to intervene early between the mare and owner to try and create some space to begin mediation and figure out why their relationship had steadily deteriorated. The owner first called me to say, "She bucked me off…lucky to get out with just a broken arm…no reason for her to act up." Clearly the horse-human relationship had deteriorated into disconnection and fear. This was not an unfamiliar situation as I have had to mediate between horses and their owners in similar circumstances many times.

With the trailer in place and the doors open I stepped slowly into the trailer where the black mare was standing tight against the wall farthest from the doors. I had to pay close attention to the messages I gave through my behavior at that point. I knew that I was telling the mare a story about my intentions through my body language. She sniffed me cautiously and I gently approached at an angle rather than a straight line, trying not to startle her and at the same time trying to avoid appearing like a stalking predator. Her nostrils pulsed as she detected my scent and tried to figure out my intentions. She was alert, ready to pull away at the slightest hint of danger. I could feel the tension like a vibration through the lead line when I clipped it onto the halter. When I gently ran my fingers over her sweat-streaked withers, she shivered, her head came up and her neck tensed while her nostrils were still pulsing. These are all signs that told me she was fearful and disconnected from people. By touching the withers I spoke to her in herd language, the language of equus. It was a good place to begin communication because that is where horses groom each other and build their herd bonds in a display of reciprocated grooming. That is behavior communicating a message that the mare understood. If this were a student, I would start the communication with a conversation

about something with which the student was familiar because I know he is more comfortable starting with his own knowledge. Perhaps a T-shirt with the name of his favorite band, or a book being read, will give me an opening to begin communication. I also have to be prepared for the fact that things may not go smoothly at first. For example, that mare remained aloof and wary in the same way that a disconnected student will share only a limited amount of trust. To bridge her suspicions with trust the teacher has to be able to track the signs indicating the state of the relationship to know when to advance and when to retreat. I had to keep my mind smooth in order to sense problems as they emerged and to reduce external and internal distractions that exacerbate fear and disconnection.

I moved my hand from the mare's withers up her neck to her ears, telling the story of my desire to form a partnership herd of two individuals. In response she threw back her head. Sensing there was something significant behind that behavior, I retreated and reminded myself to track through that behavior later. When I stepped towards the doors she sensed there was no pressure on the lead line and cautiously followed. For a second she froze at the end of the trailer, hesitated at stepping down to the ground, and then leapt into the walled round pen. She bolted 15 feet to the end of the lead line before the wall turned her. I had to pay close attention to the fact that she was in a panic, signified by her tail flagging in the air and her head held high. She called to other horses who might hear her. All of our mares responded to the new horse's calls of alarm. They came rushing up to the walls of the round pen. There was lots of squealing and snorting over the wall as she looked for the security of the herd, and the herd recognized the new mare as a stranger disrupting the established herd dynamics. The mare wanted acceptance into the herd for security and the herd members were expressing their position in the dominant order that was being affected by the new arrival.

I heard the owner yell out to me, over the round pen wall, "She just needs some discipline!" Clearly the owner wanted the mare schooled.

With a corporate view of relations based on centralized power and submissiveness on the part of the horse, the owner was not interested in a partnership. The mare had rejected the submissive role assigned to her because it made her vulnerable. She

expressed her fear through violent behavior. What the owner really wanted schooled into the mare was submission and that was the process she described as discipline. As I mediated a partnership with the horse I had to camouflage my intention to educate the owner.

The white of the mare's left eye was showing and she seemed ready to explode. The heavy wooden door to the pen thumped closed unexpectedly as the owner let go of it too quickly. The mare kicked the wall, startled by the sound, and dust rose in wisps from between the boards of the pen. I reminded myself that I was on my own here, to mediate solutions, and that I had to be self-sufficient in finding those solutions. As the horse whisperer, or teacher, it was important for me to realize that from her perspective the mare was in serious trouble. I interpreted her misbehavior as an expression of fear and disconnection. She was in a round enclosure with what looked like a two-legged predator and so she went directly to her flight reaction, bolting around the enclosure, seeking an escape. That mare wanted to run away from the pressure she felt from the close proximity of an unfamiliar human in a place that appeared to be a trap.

Sometimes students feel the same way about a classroom and they too will show signs of bolting and disconnection. Horse whisperer and accomplished aikidoist Mark Rashid (2005) explains that the round pen is the place where he attempts to enter into and blend with the horse's energy to redirect it to the most peaceful solution possible. The ultimate goal is to bring even the most dangerous situation to a harmonious conclusion by staying centred, entering in and blending with the energy of the horse, in a circular motion within the round pen. To do this I must keep my mind resilient against external distractions that threaten to rise in me. The shape and structure of the round pen is the first lesson requiring the horse to seek out another solution besides flight or fight.

A rope and halter connected me to the mare and I allowed her as much length as possible so that she could view her surroundings and me from a distance. I retreated a little by taking a step or two back towards the centre of the pen. When I sensed that some of her adrenalin had worn off, I asked her to give in to my pressure and to come a step towards me. At first she resisted. She jumped past me and bobbed her head as I released the lead line from her halter. My soft eye told me to be wary of her back feet. It was

critical to be savvy about behavior language at that point because her disconnection and fear could lead to violence. I read a message in her behavior language, focused with a hard eye on her back feet and stepped back as she kicked out. I had to be steady minded and force down any internal distractions that caused fear to rise in me. Immediately the mare bolted to the outside of the circle again, running around the wall that contained her. The horse's head and tail were raised and the message in her behavior language told me she was looking for an opening to escape through. However, in a little while she tired of the singular fight and became curious about my unpredictable behavior. I appeared as the anomaly because the expected attack from the predator had not happened; I was still patiently waiting in the middle of the round pen. Her curiosity provided a teachable moment in which I could advance my interaction with games. My pattern of interaction continued to be 'advance and retreat' as I alternated between the circling game and the driving game. I continued to wait patiently and create curiosity in the horse by means of my anomalous behavior.

Like most horses and many students, the mare was viewing her situation from the survival level of perception. I had to communicate to her, with non-aggressive behavior language, that this was a safe place and that our relationship could become the security she sought in a herd of two individuals. At the same time I had to continually track for messages concerning her awareness and understanding, to help her move away from the perception that I was a threat to her comfort and survival. Whether this took 10 minutes or 2 hours, I had to be patient and read the signs she gave me as clues to how she perceived our situation. Advancing too fast with a mediation technique could re-ignite fear and her desire to seek disconnection. I had to continually pay attention to her behavior language to determine if we were moving into disconnection or becoming more interconnected. Being patient was critical at this stage, to allow curiosity to develop. Before we could trust each other the mare had to know that I was willing and able to communicate in a language that she could understand, and I had to demonstrate that understanding by not acting predatorily. I had to work from within the mare's perception and become an asset to her learning. Part of building good faith is being aware of everything impacting on the horse's behavior.

I was aware that there were different and conflicting opinions to explain the mare's past misbehavior. I saw the problem as miscommunication and misperception, while the owner saw it as a lack of discipline. As I tracked the mare's behavior I sensed some incongruities with my soft eye. Focusing with my hard eye I realized that I had not been told the full story of what had happened to her in the past. The owner claimed she did not know why the mare bucked. The mare was reportedly fine at the auction where she was purchased. The seller even saddled her up and rode her around in the ring to show that she had been well started. The question the owner wanted answered was, why had the mare's behavior changed? The question I wanted answered had to do with the message behind that change, which is often the same question I have to get parents to ask their adolescents.

I continued to keep my mind steady so that, like a post in the ground, I did not retreat or advance but offered a supportive space in the round pen. Here I was using the round pen place as a way to tell a story about my intentions. By now the mare had discovered that running around me was no solution to her perceived dilemma and so she stopped, turned towards me and licked her lips signifying a change in the rhythm of our relationship. This was a positive change from her previous actions that told me she was curious and open to a teachable moment. Her ear movements and alertness were messages that she was willing to consider me as a way out of her lack of security. She was considering a coalition as a first step towards join up. As an act of good faith I retreated again by backing away to further track her behavior and observe her outward appearance.

When I became savvy in my teaching, I not only developed an awareness of what to look for, but also an awareness that I need to look and to pay attention to the meaning behind what I see as tracks. It is necessary to know the meaning of the tracks you see, but if you don't know that there are tracks to look for, you probably won't see them or recognize them as messages. I tracked further and perceived a few things that did not fit with a "well-started" horse. There was the kind of rub mark on her poll and jaw that occurs when a horse pulls against a rope while wearing a nylon halter. The halter leaves a burn mark and rubs off the hair where it chafes under pressure. This made her

hypersensitive around her ears and therefore difficult to halter. She was particularly afraid of my lead rope, especially when I swung it towards her right shoulder to keep her moving without jumping over the wall. A long thin patch of hair was worn off along her right shoulder, which looked like a rope burn. A fresh brand on her left hip was somewhat blurred and appeared to have been done in a hurry with too hot an iron. Her untrimmed feet indicated she had probably not had much handling. Bare patches where the cinch rested told me the cinch must have been so tight that the mare fought the pressure. I also noticed that this little mare had the rough broken coat of a horse that had wintered outdoors a great deal and lives mostly on grass all year round rather than good quality hay. From this tracking I came to the following conclusions:

> The mare saw humans as threatening predators because she had been rough-broke for a quick sale.
>
> She was probably halter broken by being tied to a post until she quit fighting.
>
> She likely had a rope burn on her shoulder and was jumpy around a rope because she fought the rope that was swung across her back to catch her at pasture.
>
> She was probably snubbed up to a post for saddling all day until she quit bucking and most likely fought back when the cinch tightened.
>
> By the time the auction was held the mare was just worn down and too tired to fight anymore.
>
> When the owner swung a leg over the mare's right shoulder to get on her bareback, the horse remembered being roped on that side, as well as everything else that had happened, and now had the energy to do something about it.
>
> The mare had limited trust of humans and there had been too rapid an advance into attempting to start a relationship with the new owner resulted in disconnection and fear that led to violence. The result was a broken arm for the owner.

The mare had been treated as a commodity. She had been schooled in preparation to be marketed in the most expedient manner possible.

It took a month of mediation with the mare before she trusted me enough to allow me to saddle her and get on her back. Several months more were needed to develop the beginnings of a partnership. Over the next year the owner and I worked to begin

harmonizing and refining the partnership. Today the mare and owner have a strong partnership.

Chapter Three Endnotes

[i] Pinker (1994) and many other experts believe the evidence overwhelmingly supports the idea that the capacity for language and its basic structure are bred in the bone. The gift of language, and some of the elemental tools for its deployment, is in the tapestry of neural connections in our brains. (Yoerg, 2001, p. 32)

[ii] When we see a chimpanzee thoughtfully studying his own face in a mirror, what questions should we be asking in order to learn what his behavior says about his mind? About the differences, and similarities, between his mind and our own? And when we see the nutcracker retrieving long-buried seeds, how do we ask questions of her that are open-minded, that don't rely entirely on how far away her branch of the evolutionary tree is from ours? (Yoerg, 2001, p. 8)

[iii] Persons in distress are reminded of what they already know but may sometimes forget—that ancestral knowledge is a powerful ally in times of adversity, can produce expanded awareness, feelings of relief, and a fortified ability to cope. To help someone cope with their living is regarded a compassionate gesture by Apache people. (Basso, 1996)

[iv] Languages consist of shared economies of grammatical resources with which language users act to get things done. Language, acquires meaning and force from the socio-cultural contexts in which they are embedded, and therefore, as every linguist knows, the discourse of any speech community exhibits a fundamental character—genius, a spirit, an underlying personality—that is very much its own. (Basso, 1996, p. 104)

[v] There is real benefit in thinking clearly about the intelligence of animals. Just as we value intelligence in one another, we also value it in other animals. And because we strive to protect the things we value. One reason we are usually nicer to smarter animals is because we believe that species with more brainpower are more sensitive to their environment, and so are more vulnerable to pain, including emotional pain such as loneliness. What do we really know about the relationship between intelligence, awareness, and emotion in animals? The short answer is, not much. (Yoerg, 2001, p. 15)

[vi] "Educators have long been intrigued by principles borrowed from business and industry. In the late nineteenth century, schools began a major transformation by copying the emerging concepts of Taylor's theory of scientific management. This meant titling the headmaster as "superintendent" just as in a factory and establishing hierarchical, military-like systems of command and control. Labor (viz. teaching) was specialized in the belief that repetitive tasks could be performed more efficiently, and teachers could be interchanged like replaceable parts. The size of schools inexorably expanded in the quest for "economy of scale." The world of teaching thus follows the law which prevails in all well-regulated industries.". (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 41)

Chapter Four
Being Savvy in a High School Classroom

This chapter describes ways of being savvy in a high school setting. It begins with the challenges to this goal presented by the structure of the school system and the structure of the human (especially male) brain. It then describes the skills of horse whispering as they might be used in a high school classroom to create and sustain partnerships between teachers and students.

Problems Presented by the Structure of the High School Setting

The goal of the horse whisperer's way of teaching in a high school setting is to build a partnership between students and teachers based upon mutual trust, on the basis of which they can mediate solutions to the problems presented to them by the nature of the school system.

The problems begin with the construction of adolescence as a lack of something because it is neither childhood nor adulthood. Adolescence is easiest to define as a stage of transition without its own intrinsic identity markers. This condition does not occur by accident. This situation is created and perpetuated by forces promoting consumerism that play upon the need to belong and upon fears concerning personal limitations that are very strong in young people. Products such as clothing, cars, and music offer temporary identities and a transitory sense of belonging. Products and the constructed identities they represent are continually changed however to increase sales to a group that has disposable income from part time jobs. This process of providing an identity then replacing it often disconnects young people from other age groups, bonding them to each other by necessity and making them particularly susceptible to product marketing.

The classroom/school structure is also characteristically authoritarian. It attempts to control undirected adolescent energy by suppressing or directing it toward adult oriented goals and operates by wielding the threat of failure against students. This alienates some students from the school system in general and from teachers specifically as they are the school system's front line representatives. That means that teachers are often perceived by students as part of the problem rather than a source of solutions.

Gurian (2001) claims that schools are places where all groups are taught to fear isolation and are pitted against each other in competition.[i]

The practice of horse whispering savvy in the classroom addresses these problems by creating relational trust. Horse whispering savvy works within the knowledge that students have an unsatisfied need to belong and to feel a sense of respect and connection within a community. Its aim is to create teacher-student partnerships to solve problems presented by the structure of the high school setting.

How Emotion and Brain Differences Affect Student Behavior

Putting partnerships at further risk is a lack of understanding as to how emotions and brain differences affect behavior in a high school classroom, even though there is a great deal of research that points to the need for greater sensitivity to and empathy for students' emotion-based behavior (Gurian, 2001). The combination of suppressed emotive capabilities on the part of boys, for example (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000), and lack of awareness on the part of teachers concerning this situation puts boys at further risk of missing learning opportunities (Gurian, 2001). Males generally are not as emotionally resilient as females and their fragility comes from having fewer brain functions available to process emotions. However, girls have their own fragility, derived from having many emotive functions to cope with at the same time (Gurian, 2001). According to Gurian, when females experience emotional stress, such as fear, brain activity may move quickly to the top of the female brain into the four lobes for processing as reasoning or verbalizing. A boy's brain has a tendency to move the information to the bottom of the limbic system, which invokes a fight or flight response acted out as aggression or withdrawal. A male's aggression and withdrawal blocks reasoning capabilities. There is less neural firing in response to crisis in the top of the brain where learning is occurring and there is more activity in the lower brain[ii] (Gurian, 2001). It is essential for teachers to be savvy about these differences and to track the emotional message in behavior language to determine if a student is moving the emotive information downward to a degree that they may become violent. To do so, I look for behavior that indicates changes, particularly if students are becoming withdrawn and disconnected (Gurian, 2001). I attempt to intervene verbally to help them move the

information up into the top of the brain system and re-establish a positive teacher-student relationship.

Many researchers conclude that cultural factors account for only some of the gap in school achievement between boys and girls. They claim most of the disparity is created by differences in brain development, which show up in behavior (Gurian, 2001). Males tend to cope with situations in a linear way that focuses on getting to the heart of a problem. The male brain is not activated as quickly as the female brain and it becomes overloaded with massive amounts of stimulation more easily. To cope with this situation males prioritize reactions and approach problems in a linear fashion, focusing primarily through their hard eye. As a result boys miss the kind of information detectable through a soft eye, and so they often make decisions with incomplete information. It is important that teachers know this in order to interpret the behavior of boys accurately.

Brain differences require a teacher to use at least two very different approaches for some concepts, sometimes simultaneously. The brain-based researchers explain that some brains have exceptional strengths related to memory and sensory intake. I might accommodate these different learning patterns by starting a Great Depression unit, both with stories about people struggling with the conditions, and with an abstract model showing economic factors. Two different approaches achieve the same purpose: namely, to teach students about the impact of the Great Depression on the people who lived through that event. In building and maintaining teacher-student partnerships in the classroom, I use differences in ways of learning to construct shared understandings. Most important is a willingness to teach to different learning styles, thus exhibiting teacher behavior that carries a message of empathy with student problems.

Teachers who ignore the realities of learning differences, and do not track behavior language, risk disconnection with the students who do not learn successfully. Such students perceive teachers to be the focus for their learning problems and a partnership is unobtainable. When no one tracks the development of disconnection and fear, a worst-case scenario can develop, such as the shooting tragedy that occurred at Columbine High School.

Tracking Teacher-Student Relationships

Tracking teacher-student relationships and horse-human relationships are similar because in both cases the process is more complex than just looking at marks on the ground or interpreting behavior language. I learned to track fear and disconnection in students by first learning to track it in the behavior of horses. Each student has certain behavior constants that I use as bench marks to judge his/her emotional state at any given moment.

Tracking for awareness is about paying attention to the whole picture, that is, to the context as well as the track. Master tracker Tom Brown (1978) teaches that the most important aspect of being savvy is to have a penetrating and participative awareness of your surroundings. He argues that you have to understand your surroundings so well that you can see them from the inside, so you can merge with them completely, and that you can pass through those surroundings without the slightest ripple being made. You are you and at the same time you are your surroundings. To do this you have to be receptive to the slightest disturbance and the significance of that disturbance. Talbott (1995) contends, "You project past the technical details of awareness to perceive like the animal being tracked and in so doing you are tracking from the inside out" (p. 176).

As I teach I must interpret student behavior so that I am aware of how students perceive my actions in relation to what they take as problems and solutions. Working with horses reminds me that I can easily be perceived as the problem, and so I have to be careful not to allow a misinterpretation of my intentions. Many times students act like prey, as indicated by their behavior. By the time that I see them in high school, they are suspicious of anyone offering opportunities to find solutions to their problems. Teachers must be aware of what they are communicating in their behavior interactions all the time because students, like horses, are learning even when the teacher is not aware that he is teaching. For example, I remember as a young student learning one of the multiplication tables really quickly and being really happy about that. The teacher, however, gave me the next work sheet with lots of questions with the same tables on it. I wondered why I had to do all of these questions if I knew that table already. What I learned from that interaction was to slow down and not let the teacher know when I was finished so I

wouldn't get so much busy work. That was not the intention of the teacher, however, but that is what had been taught by the teacher's actions. Tracking requires paying attention to often momentary and fragile information that must be filed away for possible future use because it can be critical to understanding what is occurring in a teacher-student relationship.

Case Study—Tracking Student-Teacher Relationships

Consider the following interaction in which I tracked the behavior of an intern who had attempted to teach a lesson without awareness concerning student behavior language. The Social Studies 11 lesson had not gone well and the student teacher was visibly relieved it was over. There was a noticeable slump to her shoulders when the bell sounded and the 30 students got ready to file out the door, even as she was in mid-sentence. There was an immediate rise in the volume of classroom clatter and noise from binders closing, chairs colliding with the legs of metal desks, and nylon backpacks being hoisted onto the backs of students. Those sounds merged with the noise in the crowded hallway as the door was opened and closed by the last student. The intern's face and focus shifted with the emptying of the classroom. She shuffled papers, and then shuffled them again on a desk that was already neat and orderly. I sensed tension and fear growing between us as if she were holding her breath and waiting for me to say something. I knew we were becoming disconnected as she formed a defensive posture and I read the fear in her face. The intern expected criticism, a natural reaction from someone schooled to constantly evaluate her high school teaching abilities. I waited until the tension of the silence caused her to speak first.

> "The whole thing didn't work," she said. "I had it planned down to the minute, and it didn't work—my whole lesson plan fell apart."
>
> "I don't know if it was all that bad," I said. "It looked to me as if you just forgot to notice what was happening around you. You were looking with your hard eye but not understanding the meaning of what you were seeing. The boys in the back row did not focus from the moment they entered the room. You have to remember to teach to the back row as well as to the sides and the middle of the classroom or students in the back will slip away into another world. You will not see the opportunities to bring them back, the teachable moments, with your soft eye."

As I offered my opinion, I continued to track where she was heading in talking about her teaching. I still sensed a defensive attitude.

"But it was such a struggle and I had a lot of good material to go over," she said.

"And you spent most of the hour trying to teach that material directly but struggling to get their attention, because something else was going on; something they brought into the class with them when they arrived this morning. The best lesson plan in the world about the American Revolution would not have overcome the distracting factor. When you feel you are fighting an uphill struggle to get students focused, you need to approach your lesson a different way, a way that connects with where their focus is located at that moment. You have to track their attention and feelings as they change. Like a slow-moving, relentless machine you persisted with one approach, determined to follow the pre-set plan."

I could tell from the change in her expression that the intern was completely unaware of the need to change her planned approach.

"I am not sure that I follow you," she said.

"When the students came into class I could feel the tension. Something was moving the class rhythm like ripples on a pond," I explained. "You needed to track that behavior and work with it because that is what will give you an opening and an opportunity to teach. Every shift in the energetic tenor of a class is an opening to teach. You have to pay attention so that what you teach and your approach to teaching it are dependent on the feel of the class rhythm at any given moment. Watch their eyes and their body language to tell you if they are maintaining their focus, and use analogies that they can relate to that will help them understand your points. Since it was the first class on Monday morning, they were all talking about what they did on the weekend. Some were late and several didn't have their books handy. You really tried hard to get them focused on what you were going to teach them," I suggested.

"Yes, but I needed their attention to start the lesson," she replied.

"Start when you are ready and let those that are late fit in where they can. Waiting for them just reinforces the issue around standardized timing. There was both disorder and some rebellion in your class that you could have used as an indirect way into the topic of your lesson, the causes of the American Revolution. With a steady mind you could have used what the problem made available to form a teachable moment and begin with the rebellion that was right there in class. You could have had them reflect on disorder and rebellion: what causes it and what it is like to experience it. After all, both you and the students were experiencing disorder and some rebellion at that time. Instead of dealing with the disorder as a discipline issue, you could have tracked their behavior language to a teachable

> moment. Approaching the situation this way makes students curious about how you know something is going on in the classroom. Then what they were living would have been connected to the topic of revolution in general and the American Revolution in particular. You could have asked them if the disorder was a comfortable, gainful experience, and if not, why not. That could have lead into a discussion about what they learned about order and disorder, about people who are living in disorder, and how that relates to revolution. You could have talked about what sets in motion the will to be disorderly, and what makes people resist and revolt against authority, and how this desire affects the rhythm of relationships in a given place such as a classroom. You could have compared the revolt in class to revolt against British authority. The idea is to use what is available at the moment and connect that to what you are planning to study. In that way everything out there that seems to get in the way of learning becomes part of the lesson, and it becomes a living exploration of what went on in the lives of those people 300 years ago. The classroom then becomes a place of interconnection between the past and the present," I explained.

The words "living lesson" were barely out of my mouth when I heard a noise in the hall that grew from a low rumble to a sharp crash against my door. I opened the door and saw a circle of onlookers gathering as two boys from the class grappled and threw punches at each other like hockey players. I pushed into the middle of the fighters, pulled them apart, and sent them into my room. My intern, who seemed frozen in place, stared in surprise at the red marks on each of the boys' faces where punches have landed. I had maybe two minutes to talk this out before an administrator arrived to whisk the students to the office and suspend them. I had known each of these boys since grade 9. They had played together on the same hockey and school teams. "So what's going on with you two?" I asked. The question was met with silence. I let the silence hang, longer and longer, until we all felt uncomfortable, but the students did not budge and nobody broke the silence. Still, the look on their faces and their behavior offered a clear communication. I could see by their expressions that they were reflective but remained unwilling to break their code of silence. They were so disconnected from everyone but their peers that, no matter how wronged they felt by the actions of the other student involved in the fight, they were unwilling to involve adult authority figures and break an unwritten but well understood code of behavior. The boys chose to take the consequences together rather than name the instigator, staying true to the cultural icon of a young man

with a cause to fight for at all cost. This silence makes it even more important to have the ability to read behavior language to disrupt disconnection between teachers and students.

While the boys were heading to the office I explained to the intern that this dispute caused all of the class tension. This is what we needed to pay attention to because it affected the classroom rhythm and the changes in rhythm should have been tracked for messages. Reconnecting the students to the educational agenda through the teachable moment may have provided an opportunity to disrupt their disconnection from the process of education.

Whatever led to that fight was brewing before students arrived in class and before the lesson started. The intern's lesson was doomed because of something that had happened on the weekend and because she did not track the student behavior that signaled a disturbance, and eventually disrupted focus and disconnected students and teacher. If the intern had turned what was occurring with the students into part of the lesson there would have been a possibility of diffusing the situation, or at least bringing it out into the open. That move would not have required abandoning the topic of the American Revolution. It would have required talking about what the teacher could sense happening in the group, which was the same kind of tension that happened in villages in New England in the 1770s as people chose sides over the political issues of the day. The intern simply did not have the savvy necessary to sense the tension or interconnect with the class. As a result the issue exploded in the hallway. It is important to note here that listening to what was being communicated by behavior language in the class is not something the student teacher would have learned from a teaching methods class. However, I contend teachers have to learn how to perceive this type of behavior message in their classrooms in order to build and sustain teacher-student learning relationships. To speak this language requires us as teachers to open our senses so that we might perceive what the behavior of those around us means in the present and could mean in the future, and perhaps detect relationship changes as they begin to occur. Armed with this type of understanding we can look for previously unseen or forgotten solutions to disconnection and fear (Jensen, 2000).

Creating and Sustaining a Teacher-Student Partnership

Educators wanting to disrupt the fear and disconnection that arise from the dominance of conservative forces can do so through teacher-student partnerships. Partnerships can be formed when teachers offer solutions to student problems rather than contributing to the problems that confront them. Shared purpose creates interconnection between teacher and students. This interconnection makes us more capable of coping with fear than we would be capable of individually. Just as the horse-human partnership becomes a system for solving problems on a ranch, such as finding lost cattle (see Appendix 2), the teacher-student relationship becomes a system for solving problems in the classroom as can be seen in the following example.

Several years ago I worked with a young teacher who had difficulty coping with students' questions about the specifics of a poster project he wanted them to complete. As the teacher was explaining to the class the overall design and purpose of the poster activity, the students were asking questions about how big they should make the lettering, whether there should be pictures, and how much writing they should include. The young teacher seemed quite frustrated by the fact that the students did not want to talk about the "big picture" creative educational aspects of the project, but instead insisted on asking about details. By the end of the class the teacher felt students had missed the point in his design of the project. I explained that the students were more interested in details because they are graded against details that can be easily standardized. They are part of a system that forces them into the consumer race for marks so it stands to reason that they would be concerned about those details on which they expected to be evaluated. The teacher-student partnership had been disconnected by the values schooled into the students.

Perceiving the situation from the perspective of solving the problem together would have enabled the teachers to ally with the students and use a teachable moment to help them understand how their responses were being shaped by a consumer-oriented schooling system. This could have been accomplished through a discussion about what the marks represent in terms of value compared to how we consume resources to make as many products as possible to acquire wealth. He could then have asked them to set questions for evaluating their performance such as: What do we need to know about the

poster topic? Why do we need to know it? And how best can we express the evidence of our learning? If the intern had used his experience with the concepts he intended to teach to invite students to design their own approach, I suggest the students would have been directed towards opportunities in their designs. Together in a partnership they could have reached beyond the standardized criteria that act as impediments to creativity. Students would have bonded to the teacher because of his competence and effective leadership in finding ways through the maze of problems that the school system creates for them. This bond would be the basis for a teacher-student partnership.

Practicing the skills learned in horse whispering adapted to the classroom has shown me the possibilities for creating and sustaining partnerships with students. These skills include becoming the anomaly predator teacher, balancing advance and retreat, harmonizing the partnership, using the lessons of place, and storytelling. These skills are always used in unique combinations specific to a given situation.

Informal conversational interactions between teachers and students make the anomaly predator more tangible to some students as possible sources of solutions. We all have ways of learning that are natural to us long before anyone teaches us in a direct or indirect manner, and informal interactions allow those ways to be utilized because they are not standardized in a particular way. With students I start the communication with a conversation about something with which the student is familiar because I know he/she is more comfortable starting with his/her own knowledge. Perhaps the T-shirt with the name of a favorite band or book gives me an opening to begin communication. I always have to be prepared for the fact that things may not go smoothly at first. I am aware that each new challenge we face may require restarting the development of the trust process all over again. It is not uncommon for some students in my classes to be in conflict with parents, their peers, or their lives generally, when they walk into my classroom. Students want more freedom in making decisions about their lives, while parents wish to remain in control and are often reluctant to give up power over their children, thus leading to conflict. The influence of peers can lead to pressures and dilemmas in the daily life of students. To bridge the gap between suspicion and trust, I have to be able to track through the relationship to know when to offer assistance, and when to wait until the student is

open to some assistance. I have to make assessments about their resulting emotional state nearly as quickly as I do with a horse in the round pen. Horse whisperer and aikidoist Mark Rashid (2005) explains this process as entering into and blending with the students' emotional energy to redirect it to the most peaceful and least problematic solution possible. The ultimate goal is to keep the partnership moving forward by staying centred, entering into and blending with the emotional energy of the student. In a refined harmonious teacher-student partnership the behaviors of the partners become a mutually understood language. The partners are then able to communicate information about emotions and feelings of disconnection and fear so well that they are able to mediate their way through the challenges they face together.

Becoming the Anomaly Predator Teacher

The bridge between learning to be competent in the schooling system and subverting the effects of the system is the teacher as anomaly predator.[iii] A teacher becomes an anomaly predator when he/she simultaneously represents the authority of the school system and the power to undermine it. The anomaly predator teacher shows students how to be successful in the school system while opening their awareness to the need to change the school system, and subvert the corporate values behind it.[iv] Teaching as an anomaly helps develop and sustain teacher-student partnerships.

By becoming an anomaly and an unexpected part of the solution to student fear as opposed to being perceived as its cause develops trust. A story illustrates how this can happen. A visibly upset history student comes into my class, slams his books down on the desk and announces through clenched teeth that he hates math. He claims he does not understand mathematics or its purpose. I tell him that during the class that is about to start I will explain why schools teach the kind of math he is complaining about. I had planned to start a unit on the Cold War, but the student's disconnection with math provides me with a teachable moment. Having secured his permission to mention his problem beforehand, I ask if anyone else shares his concerns. A few hands go up. That is when I link current mathematics curriculum to world events. I explain how the launching of Sputnik in the 1950s shocked Americans into thinking that they were far behind the Soviets in technology. A search was initiated for future physicists and mathematicians

and school mathematics became a sorting device to find future workers for the weapons industry. I close by telling them about my own struggles with the new mathematics system when I was a student during the transition years. The student in question did not necessarily do better in mathematics after that class, but something of a bond developed between us because he realized he was not alone in facing his fears. By my acting as an anomaly predator and inviting the student into a conversation that helped sort out his frustration, the student came to see me as an ally and felt less frustrated about his difficulty. He felt more connected knowing that others had struggled with the new math and that it has not held us back. He felt less fearful and more powerful. Realizing that the new math is associated with identifiable historic events that he can understand seemed to pull him out of the victim role. In every environment there are power balances that must be maintained to avoid fear and disconnection and the classroom is no exception. In the above example, the power imbalance between the student and system caused the student to disconnect. Had I not intervened as an anomaly predator and brought him into a conversation in which he felt more equal, things could have eventually spiraled out of control, and even led to some type of violent outcome.

Balancing Advance and Retreat Interaction

As illustrated in the incident just described, in forming a teacher-student partnership in a high school setting, the initial advance is to establish trust by demonstrating that I can offer solutions to student problems. Through structured conversations and discussions designed to unveil student's concerns about understanding the origins of the problems of their living, I set about with them to construct models that organize events into patterns (Rashid, 2005). I then lead students into a difficult situation that challenges them, such as preparation for a specific provincial exam question, offering strategies to help them work through the challenge that are based on the models. This is where I begin to use storytelling as an indirect teaching method to connect the student to the teacher, the problems they face and the models we construct. I try to help them extend their own self-sufficient capabilities without losing the security of the teacher-student relationship. I encourage them to try their ideas, interpretations, and solutions, knowing full well that a number of initial attempts to solve a problem might not work. To trust in

this process they must know that they will not be penalized for failed attempts to find solutions and that the teacher is available to give assistance.

Teachers need to pay attention to the emotional and energetic feel of relationships throughout the learning process in order to know when to change activities. I try to sense the rhythm of a relationship in my classroom, or the round pen, so that I know whether to advance to interconnect, or to retreat to ease tension. For example, if a student is having trouble understanding a complex idea, I might retreat to an analogy to help them understand. A rhythm of retreat and advance also helps me deal with what Bateson (1972) terms the double bind. This is the difficulty arising from studying a relationship from the perspective of being involved in that relationship (Bateson, 1972). From within the relationship, the tendency is to personalize everything, thereby losing objectivity. From this insider perspective, change is perceived as personally disruptive and threatening. Overcoming the fear of vulnerability is necessary to accept personal change but protecting against that vulnerability can make our ways of interacting even more deeply embedded, making them less accessible for invoking change. In disrupting fear it is important to be able to depersonalize its symptoms, while at the same time avoiding the need to retreat. Maintaining the rhythm of insider and outsider perspectives, knowing when to immerse and when to withdraw, is part of being savvy as a teacher.

If I advance too quickly a student might become fearful and engage their opposition reflex system, indicated by resistant behavior carrying the message of their concern. A workable strategy is to repeat the message after retreating to a point in the interaction where the pressure from the message is no longer threatening. This opens curiosity and should be followed by gentle advance until the student no longer perceives the teacher's message as threatening so that trust can develop. To be able to advance and retreat there has to be enough flexibility in teacher-student interactions to allow room to express various messages and reactions to them in a number of ways. As Bateson argues, "We could refer to the variable meanings of play and their interpretations as paradoxes" (1972, p. 192) that are necessary for the evolution of communication. Without these paradoxes "life would then be an endless interchange of stylized messages, a game with rigid rules, unrelieved by change or humor" (Bateson, 1972, p. 193). That would lead to

stagnation, what Whitehead (1929) terms "inert ideas," which would not enable us to expand the 'horse herd' to include humans, or to have horses accept us on their backs, or create a refined harmonious teacher-student partnership.

My horse whispering experience has inspired me to be self-sufficient in developing relationships and solving classroom problems. Self-sufficiency is detaching from both conventional strategies and high-tech solutions based on corporate consumerism. I suggest a self-sufficient approach to teaching. This utilizes what is present in the classroom from our living as teachable moments which can subvert corporate values, earn students' trust and establish the join up. The next advance is to help students learn to cope with the pressure of searching for solutions to problems. This is accomplished by leading students into a research problem, "using a thesis" to prove as the push-away part of the technique, then drawing them back into the safety of the partnership by offering possible solutions as a way out of the problem, if they run into difficulties matching appropriate data to the given thesis. This push-pull develops confidence about being self-sufficient when leaving the security of the teacher-student "herd of two," while at the same time knowing they have back up if needed. In the verbal interaction that follows, I role-play Columbo, the TV show detective who always posed the question, "What I don't quite understand is…" This question invites students to offer opinions and solutions to problems. As they answer my question the students become their own teachers and further develop their self-sufficiency.

Students feel comfortable in continually moving between seeking help and trying out their own solutions. To assist I use both support and questioning stances to ensure students know I am there to help them become self-reliant, but I am also expecting them to seek out their own solutions to problems by taking responsibility for their own inquiries. As in the circling game in the round pen, I encourage students to take responsibility for maintaining their own momentum. This momentum becomes more and more sustainable by students because I reward their success, and I make teachable moments out of their less successful endeavours by encouraging them to make lateral shifts in their thinking to cope with pressure.

When students have enough confidence in their self-sufficiency, they can test out their opinions against those of others. In doing this they are taking responsibility for their own inquiries, including sustaining their momentum by encouraging lateral shifts in thinking in order to cope with challenges. This process is accomplished by leading students into continually more complex situations that they successfully negotiate by developing and applying models for understanding the nature of the problems they face.

Harmonizing the Partnership

The ability to advance and retreat in interacting with students is crucial to maintaining the dynamic balance of a partnership. When through successful problem solving it achieves a dynamic balance that is flexible in the face of challenges, a teacher-student partnership is harmonized. A harmonious teacher-student partnership is an opportunity for students to begin to develop the confidence, knowledge, and skills they need to work with the required standardized processes and structures imposed upon them. A partnership in dynamic balance requires accepting and working with students' gender and learning variations. When trying to open teachable moments with students, I have to remember that some students take in more sensory data than other students. Some hear better, take in information through fingers and skin, and some use scent detection skills more proficiently. When teachers are working with detailed material some students can remember a greater quantity of random information for short periods of time, but others need the information packaged into a coherent form, like a model (Gurian, 2001). Teachers have to pay attention to the fact that some students simply get bored more easily than others and need constant change as a stimulant to keep them interested and attentive. Others can self-manage the more tedious aspects of schooling. Those who cannot are likely to act out and be labelled as behavior problems. This is particularly true for the ways that boys cope. However, classroom scheduling rarely takes this into account. Brain cell activity also varies. Some students shift emotive stimuli down from the limbic system to the brain stem where sight and flight responses are triggered, while others shift it to the upper brain in areas of more complex thought[v] [vi] (Gurian, 2001, p. 29).

A teacher aware of this and savvy enough to track these differences can help alleviate the double bind (Bateson, 1972) students face in trying to cope with the

problems of the school system, with only the representatives of that system available as a consistent source of assistance. The teacher-student partnership is a source of the confidence needed to face challenges. A teacher-student partnership in dynamic balance requires accepting and working with students' gender and learning variations. When trying to open teachable moments with students, I have to remember that some students are more efficient at perceiving and understanding than other students.

Utilizing the Lessons of Place as a Teacher

By studying ourselves studying, that is, by examining the processes and structures that we find ourselves located within as a learning environment, we can study the relation between place and our relationships. We can study how the very structure and operation of a classroom teaches us to be standardized, synchronized, specialized and centralized and thus mirror our corporate-based structure. Through teachable moments I can raise questions in my students' minds about the meanings contained in conventions, such as putting students in assembly line rows synchronized by standardized wall clocks.

Another way to come to understand the messages resident in places is to listen to stories about those places. First Nations writers tell stories to teach rules about sustaining relationships between people and their environment (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990). Stories help people remember. For example, the use of Apache place names is based on the belief that the easiest way to remember useful information is to attach it to a familiar event or to a familiar place where an event occurred. The information to be remembered is encoded in stories about events and places. As Basso (1996) writes, "Because the knowledge needed for wisdom is nothing if not useful, the adage that 'wisdom sits in places' is seen to make perfect sense" (p. 135).

Part of being a savvy teacher involves learning to be both the historian and the storyteller in order to study the values of the place in which we work and act so as to find meaning about the way we live. Students can more easily take ownership of a history that has room for their own experiences. This approach to teaching moves from the specific to the general, from an understanding of the impact of events on the individual, to an understanding of the impact of human events upon a certain place. History has made the classroom what it is, and in turn, the classroom schools us to reproduce the system that

created the history we are living. Storytelling gives us an opportunity to examine our survival methods and the impact we have upon the survival of other systems as a result of the methods we employ. We need to teach how people have at different times thought about their environment, how they perceived it, and how they conceptualized it, for the cultural meanings placed upon an environment express how we live our lives in a particular system.

Teaching from the corporate perspective does not involve such an investigation, and it is used to perpetuate and venerate the very systems that created disconnection and fear in the first place. As Basso contends, "Ironically…corporate culture has…become largely uninterested in what human beings take their environments to mean" (1996, p. 64) beyond their potential use as a resource. Teaching from the Apache perspective involves lessons in how to avoid repeating our mistakes (Basso, 1996). Stories can accomplish this because "oral narratives have the power to establish enduring bonds between individuals and features of the natural landscape, and as a direct consequence of such bonds, persons who have acted improperly will be moved to reflect critically on their misconduct and resolve to improve it" (Basso, 1996, p. 41). Reflecting upon events in different places through savvy teaching leads to the wisdom necessary to sustain relationships (Basso, 1996).

Teaching Through Storytelling

Join up can be accomplished through storytelling. When students are intrigued by the personal connections in a story and/or persuaded by the veracity of a story, they may voluntarily decide to join forces with a teacher whom they might otherwise normally perceive as a threat within the oppressive system of schooling. As an apprentice to a First Nations elder in my school, I had the opportunity to see how storytelling is also used as a very complex means of mediating changes in cultural and interpersonal relationships over time. My mentor was Dave, a soft-spoken man with silver hair and a silver pencil-line moustache. In the classroom his voice changed from a quiet conversational tone to the rhythm and resonance of an orator. In the traditional way he wove into his story the message he wished to communicate which is to remember the many important things that have been lost to his people. His stories represent what he can remember. Dave was born

in 1910 into the Saanich people. During his lifetime his people were catapulted from the age of the canoe into the age of the spaceship. His stories included learning to reef net fish with his family and how the features of his traditional territory came into existence. He remembered in vivid detail the feel of the cedar canoes gliding through the water, the smell of wood smoke from cooking fires, and the events that created the names for the geographic features of his territory. His people are sea people and so he spent most of his life fishing on trawlers and on his own boat until the damp and cold and residual effects of the TB he survived made the arthritis in his hands too severe to continue to work. Dave had the kind of wisdom about coping with change that grabs and maintains student attention. His stories carry meaning for people of all cultures, because they talk about coping with cultural and relationship changes. He taught me that savvy has to stand the test of time. It cannot just apply to the past or the present, but has to become a continuity that links the past and the present together.

Watching and reflecting on Dave's work makes me realize how storytelling can also function as a method of subverting the values and effects of the corporate thinking behind present-day schools. As I observed him over many hours I noticed Dave's stories offered viable practices of living that have allowed people to survive successfully for thousands of years. His stories are tools that subvert the corporate value that all knowledge and learning processes must be standardized to be useful. His stories demonstrate that non-standardized knowledge and ways of learning produce viable solutions to the problems people face in their daily lives.

Such storytelling interconnects people and events over time. Because his life spanned two different historical periods in his culture, Dave was able to create a living link between past and present (McBeth, 1993). For example, when Dave talked about the various epidemics that infected his people, he started with events that preceded his birth and linked them to his personal experience. He began with stories that had been passed on to him about the small pox epidemic in the 1800s and the Spanish influenza epidemic of 1918 and ended with the TB epidemic of the 1930s–1950s, which he survived but his first wife did not. Placing the stories of the past in the context of the present enables students to find meaning in the events for themselves. Since I have told my daughter Erin

the story of how my mother survived the flu epidemic at two years of age, but her great aunt Flossy died, Erin, who is said to resemble Flossy, has taken an interest in Flossy's life. She now knows more about her Great-Great Aunt than I do, including the location of her grave in Ross Bay cemetery. Erin now has a story she can tell linking past and present in her life.

I learned from listening to Dave's stories that even though my grandmother was at my great aunt's funeral and I wasn't, I can borrow those details as they were told to me to make the experience of the event more intimate both for my daughter and for my students. I can use my personalized experience, no matter how distant, to help me act as an informant of the event. The personalization of the event causes the students to take a greater interest in it because it is personal to someone with whom they have a connection. Over time, connections are made between the student, the teacher, and the event being studied, and disconnection that can come from an imposed curriculum can be disrupted. Moreover, connections are made between particular events and general historical understanding. Mixing my grandmother's personal experiences with my general knowledge creates an expanded knowledge. This technique of combining personal and general information makes it possible for the storyteller to spiral outward beyond the story's details to a more generalized understanding of the event's context and impact. This is one of the most effective Indigenous teaching techniques (Cruikshank, 1990). It reconfigures events from the disconnected to the personal, while at the same time instilling a broader knowledge about an historic event.

Thus, as a learning experience, a story has at least two stages of meaning acquisition. The first is the telling and the second is the retelling. In the first stage the telling of the event provides an initial meaning of what occurred in the temporal frame of the event. The second stage or retelling expresses a greater historical and social meaning, as the event is seen to exist in a larger framework. With each retelling meaning expands. The storyteller must allow the changes in meaning that emerge from numerous retellings to come forward. For example, when Dave's son tells the story of the TB epidemic that killed Dave's first wife, he tells it in the collective first person, using the word "we." As storyteller Dave's son has made the event a general cultural, or at least a family

experience, rather than primarily a personal tragedy as it was originally for Dave. Teaching from this perspective, the storyteller takes partial ownership of past events. That degree of proximity gives the teller credibility. When the teller says "we," he is relating the meaning the past event has for the teller in the present. While the meaning of the event that is appropriated by the storyteller and the purpose of telling it changes from the time that it was news, the meaning for the audience also changes, as the purpose of the retelling also changes. The original message surrounding an event may disappear and a new purpose may develop around a present situation. For example, I can use my story to keep my students connected to a study of the 1918 flu epidemic and extend that to a current events topic concerning avian flu. Again, a story from the past becomes a useful source of guidance for problematic situations in the present.

Case Study—Beginning a Partnership—The Buckle Bunch

The initial opportunity to apply horse whispering savvy to teacher-student relationships arose when I was working with a group of students nicknamed The Buckle Bunch. This group consisted of a number of students who were brought together by their shared rural background. They were somewhat estranged from other school groups. However, they still desired to belong to some group. In a rapidly urbanizing community, these students were viewed as something of an anachronism. In my view they were simply reacting in their own way to the disconnecting corporate influences directed at students. Instead of having part-time jobs in stores or fast food outlets, they worked on farms. They were interested in livestock, liked horses and cattle, and some of them were 4H members. They liked country music rather than hip- hop or rap, and preferred pickup trucks to the small, fast import cars that other students drove. They wore blue jeans and cowboy boots and sometimes hats. But the items that made them really stand out from the rest of the high school population, and became the reason for their name, were the silver trophy buckles they wore as prizes from livestock shows.[vii]

This self-organizing, loosely knit group chose to hang out in my classroom at lunch and sometimes before school.[viii] They wandered into my room[ix] when several girls borrowed my horse training videos to watch on the classroom VCR at lunch. They were joined eventually by a number of boys who also were interested in horses and worked on

local hay farms. I attempted to let their goals direct our interactions and not make our relationships a mirror of authoritarian school structure. I established a relationship with these students initially through informal communication, empathizing with their interests and experiences, and attempting to create trust. I was riding in cutting competitions at the time, I had ridden bulls and bucking horses, and I had a new Dodge diesel truck, all of which were parts of our interconnection. Sometimes we would watch a horse training video together and talk about what the trainer was doing, or the problems they were having with their horses. It was an informal relationship that allowed students to begin to trust my experience and opinions.[x]

During the time that I worked with The Buckle Bunch, I was also working on my own renewal. I was trying to perceive the school system through my other eyes and to find ways to de-school myself from corporate values. I wanted to develop ways of disrupting the disconnection and fear growing out of government policies, labor strife, a shortage of resources, and an ever-increasing set of demands from growing numbers of students, many of whom had emotional/learning/behavior problems and most certainly different brain types. I wanted to teach in ways that opened my students to the opportunity to choose whether they wished to de-school and step away from the corporate model of living, or at least to consider that possibility. I was also interested in subverting the effects of the school system without sacrificing my students' ability to make choices and to deal with the system within which they lived. I was convinced that developing their own savvy to be as self-sufficient as possible in sustaining relationships would help them cope. This I wished to do without sacrificing the conventional skills of schooling since that would have made them even more vulnerable to corporate forces. I was searching for ways to make the processes of schooling congruent with rather than contrary to education.[xi] I suspected that teaching through horse whispering savvy could be the means for me to reconnect schooling and education in my teaching practice.

The Buckle Bunch became an opportunity to confirm my intuition when some of the group and I joined up, and they began coming over to our farm after school to help me work horses.[xii] When the students started to bring horse-human relationship problems to me, I designed a credit course under the rubric of Career Preparation. Members of the

Bunch had to ride their horses from home along trails and roads to get to the ring where I was teaching. On the way they encountered obstacles and objects that frightened their inexperienced horses.

In my ring we took time to debrief about how we had coped with problems that arose on the trail.[xiii] I had to utilize my awareness that boys have greater difficulty expressing fear because it is regarded in our society as a character flaw in males. I would track their behavior language to see what was causing them fear and how they were coping with it. By switching the focus to coping with the immediate needs of living, that is, coping with the problems of surviving the ride on the trail, the ring work/schooling became more connected with the learners' immediate needs. Direct teaching, indirect teaching, and reflection upon the problems of their living became focused towards the same goal: getting down the trail safely. I also gave up on the idea of totally determining the focus of the lesson myself and let the students' needs develop the ring time lesson plan. I used two different approaches to mediating through a problem: stories to teach indirectly and demonstrate empathy, and models and sketches in the sand to illustrate my points directly. In this way ring time was used both for indirect teaching as we debriefed trail experiences to help identify a problem, and for directly teaching the skills needed to deal with trail riding problems after a solution had been mediated.

My stories, anecdotes, and analogies about how I developed my savvy system helped show the Bunch how they could strengthen their own systems for dealing with problems on the trail. In this way, I taught the basic rudimentary concepts of tracking, namely, the necessity of paying attention to the interaction of systems within a given setting to understand the behavior of their horses and their reactions to that behavior. As time went by, I started to use the mythic western images to move our relationships forward with humor, by playing into the stereotype when necessary or creating curiosity from an anomalous teaching persona when that was helpful. I learned to use anomaly to an advantage in harmonizing relationships in my classroom, just as I had to do in horse whispering. I taught the students to be open to messages in behavior language, which is communicated all around them, and to be especially open to their horse's messages. I had to put myself in their position so as to perceive from their point of view, to track our

progress in solving problems by strengthening our relationship into a partnership. This led me into teaching them further about being savvy to the hazards of the trail.

When I found that I was spending more time dealing with the emergent problems of the road and trail hazards during my lessons than I was on skills needed in the riding ring, it was time to redesign my lesson plan. I split the lesson into two components: the first dealing with the problems of coping with the hazards, and the second with what had been our original goals. I developed a pattern of advance and retreat to move the lesson forward, but also to temper the degree of challenge we undertook in order to build confidence and avoid creating fear. It wasn't long before we took our lessons out on the trails to utilize place as a teaching device, so that I could work with them on emergent problems as they occurred. The challenges that emerged ranged from cars and dogs, to baby buggies, to umbrellas being held by people walking their dogs, and the students' behavior language told me about their individual fears. The focus of my teaching as mediation between the horses, the humans, and the trail system, made me realize that sustaining relationships is just as critical to successful classroom teaching[xiv] (Gurian, 2001) as it is to horse whispering. With the Bunch I continually harmonized my relationships with them, by spending time in informal conversation, as well as through direct and indirect teaching. Storytelling became an efficient approach to teach indirectly.

In summary, I began the first step of developing a partnership (Parelli, 1999) with the Bunch by establishing communication and empathy. Through competent leadership I showed them that we could face problems together and that being savvy would help them face their problems. In harmonizing their horse-human partnerships the students acquired the knowledge and necessary skills to cope with trail riding problems. They learned how their horses could be a source of information through behavior language as well as an extension of the human senses. They began to trust themselves and their horses. As the teacher I learned that my students are a source of important information relative to the design of my lesson plans.

When I altered my plan to suit the needs of the Bunch, I refined the teacher-student relationship. Whether I am in the classroom, the round pen, or even on the Outlaw Trail, it is trust that makes leadership possible between horses and humans, and

teachers and students. This is a reciprocal process because trust and leadership strengthen each other. In many cases the bonds of trust formed within The Buckle Bunch remain to this day. Many of them keep in touch by dropping by for a visit or sending a postcard. One student who became a Social Studies/PE teacher still takes riding lessons with me now and again.

I worked with the Bunch from a position of demonstrated competency in building and sustaining relationships, first with the horses, and later in the school system itself. Teaching against the values of the corporate system from a position of apparent weakness, or failure in that system, looks to young people like a classic case of criticism derived from an inability to cope. I think I became effective at subverting the system, once I could demonstrate my own competency with horses and within the school system. Students not only wanted to be successful, but they needed to know why the system functions in a particular way. The fact that the school system defines success so narrowly, and holds it in such high esteem, creates fear and, for many, disconnection. Teachers have to demonstrate their own success in making changes before students will take risks and step away from the values of the system within which they are immersed.

In order to resist the corporate system, students need lessons connected to their lives outside the classroom. If I had concentrated most of my time on activities designed to teach ring riding, the students would likely have failed trail riding. In high school the greatest amount of time is spent in activities analogous to ring work and is disconnected from students' lives outside the classroom. Instead of going out into the world or onto the trail and coming back together to debrief the experience in a series of questions and answers opening to more questions (Postman & Weingartner, 1969), the school is largely disconnected and separate from students' experiences of living.[xv] I suggest it is time to recognize that students' ways of living cannot be left at the door of the classroom they enter each day. Good or bad experiences are with them all of the time, and when schooling adds to their problems, resistance, tension, and violence can result. Just as I built trust with the Bunch by dealing with trail hazards first, to interconnect to the riding ring, teachers need to be savvy and focus on real student needs that can be interconnected to lesson plans. Not being savvy is, at best, a position that contributes to the development

of fear and disconnection. At worst, it can contribute to the outbreak of school violence such as occurred at Columbine High School in Littleton Colorado, which is the situation I will address in chapter five.

Chapter Four Endnotes

[i] The media go out of their way to push males and females at each other in order to create the kind of gender tension that sells products. Some people wish we could just teach reading, writing and arithmetic like the old days…but more and more there is a need to help our young people grow and develop as whole people. (Gurian, 2001, p. 292)

[ii] It is important to note that there are many exceptions to the scenario of gender specific brain types…many girls become aggressive and shut down after a crisis…many boys learn better during and after a crisis because they can shut off their emotions and focus on a task…many things are going on in each brain and personality that can outweigh gender difference. (Gurian, 2001, p. 33)

The important point is that, as the teacher, you have to be able to track which particular brain function is going on and this has to be done from what can be tracked such as behavior.

[iii] The most common forms of communication on earth are silent. Bioluminescence is used by billions of marine animals. It is a light show. Their little bodies are equipped with a lighting system that flashes in patterns only they understand. Body language is used by literally hundreds of species. It may seem to uninformed human beings that many gestures are without specific meaning, but be assured, the more you learn about body language the more specific you find it to be. (Roberts, 2001, p. 10)

[iv] Teaching them to respond to the external motivation of testing equips them to respond to the external motivation of a corporate mission and management structure. Teaching children one worldview of the economy trains them to accept that corporate world without question. Teaching the values of individual free enterprise prepares the students to adopt corporate loyalty—mission, uniform, company song, corporate culture and all—over loyalty to group, class, country or union. In such an environment a student learns that when the boy seated next to her drops out of school, he is solely responsible for the decision. She will believe, as she walks past the food banks, that "those people," like the boy in her class, simply made the wrong choices. (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 82)

[v] Can we easily draw a line between the hardwired, push-button, see-red-get-angry world of instinct and the elastic, scholastic world of intelligence? No. Biologically important stimuli yank everyone around: the mother responding to her baby's cries, the rabbit freezing when a shadow passes overhead, the dog challenging his owner's rank, the sparrow attacking its image reflected in a window. Those facts do not obviate intelligence. (Yoerg, 2001, p. 31)

Humankind has the most complex brain of any species on earth, and with such incredible cerebral power we must be able to apply what we learn from animals to ourselves. (Roberts, 2001, p. xxv)

In the constant activity environment of a school classroom,

Brain imaging studies undertaken at MIT shows that the inactive female brain is as active as the activated male brain…using its resources, quickly, more often and more places in the brain…the female brain never at rest has a true learning advantage. (Gurian, 2001, p. 29),

[vii] Kinship in tribal settings was not strictly a matter of biological relationships, but rather a learned way of viewing those who shared a community of residence. The ultimate test of kinship was behavior, not

blood: you belonged if you acted like you belonged. Children were trained to see themselves as related to virtually all with whom they had regular contact. They honoured valid kinship bonds, and relationships were manufactured for persons still left so that everyone would feel included in the great ring of relatives. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 46)

[viii] The foundation of traditional First Nations education, "lies in the applicability of its perspectives to the whole process of teaching and learning…the universals that are explored may be viewed as archetypes of human learning and as part of the Indigenous psyche of all people and cultural traditions. (Cajete, 1994, p. 18)

[ix] Millions of children are not safe physically, educationally, economically, or spiritually….The poor black youths who shoot up drugs on street corners and the rich white youths who do the same thing in their mansions share a common disconnectedness from any hope or purpose. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 34)

[x] It is the affective elements—the subjective experience and observations, the communal relationships, the artistic and mythical dimensions, the ritual and ceremony, the sacred ecology, the psychological and spiritual orientations-that have characterized and formed Indigenous education since time immemorial. These dimensions and their inherent meanings are not readily quantifiable, observable or easily verbalized and as a result, have been given little credence in mainstream approaches to education and research. Yet it is these aspects of Indigenous orientation that form a profound context for learning through exploring the multidimensional relationships between humans and their inner and outer worlds. (Cajete, 1994, p. 20)

[xi] Stalking Wolf did not simply tell us where the mice were or why they were there. He let us go and discover the whole thing for ourselves. They led us beyond their mystery to the mystery of the way the lives of the animals were interdependent. They led us to an idea of how the whole fabric meshes together, although it may be that you have to live as long as Stalking Wolf and observe as keenly as he did before the pattern makes total sense. (Brown, 1978, p. 24)

[xii] Innovative programs that could provide role models to youngsters who might not have them are jeopardized by a lack of resources. We must realize that it is a very, very short -sighted policy if we fail to redeem and salvage our most needy young people. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p xi)

[xiii] In First Nations education,

…every situation provided…a potential opportunity for learning, and basic education was not separated from the natural, social, or spiritual aspects of everyday life. Living and learning were fully integrated. (Cajete, 1994, p. 33)

[xiv] We generally use the term bonding and attachment for young children but brain based research shows us that there is a need to extend this throughout the school years…the brain is still growing in adolescence; it needs bonding and attachment from caregivers to grow and as before the primary intergenerational bonding groups for the growing brain are family and teachers. (Gurian, 2001, p. 264)

How we learn has much to do with caring…memory is enhanced if an adolescent learner feels emotionally cared for by the teacher. (Gurian, 2001, p. 266)

[xv] Postman and Weingartner (1969) developed through surveys a series of questions worth asking because they have been asked so many times by so many students. Primarily those questions are focussed upon understanding why we do things in particular ways in schools and who benefits most from those practices.

Chapter Five

The Columbine Massacre from a Horse Whisperer's Perspective:

A Study in Relationship Disconnection

On April 20, 1999, at 6:30 a.m., Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold joined their Columbine High School gym class for a round of bowling at Belleview Lanes in nearby Englewood. According to two fellow high school seniors the two teenagers seemed cheerful, easily laughing and joking with their classmates. Less than five hours later the two boys planted two propane bombs in the centre of their high school's cafeteria and returned to their car to arm themselves with a daunting arsenal of weapons, including a TEC-9 semi-automatic handgun, a 9 mm rifle, and a pair of shotguns. They also carried with them a large supply of ammunition and home-made pipe bombs. When the bombs failed to detonate at 11:16 a.m., the boys, dressed in long trench coats, jumped out of their car shooting randomly at passersby on the library steps (Linedecker, 1999). On the second floor they gunned down one victim and in the school library they killed most of their other victims. After a brief attempt to re-detonate the bombs and more random killings, the two boys waited over half an hour before finally turning their guns on themselves. When the smoke cleared, the deadliest school attack in U.S. history had resulted in 12 fellow students killed, 24 wounded, 1 teacher killed, and the deaths of the two shooters.

In the flurry of investigations that followed, authorities looked to place blame on everything from parental negligence to membership in a student group considered to be outside of the mainstream of student society, referred to as the Trench Coat Mafia by other Columbine students. Though Eric and Dylan briefly belonged to the TCM, it was revealed that the group had nothing to do with plotting the shootings. By the time of the shootings most of the TCM had either graduated or dropped out of school.

The boys apparently came from stable homes and their parents did not report noticing any behavior that might have suggested what was to happen at their sons' high school. After multiple investigations officials are still struggling with the fundamental

question of why this tragic event occurred. In this chapter I will offer my analysis from the perspective of a horse whisperer, that is, in terms of relationship disconnection. I will outline how the problem at Columbine stemmed from a critical breakdown in relationships, combined with an inability to read the behavior language messages that clearly indicated tension in students was reaching a critical level.

I begin by looking at the values of the American society within which the school system was created, because tracking requires looking at a situation in its entirety including context. Looking at these events disconnected from the environment in which they occur dismisses the roles played by the school system and our way of life in creating and perpetuating violence. In contrast to my approach, most of the official investigations have singled out one or two factors in the situation as principal causes of the shootings.

The dominant perspective resulting from this narrow view of the events was that something had gone terribly wrong for a brief moment in a system that was presumed to be functioning well. The problem with trying to reduce the causes to one or two factors is that investigators are thereby distracted from seeing the larger picture. They tend to focus on one or two specific issues, such as the glorification of violence in popular culture, easy access to guns, growing up in an economically disadvantaged and violent neighbourhood, or hours of inadequate supervision. From the horse whisperer's perspective all of these are symptoms of something gone wrong in the larger picture, namely the cultural condoning of violence.

Disconnection as the Cause of Violence

The changes in Klebold's and Harris' behavior prior to the shootings were not perceived by those who saw them every day as dangerous. This is because the behavior patterns that signal power struggles and violence are not unusual in American high schools specifically, and American culture in general. Their behavior did not stand out against the background of what was going on around them because jockeying for power in competitive, even hostile, situations is normal in American society. In order to see this behavior as noteworthy, it would have to be compared to a harmoniously functioning system of interconnected relationships. When seen in this light, both American schools and American society are hotbeds of violence (Snyder, 1990). This is not a new situation.

Angry boys have been expressing their fear in violent ways for a long time and violent youth gangs date back to at least the 1800s. What is new is the degree of violence, both in frequency and intensity.

American boys kill for a wide range of reasons but these reasons mask the source of violence. Boys may kill because they were bullied or teased by classmates, because they were low in status in the school, or because a girlfriend hurt them, and all of these occurrences were then perceived as personal injustices. Indeed they may be, but they are produced in a system where relationship disconnection has become the norm.

Just as individual motives in isolation do not account for school violence, nor do the perpetrators' clothing, musical preferences, or choice of weapons, in isolation, predict anything about potential violence. Some school shooters have worn long black coats or camouflage or everyday school clothes (Linedecker, 1999); some owned their own guns or had access to firearms; many spent hours listening to shock rock or gangster rap with lyrics about mutilation, violence, and the debasement of women—but in other shootings the perpetrators did not do these things (Linedecker, 1999). None of these factors is a cause of violent behavior. Rather, they are signs of a deeper and more pervasive condition: the acceptance of fear and violence as a part of everyday living. I discussed in chapter two that what lies behind this severe relationship disconnection and breakdown are the values of corporate North America.[i]

What we should focus our attention on is not the coats the shooters wore, for example, but the disconnection between the shooters, their peers and teachers. I contend this disconnection contributed specifically to their willingness to kill (Fox & Levin, 2001). As Lindecker points out:

> When they killed they did so often after periods of calm and sophisticated planning with shocking efficiency and premeditation. They seemed to be without a conscience, a sense of belonging or an idea of kinship…they were hostile, fearless, aggressive and seemingly immune to feelings of remorse at the time of the shootings. (1999, p. 18)

In corporate America many American boys have effectively been desensitized to violence. In a culture that condones violence, the line between violent and non-violent boys is a thin one. The only difference between angry boys who are violent, and angry

boys who are not, is the presence of sufficient psychological resources to control their emotions (Kindlon &Thompson, 2000), especially in the face of a wide range of pathological triggers.[ii] Despite a clear pattern that suggests we have serious problems in our systems of living, including our school systems, we overlook violence until an episode of major concern temporarily focuses our attention on the resulting collateral damage.

The tension in Eric and Dylan from constant intimidation required an outlet, and the methods by which this could be released were governed by the culture of cruelty (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). "Some boys who can't cope with emotional hurt…go on the attack" (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000, p. 212). Klebold's and Harris' anger had no safe outlet except escalation of the struggle. With this situation in place questions about the causes of the shootings cannot be answered, if the shootings are seen as specific disconnected events (Fox & Levin, 2001), rather than interconnected evidence of pathology in our system of living. If we do not look to the entire system itself as the cause, we can never understand how our way of living promotes the fear that leads to this type of violence.[iii]

Missing the Track

It is easy for teachers to be surprised by excessively violent incidents because we are taught to focus on the specialized processes of schooling, not on tracking the development of the whole student, including how they handle relationships. We tend to see the explosion (with our hard eye) rather than the slow burning fuse (with our soft eye). The organization of curriculum into specialized subjects emulating the values of the corporate system detracts from our ability to aid in the development of the entire individual, keeping our focus narrow and our soft eye suppressed (Gurian, 2001). At the same time, the social background of continuous violence functions to desensitize us to all but the most extreme occurrences. As one boy asked in a school assembly two days after the shootings, "Why didn't their parents know what was going on with these two guys?" (Kindlar &Thompson, 2000, p. 173). As a catastrophic event Columbine and other schools shootings are not unusual and only stand out because of the extreme nature of the reaction to the abuse. The question that arises for me, however, concerns why no one was

paying serious attention to what was occurring with these two boys in terms of their relationships and their behavior language. What should have been asked is, "Why didn't anyone understand what the changes in their behavior meant?"

From a horse whisperer's perspective there were plenty of behavioral signs pointing to the potential for a violent outcome but you have to recognize tracks when you see them and be able to read them for meaning.[iv] When I tracked the events of Columbine using my savvy as a horse whisperer I saw clear evidence that the buildup to the shootings was so closely interwoven with the daily school life of the shooters that these two factors could not be separated. For example, if any faculty had noticed what they considered to be unusual or threatening behavior from certain students, they should have raised a concern, at least enough to share it with other staff or maybe the students involved. The problem is that threatening behavior is only considered unusual when it is extreme and leads to extreme outcomes and not otherwise (Canada, 1995).

The sheriff's report states that the two boys constructed approximately 100 explosive devices in their homes and that the material for making these bombs was left in plain sight. The boys obviously had to assemble the bombs somewhere—the bombs did not come together by themselves. They had unrestricted computer access for the necessary technology from the Internet, and they also were able to assemble an arsenal of weapons (Murphy, 2001). Their guns were purchased months before the shootings took place and they stored them where they were accessible without fear of confiscation. This lack of awareness seems to be one of the consistent factors in many other cases of school shootings. People in authority working with youth often seem unable to track the messages in young people's behavior (Linedecker, 1999). In all fairness, tracking dangerous behavior in a violent culture is difficult because play involving toy or even real guns is not considered unusual. Guns and bombs and boys seem to be within the norm for America. There is no anomaly here when you are looking at this pattern from inside American society where the common focus is with a hard eye. Eric and Dylan's secret lives were virtually invisible out in the open because violence is so common in that culture. We have to look at their lives in comparison with less violent ways of living in order to notice the alarming messages in their behavior.

More Tracks—Group Power Struggles

At Columbine High School there was a history of animosity between an athletic elite and other students. The TCM began in 1996[v] [vi] with a half dozen boys who shared an interest in the game *Dungeons and Dragons* and in coping with the hostility that the athletes displayed towards them.[vii] There were in total about 20 TCM members and all were considered to be highly intelligent. As the persecution increased and the boys got older, the whole complexion of the group changed. They began to wear a uniform in opposition to the powerful clothing symbols of the athletes.[viii] By the time the shootings occurred however, Dylan and Eric had moved outside of even that group and were independently challenging the power of the athletic elite[ix] (Gibbs & Roche, 1999; Linedecker, 1999; Murphy, 2001).

During this time a proficient tracker could have detected the rising tension and increased physical intimidation going on among the school's various social groups. Similarly, a tracker would have noticed the changes in Dylan and Eric's behavior. For example, when Dylan and Eric were younger they walked in the halls with their heads down to avoid eye contact, because if they looked up they would get thrown into lockers and be called "fag" by the athletes[x] (Murphy, 2001). Staff must have seen the daily power struggles in the halls. The police were also aware of the shoving matches at Columbine and, like the faculty, made no effective intervention as the situation escalated. As the boys got older and began to fight back, the confrontations increased and their reactions became even more noticeable. They sought safety in numbers, never appearing alone but always in at least pairs. The athletes' persecution on the other hand was mostly ad hoc. Often one athlete picked on another individual in a public place where there were onlookers. Sometimes there were several athletes involved at a time, but the TCM strategy was to move in groups (Murphy, 2001). This behavior spoke a message the athletes understood and at the same time taught the boys that power could be acquired through force (Mitchner & Tufts, 1997).

Eric and Dylan seem to have realized that the most powerful intimidators are those who can take the process of gaining power over others to the ultimate level, that of the killer. The willingness to take action developed as a response to the demeaning

experience of constant abuse producing pressure so intense both Eric and Dylan began carrying knives. Ultimately they accepted violence as a means of acquiring power to the point that they eventually became oppressors themselves. They moved closer towards carrying out an act of extreme violence that was the ultimate symptom of relationship breakdown in the school.

It is clear that at Columbine or in Littleton, Colorado, in general, "No one required the athletes to act responsibly, morally or with character and gave them the license to think that they could do what they wanted, with whom they wanted" (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000, p. 215). That license came from the athlete's ability that could potentially provide revenue for the school and community. This gave them status; however, the Columbine athletes were never taught how to deal with the resulting power. The default was that power was centralized in those that could take it and hold it (Mitchner & Tuffs, 1997). In American culture such power is rarely kept in check with a sense of community responsibility. The constitutional right to bear arms and the tradition of standing one's ground and not retreating beyond the air at your back is an entrenched cultural value that leads to confrontation, when combined with the values of the gunfighter icon (Brown, 1991). That is why there were no brakes placed on any school groups' attempts to acquire power and why they were able to turn Columbine High School into something of a battle zone.

The lateral and vertical pressure of the student cliques against one another was one way of insuring that young people learned to conform to the dominant values of the school and society in general (Murphy, 2001). Those values produce a particular power hierarchy and the competition for space at the top of the hierarchy is always fierce.[xi] By 1995 some 5,285 children had been shot in the United States as a result of struggles between gangs attempting to develop and maintain a power base (Murphy, 2001).[xii]

Bullying in American schools has become so entrenched in school culture that to endure it is considered something of a right of passage. However, response by force has also become accepted behavior. Aggression led to more intimidation because it gave "a cutting edge to the athlete's sense of superiority which they gained by their presence on the playing field....the athletes knew that nobody would hold them accountable for their

transgressions" (Murphy, 2001, p. 132). It was no coincidence then that Dylan Klebold purposefully shot to pieces the display case where the athletic trophies were kept. It was also no coincidence that he murdered Lauren Townsend, captain of the girl's varsity volleyball team (Murphy, 2001). As far as Eric and Dylan were concerned, any student athlete was the enemy.[xiii]

Interpreting Behavior Messages

While it is important to keep a soft eye on the big picture when tracking violence, it is also crucial to notice with the hard eye what is going on with individual students. Warning signs must be interpreted as specific to the individual and this requires paying close attention to individual students. For example, Eric and Dylan created a home video for an English class media project in which they depicted the act of carrying out a series of school shootings and in which they made their intentions known.[xiv] They based their ideas on one of the most violent movies of the 1990s called *The Basketball Diaries.* In this movie, a high school student enters his school with a shotgun and starts gunning down the students who had once tormented him (Murphy, 2001). At Columbine a teacher brought concerns about the English class video to the principal. The only result was that it was decided not to show their video to any students outside of that class and that decision evidently infuriated the video's creators (Linedecker, 1999). In most cases the production of such a video might indicate nothing more than the pervasive acceptance of violence in American culture. However, when considering the reaction of other students, this video should have raised specific concern. Eric's and Dylan's movie efforts were actually applauded by other students because they knew about the pressures the athletes were putting on the two boys, so this video had specific real meaning for these two students.

Klebold and Harris also put together at least four other videotapes over a period of time, possibly going back as far as a year prior to the shootings. In the process they were quite candid about their hopes that high profile movie directors would fight over the film rights to their stories (Gibbs & Roche, 1999; Murphy, 2001).

The Columbine athletes wore baseball caps with the peaks turned to the front. In the English class video, Klebold and Harris depicted themselves wearing their baseball

caps backwards as a sign of rebellion against the athletes, and they wore their caps backwards when they carried out the actual shootings (Murphy, 2001). This specific way set them apart, in order to venerate their identity and status and disconnect them from other groups. Wearing caps this way was not necessarily significant for other students, but is an important track in the pattern of the two boys' behavior.

Another significant factor set Klebold and Harris apart from other groups persecuted by the athletes. To show their resistance they adopted black clothing, long coats, and the symbols of the Nazi Storm troopers or SS. They marched down the corridors of Columbine sometimes goose-stepping as they went (Murphy, 2001). They learned enough German to carry on a simple conversation, they would yell "Heil Hitler" when they scored a strike in bowling class, and they began to delve deeper into Skinhead/Nazi websites. These symbols had culturally understood meanings concerning terror and violence already clearly attached to them, but they were not viewed in the context of what else was happening to the boys as the changes in their behavior unfolded.

This was a significant shift in behavior from walking with their heads down to avoid attracting abuse. They were clearly moving from merely being victims to becoming competitors for power, and they eventually used fear and violence to accomplish this change. Their behavior language signaled their acceptance of the equation in which creating fear equals attaining power. They became a force to be reckoned with and, in so doing, they accelerated the competition by killing some students and letting others live. For a brief time on the day of the shootings, they held an incredible level of power over others, having readjusted the school's power hierarchy during that interval. They perceived the shootings to be the final battle in a war between them and the athletes. They never expected to survive the shootings, and in a kind of Wagnerian sense they saw the shootings and their deaths as a ritual sacrifice.[xv]

The fact that nobody understood what they were seeing is not so surprising considering the disconnection in the school system and how focusing on specialization blinds us to seeing patterns of change in the whole individual. Such a focus helps generate a society in which individual rights are held to be more important than

community responsibility and power hierarchies are condoned and encouraged in order to perpetuate the corporate economic system.

Drugs

Eric was clearly suffering from a number of mental health problems for which he was being treated. It was known that Eric Harris was using *Luvox*, a prescription drug designed to combat mental depression. There is evidence coming to the research forefront that the prescription of such drugs may be problematic because of serious side effects. As Murphy contends, "One of the most alarming side effects of *Luvox* is listed as rage" (2001, p. 160). Other side effects include psychotic delusions and hallucinations, depersonalization, hostility, and attempted suicide" (Murphy, 2001, p. 161). The boys were also frequent users of alcohol, which would not have mixed well with prescription drugs.

While Eric's use of drugs may have been due to an ailment particular to him, prescribing drugs has become a common approach to treating inconvenient behavior in school aged boys. *Ritalin,* for example, is heavily prescribed for American boys (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000; Murphy, 2001). There are over one million boys on *Ritalin* in America, and the rate of prescription tripled between 1990–1995 (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). Pharmaceutical corporations have certainly not discouraged such widespread use of the drug. However, the list of symptoms such drugs treat looks similar to the usual complaint most adults have about boys generally, namely that they prefer the play of the moment to serious focus on the future (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). We should be concerned by the sheer number of diagnosed cases, and the possibility that many mild to moderate cases of various so-called syndromes are a normal variant of boys' temperament that could be corrected by learning environments designed to keep them motivated and energized with a variety of active learning opportunities. Teachers also need to understand that much of boys' outward agitation and rowdiness exists to mask emotional pain (Pollack, 1998). Perhaps these boys are looking for understanding and empathy rather than diagnoses and medication. Medicating these boys may simply perpetuate their inability to cope effectively and disconnects them from their own

emotions and from others around them, making them potential recruits for violent resistance.

A similar dynamic occurs in athletes, with steroids, rather than *Ritalin,* being the culprit. One of the side effects of steroid use is anger. Using steroids thus compounds the anger athletes may feel toward those who place pressure on them to excel, namely coaches, parents, and fans. The problem is that anger cannot easily be directed at those who placed pressure on the athletes, because the pressure comes in the form of adulation and expectations. This leads to transferring anger from "those against whom such negative emotions cannot be expressed to a different easier target" (Murphy, 2001, p. 133). Aggression becomes a common method of releasing tension for the male athletes because their emotional illiteracy leaves them with anger as the primary emotional response to the fear of defeat (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000).

Media

Increasingly American society is offering, as entertainment, a type of desensitization training through violent forms of media (Grossman, 1996). Most poignant in this regard were statements made by Lt. Col. Grossman during the recent sniper incident in Washington, D.C. Grossman, a U.S. military sniper training specialist, pointed out that the military uses violent media to desensitize soldiers enough so that they will actually shoot their human targets (Grossman, 1996). As Slotkin (1992) has pointed out in his book, *Gunfighter Nation*, Americans have deified those who have been able to pull the trigger over and over again, as evidenced by their fascination with gunfighters such as Billy the Kid and Wyatt Earp (Rosa, 1969; Tatum, 1982). This veneration and desensitization make pulling the trigger much easier.

After the Columbine shooting the video game industry actually came out with even more violent games (Murphy, 2001) in the name of corporate profits. They justified this move by citing freedom of expression, which equated to marketing without a sense of conscience. From the corporate perspective Americans need to be desensitized about violence in order to continue the violent process of globalized corporate consumerism. This parallels the need for ancient Roman governments to keep their citizens conditioned to violence and conquest through gladiator sports.

Not surprisingly, Eric and Dylan, like a number of other school shooters, were ardent fans of the type of violent video games that have been such effective agents of desensitization and disconnection for the U.S. military[xvi] (Grossman, 1996; Lindecker, 1999). These video games were readily available to Eric and Dylan at a vulnerable stage in their lives, when they were feeling powerless against the athletes who assaulted them (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000; Linedecker, 1999; Murphy, 2001).

By June 1998, there is a clear turning point in Dylan's emotional state as he wrote in Eric Harris' yearbook, *The Coming of the April of Natural Born Killers,* as a reference to one of the three ultra violent movies preferred by the boys. The other movie that is part of popular American culture and was watched by Eric and Dylan, in addition to *Basketball Diaries,* was *The Matrix.* The violent video games and movies provided them with rationalization and models to follow in order to empower themselves through violence.

Community Consent

The most insidious factor in the Columbine tragedy is that the existence of symbols and hierarchies of power cannot openly continue within a public school without at least the tacit support and consent from the community at large. Columbine students have reported to investigators that the teachers and administrators continued to favor the athletes even as the hallway violence worsened (Murphy, 2001). "Eight months before the shootings, the County Sheriff's Department officially warned the County Commissioners about an epidemic of violence in the Columbine School vicinity…the Sheriff's department identified roving gangs of athletes as the culprits" (Murphy, 2001, p. 135).

The immediate response by school authorities to an increase in school violence is usually stricter security, including the use of metal detectors and bars on windows, as well as security guards and the addition of more police to patrol school halls. Campuses become closed and anyone who is not on legitimate business at a school is refused entry. For example, at the 3,000–student Thomas Jefferson High School in Brooklyn, the school board installed metal detectors but also installed what was termed a grieving room. This room was staffed with professional counsellors to help students deal with the emotional

effects of the commonly occurring random violence in the school (Linedecker, 1999). These are, however, superficial treatments for a problem that runs far deeper in American culture than could be solved with just increased security.

The evolution of the boys' identity from a response to oppression into a means to acquire power is a discouraging commentary on American society, where gangs form to protect their members and to acquire power. These formations are the direct result of competition for power inherent in the American corporate system. In that system violence is an acceptable process for acquiring power and this acquisition is governed by two key factors. Power, like all resources, is not equally distributed nor is it infinite, and so the competition for this limited commodity is fierce. The struggle for power centres around keeping what you have and getting what you need, and whether it is school gangs or nations in conflict, the struggles most often lead to violence (Hedges, 2002).

The Big Picture

By projection it could also be said that America's powerful world position contributed to the many shootings in the 1990s. It was a time when American power and the cultural icons of that power were becoming pre-eminent. The U.S.S.R. was gone as was the Cold War and it seemed that nothing could challenge the U.S.A.[xvii] During this time America's schools had a record-setting number of students and teachers killed and wounded in shooting incidents (Canada, 1995). Columbine had been preceded by a wave of violence that made the 1990s the worst time period for school violence to date (Linedecker, 1999). The U.S. Department of Education reported that 6,000 students were caught and/or expelled for bringing guns to school illegally during the 1996–97 school years (Linedecker, 1999). Ten percent of the nation's schools reported incidents of robbery, rape, suicide, or murder (Linedecker, 1999).

Just as the U.S.A. was becoming the pre-eminent unchallenged super power and inner city school violence was perceived as the norm, concern began to emerge about violence invading the suburbs and rural communities once thought to be safe from the dangers of major cities (Linedecker, 1999). For example, one of the most lethal shooting incidents occurred at Westside School in Jonesboro, Arkansas, a school where only 250 students were enrolled. There were approximately 600 students at Heath High in

Paducah, Kentucky, where another shooting incident occurred (Linedecker, 1999). What was thought to be a situation characteristic of cities was being recognized as a much more widespread problem occurring throughout American culture. Considering the conditions of the times, it is not hard to understand why young American males raised in an all-powerful state would refuse suppression by any group and use violence to resist it. The United States citizenry including students are clearly aware that:

> Never before in modern history has a country dominated the earth so totally as the United States does today....Americans in the absence of limits put to them by anybody and anything act as if they own a kind of blank check in their "McWorld". This does nothing to decrease the pressure on young males to acquire and display their power. That the Americans are clearly aware of this pattern of power can be seen in George Bush's statements in 1992 regarding a "New World Order," after the fall of the U.S.S.R., and the apparent success of the Gulf War. A world once divided into two armed camps now recognizes one rule and pre-eminent power, the United States of America. (Blum, 2000, p. 1)

By outward extension of this view from school culture, we can perceive that young American males need to be able to feel they are powerful in a powerful nation. A culture cannot equate a gender identity to power without there being hostility to any forces that threaten the ability of individual members of that gender to succeed in attaining personal power. War gives American males purpose and meaning, while winning is acknowledged by the bestowing of prestige and status (Hedges, 2002). Violence is considered to be just so much collateral damage in the training ground for the American male who will extend the "globalizing" economic empire of America through military/corporate means. Just as American foreign policy tends to isolate that nation, American school life tends to reinforce the isolation of at least a certain type of student (Barone, 1990, p. 313), and to victimize many others in the process. Columbine's groups, like little nations, tried to survive by attempting to extend their influence and power. There was a clear pattern of disconnection and fear among the school's social groups, and, like nations, some groups went to war to protect their special interests.

Columbine as a Teachable Moment for Canadian Teachers

It is clear that massive changes in the structure and operation of American society would have to occur in order to eliminate violence in general. What the Columbine

tragedy has demonstrated is how the traditionally violent aspect of America life comes forward in its institutions and that schools by their nature intensify the process. Popular culture legitimizes violence as well as a lack of personal responsibility, empathy, and a sense of kinship towards others, beyond a nationalistic sense of patriotic Americanism. When a culture combines the ability and willingness to kill with a need for power, we should not be surprised when violence erupts. Violent icons of the corporate system also play an integral role in the violent American culture. Violent media as entertainment and the icons of the Wild West, derived from the Civil War and its aftermath, are also central in American culture. In short, the prevalent American view is that everything is potentially a frontier for America to globalize and conquer, and the role of boys and men is constructed to accomplish the task. School violence is simply a smaller version of the violence in corporate-based American society.

In this "globalizing" world economy, what can Canada learn from the Columbine tragedy and the pervasiveness of violence in the U.S.? We know that Canada does not have the same cultural icons as the United States. We have no glorified Billy the Kids, no Wyatt Earps, to construct masculine identity, although we are obviously exposed to them through American media. We do not have a political icon like Jesse James venerated as a hero for robbing banks and trains. While the U.S. Civil War had much to do with how Canada was formed, Canadians were more concerned about avoiding the experience of such a war than venerating it. At the same time, we should not feel too comfortable with the apparent distance between Canadian culture and American icons. Canada is not immune to the violence in American culture, or to the violence perpetrated by the corporate system. There have been several shootings in Canadian schools, such as at the École Polytechnique in Montreal, and in Taber, Alberta. The Canadian and American school systems are similar in many ways and a culture of cruelty is very much a reality for boys in Canadian schools. Part of being a savvy teacher is being aware of how American values and school models affect Canadian schools. For example, we have to be aware that in both America and Canada males are rarely celebrated for moral or emotional courage and are usually in the news because they represent power (Murphy, 2001). We must also realize that the same American societal forces and trends that helped

to mold Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold are present in every Canadian school and community (Murphy, 2001). Primarily we must remember that the cultural border between the United States and Canada is porous.

As teachers, I contend, we need to look more critically at our systems of living and at how and why we are so disconnected from other systems crucial to our survival. All of the research into single factor causes of school violence has done little to help authorities identify when a specific individual will act beyond condoned levels of violence. Teachers have to learn how to develop and sustain teacher-student partnerships within the context of their classrooms and follow changes in those partnerships as they occur. Our way of schooling and living that is similar to the U.S. also causes us to forget the web of social relationship that we depend upon for survival (Capra, 1996). In the classroom, it seems the only way to deal with pervasive violent symbols is to develop the types of relationships with students that open the way to question their meaning specifically and our way of living generally.[xviii] We must teach our teachers how to sense and track changes in relationships through behavior language so that we can see problems as they develop. We must also work towards raising teacher awareness of our school system's effects upon teachers and students.

If we do not use the Columbine tragedy as a teachable moment to turn a more critical eye on the cultures and systems behind school violence, I fear we will be confronted with more school tragedies. Clearly, the U.S. system has not coped any better since Columbine. On March 22, 2005 in a small Northern Minnesota town called Red Lake, a 16–year–old male killed his grandparents. He then took his grandfather's weapons and police car, drove to the local high school and shot to death five students, a teacher, and a security guard before killing himself. It was the worst such event since Columbine. Let us not ignore the chilling warnings written by Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold before the Columbine killings. In Klebold's 1998 yearbook, Harris drew a gunman standing amid a sea of dead bodies with a caption: "The only reason your [sic] still alive is because someone has decided to let you live." In his math notebook, the day before the attack, Klebold wrote "...It's interesting when I'm in my human form, knowing I'm going to die. Everything has a touch of triviality to it." Teacher savvy, I

argue, is an excellent first step towards diffusing such anger and developing connection and empathy in young men like these.

Conclusion

Disconnection in teacher student relationships, caused by the processes and goals of the public school system, is the most pressing challenge facing high school teachers today. Disrupting this disconnection and subverting the forces that produce it are the primary goals of the savvy teacher. While the development of teacher savvy is a very individual process, that process must lead to the acquisition of three vital abilities in the face of pressures from corporate values rampant within the school system: being able to develop teacher student partnerships, sustain those partnerships, and track behavior indicating changes in relational rhythms. They can only be developed in concert with an awareness of the need to change teaching practice derived from personal experiences. From this desire to change the savvy teacher must be able to utilize the processes of schooling to educate about the problems derived from our way of living, which are neither compatible with our planetary systems nor sustainable over the long term.

To practice horse whispering in the classroom, teachers must develop their other eyes to sense the relational system of their classroom. They must learn to see the teaching environment as a complex interaction of systems, that is, a network of interconnected reciprocal relations that function well as long as its interacting systems unfold harmoniously. Then they must learn to track this relational system from within, by being immersed in the web of classroom relationships, and sensitive to shifts in relational rhythms, aware of the patterns and needs of other systems that comprise the learning setting. The savvy teacher must be willing to educate students to understand the influence of the corporate agenda in the process of schooling and, to this end, abandon typical prescribed curriculum plans, and rely instead on teachable moments that occur within the classroom setting, all the while camouflaging their intent to educate students to think for themselves. It is important for the savvy teacher to realize how being powerless can make a student feel fearful and disconnected and that, for young teachers, the classroom can be a fearful place, with the sudden realization of being unprepared to handle what occurs in that setting or even influence the outcome of events. The savvy teacher needs to

encourage and enhance self-sufficiency in the classroom in order to disrupt dependency on the processes offered to us by the corporate way of living. Self-sufficiency reduces dependency on corporate solutions to the problems of living and the self-sufficient teacher must track for what is available to help form solutions to problems.

To develop trust in teacher-student partnerships, the savvy teacher must offer their own skills and strengths to extend the abilities of his students, at the same time being aware of others' perceptions of their actions and how they can be interpreted in ways that arouse fear, even though that is not the intention. To sustain teacher-student relationships, the savvy teacher must pay attention to student fears and how fear translates into behavior. For a savvy teacher, student behavior patterns read like a story in a text that is never finished but continually open, requiring constant re-reading. The savvy teacher must adopt an anomaly problem solver identity to disrupt disconnection and invoke opportunities for change.

Ultimately the savvy teacher works towards subverting the replication of corporate-driven consumerism, and the forces of fear and violence fueling it, by opening awareness concerning the need for radical changes in our way of living.

Chapter Five Endnotes

[i] Contemporary American Indian education has focused on Indian people learning the skills necessary to be productive—or at least survive—in post-industrial American society. American Indians have been encouraged to be consumers in the tradition of the American dream and all that it entails. How can they re-envision and re-establish the ecology of education that formed and maintained Tribal societies? Ironically, many creative Western thinkers have embraced essentially Indigenous environmental education views and are vigorously appropriating Indigenous concepts to support the development of their alternative models. (Cajete, 1994, p. 21)

[ii] Brain development and therefore psychosocial maturity exists not only on an everyday continuum of experience but also in the context of mini-crises that are created organically by the brain's attention to its environment and by the community's attention to the brain. A child grows up by force of nature and environmental stimulants, but some of these stimulants need to be planned by the leaders and teachers in the environment. (Gurian, 2001, p. 285)

[iii] What happens when carnivores confront is governed by the necessity to survive. The initial response of a carnivore to surprise is flight, since those who underestimate the danger of the unknown tend to perish oftener than those who overestimate it. Most animals flee unless they are sure at a glance that the odds are heavily in their favour. Thus, most animals will flee if startled, and the vast majority of animals will avoid a confrontation with man if they have a clear escape route. However, when you corner an animal, especially if you come upon it suddenly, cutting off its only escape route, it will

attack. Biological imperatives drive it to attack. How close you must come depends on the animal, but there is a point for every species that once past requires that all action be interpreted as an overwhelming threat, and the only response is attack. Even the normally timid rabbit will attack when there is no other avenue of action. Every animal has a point where it will turn and fight because it sees that further flight is impossible and death is the obvious alternative. Only a very hungry predator takes its prey when the prey has turned instead of while it's on the run. A fleeing animal is a vulnerable animal. A trapped animal has nothing else to lose. And sometimes, the unexpectedness of its ferocity creates enough space for it to escape. The cornered attack is a last chance, however unlikely, at survival. (Brown, 1978, p. 70)

The animal at the fight end of the fight/flight spectrum is a predator, and the animal at the flight end is preyed upon. Based on this assumption, you can describe humans as predators, but humans can also be passive, non-violent and non-aggressive. This curious and perhaps unique mixture of fight and flight, prey and predator is almost always present in our relationships and communications. (Roberts, 2001, p. 11)

[iv] Perhaps the most lost art in our service to teen development today is the rite of passage…we require our high school students to grow up by self creating such a ritual which then takes a form that may be high risk…we do not organize the adolescent journey into a set of mini-crises called rites of passage. (Gurian, 2001, p. 285)

[v] Alienated children and youth are assigned a multitude of labels, most of them unfriendly, They are described as aggressive or anxious, as attention-disordered or affectionless, as unmotivated or un-teachable, as drug abusers or dropouts. Most terms are either overtly hostile or covertly patronizing in the long-established tradition of blaming the victim. While professional pejoratives may sound more elegant than labels invoked by the public, both are often equally condescending. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 7)

[vi] Young people who have embraced lifestyles of freedom without responsibility cannot be reclaimed by either permissive or authoritarian approaches. Adults who place no demands on these youth are viewed as weak, and are abandoning them to the tyranny of negative peers. But to demand submission is to fuel rebellion and the rejection of adult values. The formidable challenge is to develop new educational approaches that avoid the pitfalls of either overindulgence or authoritarian obedience. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 28)

[vii] We have given our children ethical values that say, "Whatever you do is all right as long as you don't get caught." We have taught them that success is everything, no matter how ruthless you might be in achieving your results. We have based our whole society on power, portraying compassion, gentleness, and caring as "sissy" qualities. Tough, macho—this is how you should operate. Children adopt these values because they are so prevalent. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. xi)

[viii] With the advent of scientific management in the nineteenth century, schools became depersonalized bureaucracies, replacing primary human relations with an elaborate system of rules. In a remarkable bit of "newspeak" (i.e., faults are relabeled as virtues), the American Association of School Administrators applauded formal codes of conduct in student handbooks as the "most important innovation of American schools for the control and management of student behaviour. The effective code carries a clear message to the student: This you can do; this you cannot do; and if you do what you shouldn't this is the price you pay. Nothing that we know about human beings suggests that we have been programmed to be obedient. But Western civilization resounds with the theme that authority is to be revered, and obedience, if not natural, is certainly ideal. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. XXxx)

[ix] An alternative management strategy is "inductive discipline." This involves communicating to children the effect of their behaviour on others while fostering empathy and responsibility. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 53)

[x] We feel impotent in countering the power of peers, for " ...the lessons pupils get from one another in the schoolyard are a hundred times more u.

[xi] A school in California secures funds for a concrete wall around its playground to protect children from stray bullets fired by warring gangs in the housing project across the street. Nobody mentions that most of the occupants of the project are also children, since that is on the other side of the wall. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 37)

[xii] Modern children desperately pursue "artificial belongings" because this need is not fulfilled by families, schools, and neighborhoods. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 48)

[xiii] Schooling concentrates on segmented parts and separate facts:

> There is currently in our society an enormous emphasis on the self-narcissism, self-concern and preoccupation with "me"....at the same time...surprisingly broad and influential range of psychological theory turns out to legitimatize selfishness. Schools have institutionalized selfish strategies to the detriment of cooperation. Addicted to hyper-individualism and cut-throat competition, schools pit students against one another. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 35)

[xiv] The truth is that most of us have very little firsthand experience with using guns as weapons. Even the vast majority of police officers have never exchanged shots with a suspect. Most of us receive our images of guns and their use through television, film, and newspapers. Unfortunately, the images from the screen and the newspapers are often unrepresentative or biased because of the sensationalism and exaggeration typically employed to sell news and entertainment. (Lott, 2000, p. 1)

[xv] I wanted a death that would be an omen to anyone who saw it. I wanted a spectacular death, full of final insights. I wanted my last track to be the sign of a struggle. I wanted a death where the signs of my going would say to whoever read them that it there was nothing beyond life but the abyss, I had gone into it taking the best of myself with me in one joyous leap. I did not want a bad medicine death.

> There were so many kinds of bad medicine death. Killed by boredom and the tiny, unconnected insignificance of civilized life that hits like a predator coming in from above and behind you, as silent as night. (Brown, 1978, p. 177)

[xvi] While youth hunger for a feeling of importance, adults "infantilize" them. The typical approach to the cries of boredom from youth is to build them a new playground or teen-town where they are told to go and play some more. Today, little is asked of young people except that they be consumers. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 37)

Video games are being developed now whereby a player will be able to: "...go in, call up the game environment, theme and story that you want to play in and you interact with it" (Murphy, 2001, p. 309).

According to U.S.C. professor Marsha Kinder, "Live action video technology makes the violence that much more realistic" (Murphy, 2001, p. 309). Kinder states that violent video games are: "Worse than T.V. or a movie because it communicates the message that the only way to be empowered is through violence" (Murphy, 2001, p. 309).

[xvii] It is abundantly clear that the majority of violent transgressors are boys who through the 1990s were increasingly: "Turning their frustrations and anger on teachers and classmates in evermore lethal ways" (Linedecker, 1999, p. 16).

The events that seem to have set the violence in motion were varied. Some were spontaneous and others involved a great deal of planning over time. They could have been bullied, teased or suffered a relationship breakdown. They could have been abused because they were perceived to be weak, different and maybe they had something that somebody else wanted. Some wore long coats for symbols or to hide a weapon. Some wore no coats at all. What links them together are more general factors than clothing or a universal cause. All of the shooters shared three traits: 1) they were mis-educated as to how they should handle emotional pain, 2) they were all familiar with the culture of cruelty and the disconnection derived from the school system, and 3) they were willing to kill.

When pushed too far in their perceptions they did exactly what American society expected them to do and that expectation was to fight. They were expressing their problems, their feelings and their frustrations through extreme violence and after all the American empire has been built on violent process. The shooters in these other cases all shared feelings of, "Hostility, inadequacy, depression and paranoia" (Linedecker, 1999, p. 17). They had few true friends and they shared a tendency towards aggression as a solution and they appear to have little remorse for their actions. They shared a tendency towards technological isolation spending vast amounts of time with computers and video games and they had access to firearms.

[xviii] We caretakers fail to meet a child's most basic needs, the child learns that they are unpredictable or unreliable. Some children reach beyond their families in search of substitute attachments with other adults or peers. Those more seriously damaged become "relationship-resistant," viewing even friendly, helpful adults with deep distrust. Expecting rejection, they employ protective behaviors learned in prior encounters with threatening persons. (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 9)

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Appendix 1

Case Example—Disconnection Between the B.C. Government and Teachers

Let us examine what occurred when teachers were not savvy about the public view of British Columbia schools in the early 1980s and were taken by surprise by the backlash directed at them because of the changes in society that had taken place in the 1960s–70s.[i] Teachers made the mistake of ignoring history and assuming that the value of their work would speak for itself. They should have been savvy enough to know that, in B.C., there are patterns to the way the government values and devalues the educational system, patterns that have established a long history of disconnection between government and teachers. Teachers should have realized that it is the corporate perspective of schooling that always takes precedence, in good and bad times. The corporate perspective views schooling as a way of allowing the middle and upper classes to improve their social status while denying poorer children the same opportunity for improvement[ii] (Kilian, 1985). When times are economically tough this class struggle is intensified (Kilian, 1985).

Belief in the school as the key to economic success was the reasoning behind the attack on the school system during the Great Depression in the 1930s,[iii] and was responsible in the 1950s for the great influx of students into the system born during the Baby-Boom era. There was nothing done to respond to the fact that school populations were growing faster than teachers could cope. When the Chant Commission was launched to ascertain how schools were coping with the population boom, its authors noted that teachers were likely to get scarcer as a result of "abysmal working conditions and salaries" (Kilian 1985, p. 34). Teachers reacted with militancy, saying that everything but the population increase changed slowly. As population figures rose, staff levels remained stagnant and class sizes soared. The response of then-Education Minister Leslie Peterson was to state that eliminating classes of over 40 was feasible but impractical because it would "result in an inferior education system" (Kilian 1985, p. 35).

By the late 1960s, teachers were increasingly impatient with government attitudes towards education, and more confident of their own power to influence policy. In 1967, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation set up its own commission on education. The

commission concluded that schooling should be humanized and personalized and that the development of the intellect should parallel the development of emotional maturity and social responsibility. The government responded by introducing Bill 86 in 1967. Bill 86 required major changes in school financing for the purpose of freeing up money for the Roberts Bank Super Port Project at a time when the school system was short 382 classrooms (Kilian, 1985). An even greater rift between government and teachers emerged with "the government's plan to divert money from teachers' pension plans into B.C. Hydro bonds to help pay for the government's dams on the Columbia and Peace rivers" (Kilian, 1985, p. 36). The BCTF levied $3 from each of its members to fund a major publicity campaign to coincide with the next provincial election. To press its rights to advocate for control of pension funds, the BCTF sought out the support of organized labor and became affiliated with anti-corporate interests. The government saw this as an intrusion into politics by a supposedly non-political group and reacted with hostility. The power struggle between government and teachers escalated from there.

Teachers launched a campaign to improve pension benefits and in 1971 staged a one-day strike. Although this was not the first B.C. teachers' strike—teachers in Victoria went out in 1919 and in New Westminster in 1921—new rules of engagement were employed. The government withdrew sick-leave provisions and no longer required BCTF membership for all teachers. The disconnection between the BCTF and the political right wing did not ease because political analysts agreed that the BCTF was a major factor in the defeat of the W.A.C. Bennett government in 1972. This made the BCTF a potential high profile target because, "In less than a decade, it had moved from acting as a non-political interest group to a powerful political force[iv] and right wing governments and corporate interests more or less declared war at that point" (Kilian, 1985, p. 39). Teachers in the classroom were about to feel the brunt of the right wing political system that perceived human resources as expendable, and human service professionals as their enemies. The increasingly left wing leaning among many teachers was seen by right wing interests as a betrayal of schooling which, from their perspective, was to widen rather than close the gap between social classes.

With the onset of the depression in the early 1980s, the opponents of left wing views began to maneuver politically by indicating their fondness for organizing students in divisions and streams according to ability.[v] Such approaches played into student fears and made failure rates soar. In fact, failure was perceived by many at the time as a way of tightening up what was considered to be a lax system. It was not uncommon to see standardized testing embraced as a classroom management tool rather than just as an evaluation method. Teachers found the opposition between the school system and the political systems increasingly difficult to cope with and were subjected to increasing levels of redundant regulations and bureaucracy: attempts to move teachers away from education and back to schooling as their principal focus. There was increasing tension between the corporate support for schooling and a more humanist view that respected students' needs. In the meantime, it was the government's view there was a need to divert money away from schools to pay for the Coquihalla Highway and the costs of Expo 86.

At the same time, teachers had to cope with rapid social changes that placed special needs students in their already crowded classrooms. As a result, they found themselves attempting to solve an increasing number of complex social problems, often with *ad hoc* approaches. Teachers, for the most part, were neither trained to handle these new class dynamics nor given the necessary resources. Their training had usually been directed around "best case" scenarios in classrooms rather than the realities that they now had to face on a daily basis. Waiting in the wings were various types of technology purportedly capable of solving the problems faced by teachers on a daily basis.

The introduction of high cost technology to enhance learning has had limited success. It has been largely aimed at meeting corporate demands for trained workers, and has dramatically increased the cost of schooling in the process.[vi] [vii] There are still many serious unanswered questions about how much benefit all of this technology has actually added to learning. Computers gave access to enormous amounts of data, but a shortage of data has never been a problem. Lack of skills to make sense of copious information is what plagues students and teachers, and computer technology has done much to exacerbate the problem. Corporate interests used the economic conditions of the early 1980s recession as an excuse to attack teachers and gain public support for high-tech

innovations as a low cost, high efficiency solution. Schools became vulnerable to claims of both extravagance and incompetence as political interests sought scapegoats for the economic problems.[viii]

Teachers were not savvy in this instance because they did not perceive clearly where the attacks were coming from, within the public. They did not realize that many of their strongest opponents possessed advanced degrees and had been successful in the system themselves. In fact, their opponents were products of the system and their way of viewing the world was perpetuated by the school system. The schooled middle and upper classes were willing to turn against the school system during an economic recession because they did not want to bear the cost of educating the masses.

In effect, the school system was now confronting graduates of the system who resented the proposed changes of the 1970s that tried to emphasize education and de-emphasize schooling even though they enjoyed benefits from those changes, because the cost to educate was higher. Businessmen wanted greater access to schools as a new market.[ix] They supported political parties that listened primarily to corporate voices rather than to what they regarded as blue collar left wing political viewpoints. Corporate interests also knew that they—and for the most part their children—could efficiently show evidence of their learning on standardized quantitative tests[x] (Kilian, 1985). They knew that their values and worldview lent itself to standardized assessments[xi] much more efficiently[xii] than to other views about what young people should experience as learning. This played into corporate views about schools because, as the 1980s depression hit and cutbacks occurred, the government found allies for a return to so-called higher standards that could be cheaply evaluated in quantitative terms by standardized tests.[xiii] Tying academic success to standardized exams ensured relatively easy access for their children to higher education, while minimizing competition from children less socio-economically fortunate (Kilian, 1985). By 1990 there were rapidly increasing levels of disconnection and fear in the school system, resulting from a decade of government reaction to the economic situation of the 1980s, much as there had been a reaction to the more open 1920s when the Great Depression occurred in the 1930s.[xiv]

Each government reform imposed on the school system has been opposed by those responsible for implementing changes. That opposition has usually taken the form of demands for more diversity and choice, which would allow for a broader range of learning experiences. The government reforms are usually touted as requiring a back-to-basics approach, which is problematic since the B.C. government's only goal has been basic preparation of students for the past, rather than the present or the unknown future[xv] (Kilian, 1985). Through all of these different events that have impacted the school system, it is important to remember that schools are doing exactly what they were designed to do and they have not suddenly veered from their designed purpose. The fact is that they were never designed to meet an individual's needs from the individual's perspective, which raises the question of whether we as individuals even need schools. In this regard, I do not question the need for education but I do wonder if there is a need for "forced schooling configured around six classes a day, five days a week, 10 months a year for twelve years…comprising a deadly routine" (Gatto, 2003, p. 34).

Appendix 1 Endnotes

[i] By the early 1970s, relative prosperity, increased student enrolment, an aura of optimism and a culture of risk taking began to permeate schools. There was a sense of new possibilities being brought to classrooms by young and enthusiastic teachers, whose services were suddenly in demand. The prevailing mood was one of challenge, change and political activism. Mortified by the success of Sputnik, Americans began to pay more attention to public education, and the effect on schools spilled over into Canada. There was encouragement for schools to become more innovative and more "relevant." Unconventional thinking, however weakly reasoned, was prized. In the crowded schools of the 1970s, there was often considerable confusion and conflict between the old and new guards. These schools were passionate places, committed to the social importance of the work of teaching and learning. (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 5)

[ii] Big business in our schools is symbolic of the Americanization of Canadian education, which in turn is part of a major current transformation of Canadian economic, social and cultural life. All institutions are under intense pressure to operate as if they were a business. The corporate model, based on head-to-head competition and survival of the fittest, is the prototype for all government and, more recently, educational institutions. As our countries merge, Canada finds itself adopting American-style corporatism, unabashed entrepreneurial goals and a culture of competitiveness. During the last decade, Canada has fundamentally realigned its orientation from east-west to north-south, in essence becoming part of a new borderless North American economy. Canada is now seen by North American corporations, whether Canadian-based or not, as another "state" about the market size of California. (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 94)

[iii] The provincial economy had collapsed. Based then as now on basic resource-extraction industries, it suffered badly when foreign markets dried up. Politicians and public alike were looking frantically for a way to get the government off people's backs, to lighten the tax burden and restore prosperity. At the

same time, the depression was seen by some as an opportunity to hit back at the airy-fairy "progressive" education reforms of the 1920s. Following U.S. and eastern Canadian examples, the B.C. schools had seen the adoption of such radical notions as a "child-centered" curriculum, junior high schools, and something called vocational training—a sop to students who couldn't or wouldn't study *real* subjects like Latin.

The schools had taken a heavy broadside from the right wing business community in 1932, when the notorious Kidd Report was published. George Kidd, a Vancouver businessman, had been appointed by the provincial Tory government to study government finances. Kidd suggested an overall cut of 25 per cent in provincial government spending, and he took special aim at education.

Among other things, Kidd wanted to cut teacher salaries by 25 per cent; abolish all school boards; and require students between fourteen and sixteen to pay half the costs of their high school education. Those over sixteen could pay the whole shot. Similarly, teachers would have to pay for the whole cost of their training, and UBC would be shut down altogether, with deserving students getting scholarships to schools "elsewhere in the Dominion."

Kidd's proposals reflected widespread resentment of trends in education. School costs were going up. The B.C. Teachers' Federation and the Parent-Teacher Association were clamoring for expensive equipment. The province was chopped into an inefficient patchwork of over 800 school districts. Hard-pressed taxpayers could see that a plot was afoot to keep students in school as long as possible, instead of getting them out into the workplace. In Kidd's opinion, most students should quit after Grade 6 and find a job, leaving high school for a small minority of the bright and well-bred. The idea of staying school to learn a useful trade was regarded as a mere frill by Tory education minister Joshua Hinchcliffe. (Kilian, 1985, p. 30)

[iv] Interest in making education more democratic was accelerated by the Vietnam War and the campus unrest of the late 1960s. Until then, Canadian and American school systems had concentrated on producing an academic elite, defined as whoever survived the system. Something went wrong a quarter-century ago: the system produced a generation of elite students who rejected elitism. They came out of university contemptuous of the system that had produced them, but they were keenly aware that the system could be changed only be access to the knowledge, skills and values embodies in the system itself. (Kilian, 1985, p. 41)

[v] From the corporate perspective what was required to get things back on track was a more clearly defined hierarchy, unquestioning discipline and punitive supervision, as imposed…in the world of business. (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 11).

[vi] For a time the Social Credit government…in the mid 1980s…were mesmerized by the hope of a technological fix, using the Open Learning Institute, the Knowledge Network, and maybe computers to spread teaching costs as thinly as possible. "Trying to make schools more "businesslike" simply ignores the fact that education, like health care and police work, is a labor-intensive activity. Because technology makes such services only marginally more productive, they are almost never profitable. Apart from economic arguments, however, education is a human activity that most people find both urgently necessary and personally satisfying regardless of its high cost and uncertain outcome. In this regard education is like having children—another enterprise that, like education, fails to meet the six requirements for business success. (Kilian 1985, p. 51)

[vii] The rise in school costs was less than the public perceived it to be because the schools were doing so much more than they had been asked to do even a decade earlier. Class size had been sharply reduced under Premier Barrett and in-service training of teachers enabled them to address a greater range of learning problems but the training had to be paid for. (Kilian, 1985, p. 45)

[viii] The government consciously chose not only to make education a low priority, but to make it, along with other fields, a scapegoat for the province's economic woes—to portray it as a problem rather than a solution, because an unhappy and frightened populace was looking for someone to blame. (Kilian, 1985, p. 57)

[ix] Business provides speakers and materials to explain how our market economy works, implicitly or explicitly representing free enterprise theory as some sort of natural law of economics. It undermines the school's ability to help students learn to think critically about economic issues and smacks of the kind of indoctrination we so rightly criticize in totalitarian states. When a corporation sponsors a lunch program, provides educational materials or backs literacy classes, it becomes very difficult for the school to avoid complementary business-oriented economics curricula. When an oil company sponsors a school conference on the environment, the likelihood of any serious dialogue on the oil sector's role in energy depletion or oil spills is reduced. If this oil company than provides the school with a set of state-of-the-art texts and videos on the environment—supplies most schools could never acquire with public money—the material becomes a core teaching resource of that school. (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 80)

[x] The government spent a great deal of time and effort in trying to revise what is taught in schools and trying to assess how well it is being mastered…emphasis in highs school was to fall much more heavily on science, languages and computers…however…given the attacks the government kept making on the teachers who were expected to implement curriculum changes, government sincerity about curriculum reform seemed suspect from the start. (Kilian, 1985, p. 98)

[xi] The political nature of the exams was emphasized by the manner of their establishment. Having signed an agreement in June 1983 with the BCTF to work out an acceptable method of student evaluation, the ministry in mid-summer unilaterally decided to carry out Grade 12 provincial exams. The teachers, angered at what they saw as reneging on an agreement, declined the government's invitation to help in developing the exams. At the end of September, the BCTF executive passed a motion advising members not to participate in the preparation or marking of Grade 12 exams…a pedagogic shift was foreseen toward topics that could be easily covered on multiple-choice tests, and toward the "cramming" such tests invite. Given the fact that at the time the province had one of the lowest university participation rates in Canada (16 per cent for urban young people, less than 7 per cent for rural, residents), the exams seemed to create an awful lot of fuss for such a small group. (Kilian, 1985, p. 105)

[xii] In the early decades of the century, such exams determined not only who could graduate from high school, but who could be promoted from one grade to another, even in elementary school. The first B.C. royal commission, on education, the 1925 Putman-Weir commission, recommended dropping external exams, stating that "Nobody could be sure what was measured, or how closely the measure tallied with reality." Not until the 1930s were high school entrance exams ended. Then, in 1937, the principle of accreditation weakened the case for exams in the final year of high school. An accredited high school could pass 40 per cent (later 60 per cent) of its students without obliging them to take provincial exams. The function of our high schools still was restrictive, almost to the point of being single-purpose—to prepare a select group of students, almost all of whom lived in the larger urban centers, from matriculation into university. After the war, however, the role of the secondary school began to change and expand beyond its original narrow "prep-school" definition. Performance on the provincial exams: good results meant the school won accreditation…The Chant commission changed the nature of high-school education, and encouraged far more diversification in secondary programs. When teachers' training might be just a couple of years greater than that of their students, a provincial exam system served a useful purpose. (Kilian, 1985, p. 102)

[xiii] Brain based research is helpful in understanding why it is that males who get 70% of the D's and F's in our schools and only about 40% of the A's end up outscoring females in standardized tests. The

student who naturally favours deductive and quick abstract reasoning tends to do well in a multiple choice format…the student who tends to quickly single out information rather than thinking out a larger variety of possibilities also does better. (Gurian, 2001, p. 302)

[xiv] By imposing new curriculum and particularly new exams,

The ministry and the government were expressing a paradoxical vote of no confidence in themselves. They were saying that they didn't trust the teachers who had been educated (mostly in B.C.) and professionally trained (mostly in B.C.) to the standards set by B.C. governments (mostly Social Credit) and enforced by the B.C. ministry of education, which had also determined the curriculum that teachers must use…the exams were just another political stick with which to beat the government's political enemies. Science teachers were mad at the factual errors, vague questions and poor diagrams in the Biology 12 test and sent off a formal letter of protest to Victoria. Biology markers found that 63 per cent of the exam questions had some kind of error in them, and the test used terminology that biologists stopped using twenty years ago. (Kilian, 1985, p. 107)

[xv] We ask that today's schools be judged on "preparing students for the twenty-first century. As if we know exactly what will be required. This expectation renders schools vulnerable to criticisms that cannot be refuted. (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 20)

Appendix 2
Learning Savvy

Savvy is most often learned indirectly by paying attention and noticing what happens as people who are savvy engage the world. I have had the good fortune to ride with a number of such people, who have been my mentors. Sometimes a lesson about savvy is immediately obvious; sometimes a process of reflection is required before the lesson becomes clear; and sometimes it is possible to ask and be told directly what the lesson is. But always the lesson is embedded in events of daily life; it is never without context. In order to describe how I learned to be savvy, it is necessary to give the context and the events that carried the lessons. That is, it is necessary to tell the stories. Following are the stories of learning to be savvy.

One spring day I was introduced to an old rancher who lived in the High River area of Alberta. I was drawn to Bert because he worked with horses in ways with which I am familiar and because he had a broad knowledge of the history of the West. Despite his age Bert saddled his own horse and rode without any assistance. This might seem unremarkable for someone who had been a cowboy all of his life, but Bert was blind. Too many years in the sun and winter snow glare had clouded his eyes so that all he could see were faint shadows. Although legally blind, Bert still managed his ranch. He had learned "other" ways of seeing or sensing from 80 years of interpreting the messages of his land through the behavior of his horses. As his eyes grew dimmer Bert used his savvy to develop an inner map (Brody, 1981) of the interconnected systems that lived within his ranch. He senses by feel when he is riding (Dorrance, 1999) the interaction of those systems. For these reasons Bert was the perfect one to teach me how to use my "other eyes".

Bert explained that there are certain parts of a system, like a ranch or a classroom, that are essential to its sustainability. Water and grass are important to a rancher the way that trust and partnership are essential to the savvy classroom teacher. To survive, a rancher must know how to listen and speak the language of the land and how to sense the land as a whole system just as a classroom teacher must be able to sense the relational

system of the classroom. Like many ranchers of his era Bert had been deeply influenced by First Nations cowboys who taught him and contributed much to the evolution of cowboy culture (Baillargeon & Tepper, 1998; Iverson, 1994). I believe that in today's dominant culture of corporate consumerism, there are very few opportunities to learn Indigenous knowledge and wisdom because even some of the most progressive western philosophers "still believe that listening to the land is only a metaphor" (Jensen, 2000, p. 24). The early First Nations cowboys knew that the land does communicate to those who are willing to listen and able to hear and that their horses could be conduits of information. This is one of the reasons that I sought out this knowledge on some of the most isolated ranches in North America, where most of the work is still done from horseback.

One day just at daybreak, Bert, his foreman, and I rode out to find the location of an old rustler's hideout. We turned east as the brilliant crimson ball of the rising sun moved into view above a tree-covered ridge. The morning air was crisp and cool and I could hear the comforting squeak of my saddle leather and the muffled sound of hooves walking softly through the grass. A red-tailed hawk circled on the wind and the blue sky seemed to run on forever. We turned into the lee of some hills because the wind on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains has an edge at that time of year. Although the sun was out and the sky was clear, our toes and fingers were getting chilled. I noticed Bert stopped every once in a while and just sat on his horse as if listening to something. It was his way of sensing his horse's reactions to what was going on around him—through his "other" eyes. He knew where he was by the feel of the sun on his face or the direction of the wind or the way the horse felt as he moved over the land. He could tell by the sound of the river and the direction of its flow where he was and the direction that he was going. He could also sense anomalies in the way things normally functioned on his ranch. As we moved closer to Camel's Hump Hill Bert stopped, ran his right hand along his horse's neck, stroking him to see if the horse was tense, and pointed in the general direction of what looked like dark-coloured rocks under some brush. He told the foreman, "There is at least one cow lying down there in the brush and it shouldn't be in this pasture." Both the foreman and I looked where Bert was pointing, but could not see the cow. Despite the

fact that he was legally blind Bert knew a cow was there. The foreman insisted no cows were put into this pasture. Bert sat in such a way that he was not looking directly at the "rocks," but as if he were listening to them. His right ear was turned towards his horse, which was still looking intently at the so-called rocks. In a slow, quiet voice Bert said, "Well, there have never been rocks there before." When we turned our horses and rode up to have a closer look the so-called rocks slowly got up and moved. A Hereford cow and calf have been resting in the bush. When the foreman commented that she must have gotten through a hole in the fence and that he would get some riders to drive the cow back up into the pasture the next day, Bert just nodded in agreement.

Much later when I knew Bert better and felt more comfortable with him I broached the delicate subject of how a legally blind man knew the "rocks" were cattle. For a moment, he sat quietly, took a swallow of black coffee and stared into the distance. I wondered if he had heard me or if I might have offended him. When he finally spoke, I realized that he was choosing his words carefully in order to talk about something that was very difficult to explain. Finally he said:

> Sometimes you just feel something or know something when you have been out here a long time, so you don't need to see with just your regular eyes to know how things are and what is going on. With time and practice you learn to look deeper into things, between the branches of the trees, for example. You have to let your eyes go, soften them so you can see deeper with the eyes inside your head…with your "other" eyes.

Bert was talking about the ability to use all his senses. He was telling me that when I saw rocks instead of the cow, I was using just my ordinary hard eyes. For example, as Bowering described it:

> If you just have ordinary eyes, you would have seen the late morning sunlight flooding the light green of the wide grassy valley…where we were riding…and making giant knife shadows where the ridges slid down the hillsides, where there were wrinkles made in the land…where we sat horseback looking at the so called rocks. But if you had…other eyes…you paid attention to the shadows…because any animal with any sense was resting where it was darker…there in the shadows where you could see something moving…breathing…maybe even a lot of things moving and breathing but making very little noise. (Bowering, 1987, p. 1)

You have to accept that the land "breathes" and the rocks "breathe" but not in the same rhythm as the cow, and you have to sense the difference. That is how the world looks and sounds when you listen to the subtle energies of a place and its behavior language is perceived through your "other" eyes.

I was presented with another opportunity to deepen my savvy when Bert invited me to help on the last sweep of a cow-calf gather in a section of pasture. The main crew had already worked the area. It was my job to make a final check for any cows or calves left behind in the gather. Sometimes cows that hide a new calf while out feeding will come back for the calf to nurse. If they are driven downhill a calf might be left behind in all the noise and confusion. To ensure I didn't get lost I was given the drainage area of a dry creek to work. I only had to follow the creek bed downhill. Due to the rough, sloping ground I could not see the whole area at any one time, or any of the other riders with whom I was working. Since I did not have a dog working with me I had to ride into the bush where cattle like to hole up. I was riding one of Bert's horses and we were all alone. The gelding and I worked our way down into a brush area for several hours. It wasn't until about noon that the way he felt underneath me began to change in subtle ways. At first I felt less fluidity in the way he moved in his back. There was increasing rigidity that I could feel in his neck. Then, in mid-stride the gelding's head came up, and suddenly he stopped. His ears were pricked forward towards a clump of bushes located off to our right. I looked into the spaces between the branches to try to see a pattern in the shadows running contrary to the pattern of the branches. I did not see anything unusual. I tried again to focus with a hard eye on the branches and still could not see anything unusual. But the horse seemed adamant as he looked towards the bush; there was something more than foliage there. At that point I tried softening my eye and then back to a hard eye. In the transition I noticed a black line running as an anomaly to the pattern of the branches. Refocusing between my soft and hard eye several times, I gradually saw the partial outline of a calf lying down. He was watching us while blending in with the bush.

Experiences like these helped me develop my other eyes. Like Bert, who could draw upon his other senses to track what was happening around him when his regular

eyes failed him, I learned to use my "other" eyes to interpret the behavior language spoken to me by other sentient beings in my relational setting.

Another opportunity to observe the use of "other eyes" occurred in Arizona. Riding another portion of the Outlaw Trail, my Navajo friend Steve and I were lost. We spent a cold night in the desert without much in the way of supplies. When we backtracked the next day to see where we had missed the trail, we noticed a Navajo *hogan* (house) in the distance. We rode up to the hogan to get water for our horses and to ask directions. To our surprise, a woman elder had fry bread, mutton stew, and coffee ready for us when we arrived. As we ate, she was weaving a basket with a design depicting the mountains that form the boundary of Navajo lands with an opening or pathway in the design that led into the centre of the basket. Steve asked in Navajo how she knew that we would be coming her way. She said that she knew someone had passed this way the day before by the way her dog was acting. When her grandson came back from tending sheep he reported two sets of horse tracks, small and unshod, which indicated they were probably Navajo ponies. Since there were no packhorse tracks she figured we were travelling lightly. Knowing there was no way out of the canyon we had ridden into, and that we had not returned that day, she figured we would be hungry when we came back out, which explained why she made us something to eat. When we returned to the hogan at the end of our trip to drop off some supplies in thanks for the elder's hospitality—as is customary in Navajo ways—she presented me with her finished basket. Pointing to the design, which she said depicted a map into the Navajo Nation, she suggested I keep the basket to prevent me from getting lost again. We all had a good laugh about us riding into a straight-walled box canyon. We made future plans to finish our ride along the section of the Outlaw Trail that led to Navajo Mountain, guided by the elder's grandson. I realized, that although I had worked at developing my savvy and "other eyes" in the round pen, Bert and the Navajo elder had developed it to a much finer degree through their ways of living.

Learning to See the Teaching Environment as a Complex Interaction of Systems

On a day in August I was riding south from the Marshall ranch with my guide when we descended into a narrow side valley that led towards the Montana-

Saskatchewan border. Dropping over the edge of a grass covered knoll, the trail narrowed abruptly and forced us to ride single file into a brush-filled coulee, which cut down to the valley floor in a series of switchbacks. The valley walls were a series of terraced ledges left over from Ice Age melt water some 11,000 years ago and gave the valley the feel of an amphitheatre. Along a series of terraces were clusters of trees and patches of rich green grassland and I sensed that there were others moving along those benches above the valley floor. I practiced shifting from my soft to hard eye and caught glimpses of the others that lived in that valley.

As we rode through the valley I became aware of the interactions between its inhabitants and us. To the left of the trail I noticed a patch of horsehair and bleached bones on the bare earth, where an old horse had died the previous spring. To the right were the homes of some cliff swallows. They swooped and dove after insects in front of the steep walls of the coulee where they lived in nests lined in horsehair. Our horses' hooves sent insects skyward for the swallows, while at the same time the birds helped us by reducing the fly and mosquito population. I caught a glimpse of a coyote travelling parallel to us, no doubt hoping we would flush out a rabbit or a mouse. The coyote tracked our route cautiously, moving fluidly and low to the ground. He picked up some scent and vanished in an instant behind a clump of tall grass. I looked for the coyote to emerge somewhere else, but he had disappeared like smoke in the wind. All of these valley inhabitants were interconnected systems in the bigger system of the coulee. As we rode into the coulee their behavior indicated that they could incorporate our actions into their patterns of interconnection that compose the valley system.

When we arrived at the Outlaw Caves I started to understand how the outlaws found sanctuary by incorporating themselves into the patterns of the environment. The caves are hidden in a hillside surrounded by high ground. The nearby hill, Pyramid Butte, was ideal as a lookout because it offered a clear view in all directions. A reliable source of water was available from Paisley Brook Creek. There were two possible escape routes from the hideout that led north or south of the border. In a short time the outlaws could cross into the United States or remain in Canada, depending on which country's law officers were hunting for them. Enlarged wolf dens dug into the hillside of the hideout

area provided enough room to shelter a handful of men and horses during the summer. When the weather turned cold and livestock theft became more frequent, because tracks were more visible in the snow, the outlaws usually drifted into towns like Plentywood or they entered into a mutually beneficial relationship with friendly ranchers. In exchange for shelter ranchers obtained some much needed cash to purchase supplies.

The small rancher-outlaw economic system was a network of interconnected reciprocal relations that functioned well as long as its interacting systems unfolded harmoniously. The success of this hideout system did not come from its structure but from the relationships that composed it. There were subtle forces at work in the social/economic class conflicts that made resistance against the powerful cattle barons possible. The key element was the acceptance of the outlaws by local ranchers. The outlaws were safe in their hideouts as long as those relationships were in place. The key to success in a hostile environment was developing partnerships for mutual benefit and protection.

Indirectly and Directly Learning to Track Behavior as the Key to Awareness

An indirect lesson

I learned much about tracking initially through the indirect teaching of 16-year-old Zeb Dalton and his 12-year-old brother Zeke, two proficient trackers who were wise beyond their years in the ways of horses, in the complex canyon country of southeast Utah. The Daltons are fourth generation ranchers. More dependable than many adults I have met, they were expected to do a full day's work on the family's 200 thousand–acre ranch. Ten–hour days in the saddle were common because the ranch was run primarily from horseback, in a continuous drift from winter range in the desert to summer range in the mountains, and then back again.

One morning, Zeb, Zeke, and I were looking for ten lost horses on a canyon trail that is more of a vague suggestion than a clear reality. We were under pressure to find the horses while they were still in the canyons because, once out on to the flats, they could wander all the way to New Mexico. The situation that morning was that somewhere out there in the rim rock and sagebrush, near a place called the Seeps, were the horses we had been tracking since early morning. Eventually Zeb and Zeke found tracks heading off

into dense tamarack thickets, along a trail so narrow our horses had to be unsaddled to pass under a low ledge. Just before noon, the tracks faded out in some rough boulders and slick rock. It was as if they were taunting us to follow, teasing us with a trail that disappeared. We fanned out looking for signs. The Dalton boys had not said five words in the last two hours, but I sensed they were communicating to each other somehow about what they were finding. They were not looking so much as they were feeling their way, with a horse's sense of awareness, which had caused them to choose a particular route over the slick rock. It was early afternoon when we came over a steep slope of sand, slowed our pace, and finally saw the horses. They were staring at us, frozen in mid-chew, grass hanging out of their mouths, apparently puzzled momentarily by our arrival. At that point I realized we were never really following the horses, but rather riding to where the horses were going to be and we found them when we all arrived at the same place.

As I tried unsuccessfully to catch onto the brothers' tracking method, I began to think their abilities came from something undetectable, like their genes, their blood type, or perhaps the water they drank. Then I realized it came from being immersed in, and at the same time, open, to learning about the systems around them. Their way of sensing and their ability to track was inextricably linked to their way of living and that was the strength of their learning methods. Zeb and Zeke's way of going was both the way they lived and the way they learned. Those young cowboys could track a lizard over slick rock because they sensed subtle changes. They detected slight alterations in the dynamic balance of their world with the passage of a horse, cow, or deer. They were accomplished listeners to rocks, wind, sun, and sand and they felt as much as they heard or saw in their setting. They were well on their way to reaching their full potential as trackers.

I learned that to be a good tracker I had to see how a setting is altered in the slightest way by the passage of a foot, claw, or hoof. To do this I had to be very aware all of the time. Zeb and Zeke were so in tune with their surroundings they knew how to search for horses without hesitation, as if they had them on radar. They sensed minor shifts in the wind and heat of the day that seemed to direct them to where the horses were hiding. Those young ranchers felt the reverberations of their world in textures and scents, tastes, and sounds. Sensing these helped them find the horses' location. The brothers

were not only proficient at tracking the horses, but also in living as if they belonged out there as much as do the rock, brush, sand, and horses. They had perfected the art of belonging by living with an awareness of the patterns and needs of other systems that composed their world.

While I learned indirectly a great deal about tracking from the Dalton brothers, I also needed some direct teaching from a tracking expert to help me understand the significance of a track. A.C. Ekker of Robber's Roost Ranch in southern Utah taught me the importance of using all of my senses to see what is happening to relationships, in a complex setting like his ranch or a high school classroom. As we rode together he demonstrated the first stage by pointing to the existence of some wild horse tracks that crossed our trail. He explained how a behavior message represented in a track provides meaning about an event. For example, the side of the tree on which the tracks are located told us what time of day the horse was travelling since he would likely keep to the shade in the afternoon at that time of year. The way that tracks exist within tracks, like systems within systems, also provided information. Kneeling close to the horse hoof tracks that were made in soft sand, AC considered the fact that there was wind early that morning, but no breeze for several hours by the time we had arrived. He determined that the track was made after the wind died down but before noon, when there would be no shade and animals would tend to stop moving for a while. He compared the clarity of the horse track to one that had just been made by his horse, which gave him an idea of the age of the tracks he was viewing. Finally, he looked for symmetry by examining the edges of his horse's tracks for sharpness, compared to the edges of the wild horse tracks that were beginning to collapse. When it is hot and dry in the desert a track will stay sharp for only about an hour before the edges begin to collapse. The dryness of the wild horse droppings also provided clues as to when the horses had passed by. From this direct instruction, I learned the importance of maintaining a constant mental file of what is going on around me, such as when it rained last or whether there was wind or dew that morning, or if a student's typical behavior has changed.

Learning to Camouflage the Intention to Educate

I learned valuable lessons about camouflaging intention while on a section of the Outlaw Trail in New Mexico. We were riding our horses deep into the Gila Mountains searching for the remains of a cabin hideout used by outlaws in the late 1800s. My guide knew of an old cabin ruin, where he had found artifacts dating from the late 1800s, located on a straight line that ran between a ranch where the outlaws had worked between robberies and several small local towns. Finding the trail that linked the two areas was the challenge. We could not find the trail section leading from the rim of the canyon to the canyon floor and the cabin ruins. When the guide finally discovered an abandoned trail that lead from the canyon floor in the direction of the rim behind the cabin ruins, it turned out to be very narrow and treacherous but led us to an unexpected find. This was an atypical hideout. The cabin turned out to be a reverse hill lookout. Unlike every hideout I had previously examined, where the lookout was a high point from which the approaches to the area could be watched, this lookout required looking up rather than down. Reflecting on this incident I came to realize that my goal of educating students to understand the influence of the corporate agenda in the processes of schooling required abandoning typical prescribed curriculum plans and relying instead on teachable moments. Even under the guise of critical thinking, no curriculum plan aimed at undermining the school system or as Illich (1971) calls it, "deschooling," would be approved, or at least it would raise concern among parents and administrators. However, teaching students how to track the cause of a particular event in the moment it occurs in the classroom to an underlying corporate agenda is both more effective for students and less noticeable to administrators and parents. Reflecting on the hideouts encountered on the Outlaw Trail made clear to me the importance of camouflaging my intent to educate students to think for themselves.

Learning the Relationship Between Power and Fear

Riding along portions of the Outlaw Trail into the Chisos Mountains of Texas and Copper Canyon in Mexico taught me to be savvy about the use of power in my classroom. From the Gila River country to the Mexican border, the Outlaw Trail swings south to El Paso where it forks east along one trail and continues directly south on

another. The eastern fork leads to the Big Bend area and a crossing into Mexico near Lajitas, Texas. The other route leads from El Paso into Chihuahua via Sonora, but both forks eventually reach Copper Canyon, the last major hideout in the Sierra Madre Mountains. My guide in the Chisos Mountains was a rancher who has ridden over the land by horseback for most of his life. He knew the country and history of the Big Bend area intimately and taught me about the various power groups in the area. Illegal migrants, drug smugglers, and thieves move across the border continually, and ranchers, like teachers, often find themselves caught in the middle between warring groups. Most of the people who come across the border are poverty-stricken and are simply looking for the opportunity to work. However, there are also false guides who take money for smuggling people and then abandon them to die of thirst or exposure in the desert. Called "Coyotes," these so-called guides are often tied into drug-running operations that use groups of illegal immigrants as cover to slip across the border with a drug shipment. These false guides and drug smugglers are invariably armed and dangerous (Poppa, 1998). My guide did not take lightly the push and pull of tensions along this border zone. Since we were going to camp out for several nights in the desert he carried a rifle and a revolver for our protection.

Our first indication of a potential problem came from an unexpected source made evident when we stopped to give the horses a breather from the climb into the Chisos basin. Judging by the size, shape, and length of stride of the tracks that crossed the sand in front of us, there was a mature male mountain lion in the neighbourhood. There are lots of them in the Chisos Mountains but they are elusive and rarely seen by passers-by. We decided that the cat was long gone because if there had still been a mountain lion scent in the air the horses would have been upset. Yet, as the afternoon stretched into dusk, the horses seemed restless. Even though the sky was clear and there were no unusual sounds that we could hear, they were very uneasy when we watered them. They were too alert to drink. The guide interpreted that as unusual considering the long ride they had just completed.

We were stretched out on our bedrolls talking around the fire when we became aware of something or someone moving in the darkness. I heard one of the horses snort,

sharply blowing air through its nose as a sign of alarm. In one motion the guide doused our small fire and slipped into the darkness in the direction of the horses. I waited a few moments, hearing only the fire coals hiss, waiting for my eyes to adjust to the lack of light. I decided to find my guide to see if he needed some help and took what I thought was a shortcut to where he was watching. In the darkness I became disoriented. I took a few steps in the direction where I thought the horses were located, but realized that I was heading away from camp closer to the Rio Grande. As I turned to back- track my trail, I heard something moving around in the arroyo just past the bushes in front of me. The guide whispered to me from behind "Don't go down there—come back up the trail—go easy and be quiet." When I saw how low he was crouched I thought of the mountain lion tracks. I followed him back to where the horses were picketed and we led them in closer to camp until morning. That night we caught a few moments of sleep now and again, but for the most part we kept watch and waited for dawn.

The next morning the guide told me he found evidence of someone moving around in the darkness last night. He thought some illegal immigrants were probably passing through in the night and I had nearly stumbled upon them when I went out to find the horses. They were probably just people crossing the border to find work, but it was foolish of me to go stumbling around in the dark when I did not know what or who was out there. Our fears were confirmed when we walked down the trail and found tracks in the soft sand and a very recently used camp. There were numerous tracks from running shoes, the common footwear of those crossing the border illegally. In fact, the guide saw tracks from two time periods, which meant there were others out there in the darkness. The most recent tracks appeared to belong to two people who had left their camp late in the night carrying something. There was an impression in the sand made by something heavy, with a square corner that seems to have been covered by a burlap sack. These signs disturbed the guide. As we followed the trail we picked up a piece of burlap fibre caught on the thorns of a cat claw bush. The fibres were from a potato sack commonly used by smugglers to cover the square metal tins that hold illegal drugs. These smugglers often try to cover their tracks by travelling over trails used by migrant workers. The previous night we had stumbled onto at least two drug smugglers who, most probably,

were armed. When we walked back to the horses the guide noticed human tracks close by our camp. Now we realized that the horses were acting spooky because someone was coming close to us, to see what we were doing. As we headed down the trail towards a rock knoll for a better view, the guide kept looking over our back trail.

Through the guide's tracking procedure he had uncovered the presence of several potentially powerful individuals of whom I was totally unaware. The effect this had on me was to make me afraid because I was suddenly aware that I was out of my zone of comfort. The situation was both unfamiliar and dangerous and I did not have the skills on my own to cope and was totally dependent upon the guide for my security. I could feel a desire well up to retreat, to disconnect from the situation and get away from the threat, but there was no place to go except to stay with and trust in my guide. That experience of suddenly realizing I was in over my head in a situation where I did not have the skills with which to cope had a lasting impression. It gave me an opportunity to experience how being powerless can make a person feel fearful and disconnected. Later upon reflection I vowed to remember this relationship between powerlessness and fear in my classroom teaching.

From my desert experience I saw how easy it is to become afraid when you feel powerless and in the dark, lost and disoriented. For young teachers the classroom must feel somewhat like the desert felt to me. They do not have the experience to know what they are really getting into when they decide to become teachers. Facing a situation with the sudden realization of being unprepared to handle what is occurring or even influence the outcome of events made me realize how important the approach of the mentor is for a young teacher. I realized it is critical to construct lessons around what might be encountered in daily living based upon the needs of a student teacher. It took a savvy guide to establish a connection with me and pull me out of what might have been a violent situation before I made a wrong decision on my own. I realized that guiding young teachers out of difficult situations when they cannot do it themselves and connecting my mentoring to what they experience are key roles of a mentor teacher and my effectiveness in these roles is determined by the degree of trust in my mentor-student relationship. Before trust is put to the test in a difficult situation, I would have to make

sure that I demonstrated to a young teacher that my decisions could be trusted. I would have to structure lessons that would help to build that awareness. That experience in the desert also showed me differences of power can cause fear in my classroom and the awareness that this can happen if I do not establish a partnership first is part of being a savvy teacher.

Learning To Be Self-Sufficient

The people of Copper Canyon in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico live simpler but more interconnected lives than we urban dwellers. They solve their problems with what resources they have at hand, including each other, without resorting to expensive high technology. Before heading into the mountains that engulf Copper Canyon I stopped at a local rodeo to watch Mexican team ropers try out their luck with Caliente cattle. Through the swirling dust of the arena and loud cheers I saw whole families working together, including young people who were not disconnected or excluded. The teenagers were helping their parents, contributing to the family effort. They were also watching and learning from their relatives. There were many teenagers competing with men and all were participating as if there was no such category as adolescence.

On Copper Canyon ranches the young, very early in their lives, are given responsibilities that are important to the economic well being of the family. The youngsters learn from older siblings, parents, or relatives the skills necessary for surviving in the Canyon lands so that they too can become self-sufficient. This display of interconnected living at a much simpler level than is common in most of North America made me realize that encouraging and enhancing self-sufficiency in the classroom can disrupt our dependency on the processes offered to us by the corporate way of living. The corporate way of living relies on creating dependencies to form markets. Self-sufficiency reduces dependency on corporate solutions to the problems of living. However, to be self-sufficient a teacher has to be aware of what is available to help them form solutions to problems.

I learned to be aware of that by living in Copper Canyon where the water is still clean enough to drink right from the streams and springs. The simple but effective log

cabins of the Tarahumara people are built into the slopes of the hillsides where these farmers can oversee their field crops. In the distance are the vertical volcanic walls clothed in agave and sotol cactus, which are used for food and medicine by the Indigenous people who live in small communities of between five and 20 families along streams in the mountain valleys. Some still prefer to live in isolated rock shelters in the summer and to return to their cabins in the winter.

My guide Julio and his family are farmers who live in a *rancho* along the river. They have a few acres in corn, peppers, and tomatoes. They welcomed me into their simple log cabin home one evening and we prepared a dinner from what we could pick in the field and in the surrounding hills. We mixed tortilla dough made from their corn, formed the tortillas by hand in a press, and cooked them over a stove made from a 50–gallon drum. Added to the tortillas was a soup made from squash blossoms and seasoned with wild mushrooms Julio picked in the fields around the rancho. We made a salsa out of onions, tomatoes, and firecracker chillies. This family was a model of self-sufficiency and solved their problems by being as self-reliant as the land and the economy of the country would allow. They were not dependent on modern conveniences and technology. During my time with them I learned the importance of self-sufficiency in escaping the influence of corporate induced consumerism.

Developing Student-Teacher Trust

Navajo elder Hosteen's first lesson in sustaining relationships concerned developing my trust in his son Steve as a mentor. We were going to be travelling a long distance and would probably be riding some of the time at night, so Hosteen suggested I undertake a night ride guided by Steve along a trail in a nearby canyon. Hosteen chose an evening with a bright full moon to light our travel into the canyon so that I could see well enough to assess Steve's decisions and gain confidence in his leadership. I did not have the same advantage of moonlight at the end of the ride on the way back down the canyon so I had to listen to Steve's instructions carefully and trust in what he told me. On the way back down the trail the sky above was bright, but the trail was pitch black. Steve coached me how to focus through my sense of balance on the horse's back and to allow

my horse's senses and knowledge to become an extension of my own. In my classroom I offer my own skills and strengths in the same way to extend the abilities of my students.

Learning Perceiving from Another's Perspective

Hosteen's second lesson involved Steve and me in tracking wild horses on Hunt's Mesa. Hosteen knew that if we wanted to find a lost trail that is used only by wild horses, we would have to be able to perceive from a horse's perspective. In this way I would learn how horses behave when they travel and where they make their trails. Only by following the horses' tracks could we learn the messages of their behavior language, that is, how they see the world and make their decisions, where they go for water and where they rest in the heat of the day. Steve knew how to track the wild horses because he participated each year as his family selected for their use a few wild horses from the many that roam the Navajo lands in wild bands. In fact, we were riding mustangs that came from a band with a territory close to Steve's hogan.

By noon we reached the top of the mesa where there was plenty of evidence of wild horses. We decided to wait until late afternoon to see if the horses would come off the mesa and head for water. By afternoon, the prevailing winds carried our scent away from the trail. Using our horses' blankets to mask our scent, we waited above the trail. Several hours later, when the sun began to decline over Monument Valley, six wild horses walked cautiously towards us. We had to be very quiet to observe them. Three mares led the way. The lead mare stopped and lifted her head to sense the air. As predicted, what breeze existed came towards us and she could not sense our presence. Still, she was cautious and seemed uneasy. She nuzzled back her eager foal until she was sure it was safe and then headed down the trail at a jog. From this lesson I learned to be very aware of others' perceptions of my actions and how they can be interpreted in ways that arouse fear, even though that is not my intention. To sustain teacher-student relationships, whether with horses or with humans, I learned to pay attention to how they think, act, and most importantly what causes them to be afraid. Having discerned their behavior patterns, I blended into their setting by adopting my anomaly predator/problem solver identity.

Creating a Partnership

The next lesson Hosteen arranged focused on developing strong horse-human partnerships to face difficult situations in a spirit of trust and mutual support. Hosteen sent us for a ride around Boot Mesa on an afternoon when he knew there would be some weather challenges which would help me learn more about my horse partner. Steve and I saddled up by 5:30 p.m. and headed out at a slow pace towards Boot Mesa. The horses seemed restless and eager to be off and going because the wind had picked up and they sensed the changing weather. As soon as we turned the corner on the western side of the mesa, we saw in the distance that a storm was building over Monument Valley. In front of the storm, the wind was gusting. There was lightning off in the distance but the wind was blowing towards us and driving sand in our direction. We had to choose. We could try to outrun the storm, or find some shelter behind the rocks at the foot of the Mesa. If we went on and failed to outrun the storm we would be caught out in the open. If we stayed we would have to shelter in the rocks all night. We listened to the behavior language of our horse partners. They were eager to keep moving, so we took their cue and decided to try to outrun the storm. The sky was getting darker and the wind was blowing up the brim of my hat and lifting our horses' manes and tails sideways, like the edges of tattered flags. Cloud whiskers—long black wisps of fine sand and rain—were hanging down from the base of the black clouds to the north. Every few seconds lightning filled the sky to the north, followed by the crackle and boom of thunder rolling over us like a cannon barrage. We were moving at a fast trot and sometimes a lope. As the light faded we had to trust the superior vision of our horse partners to pick the right path over the sand and rock. Trusting completely in our horses, we sat loose in the saddle in order to stay balanced while the horses swerved around thorn bushes, soft sand, and grass clumps. When we turned the corner of the mesa to head back to where we started at the south side, the sky had turned black. Hosteen watched as I walked to cool out my horse on the dirt road to the camp, knowing I had gained a partner to carry me home over long distances, through darkness, bad weather, and rough terrain. Now, whenever I see restless behavior in my horse or human students, I take it as a message that there needs to be a shift in what we are doing because there is something going on that I may not yet know

about but is affecting the rhythm of the relationships in a classroom. Maintaining a partnership requires constant attention to the rhythm of relationship.

Learning Interrelationships in the Environment

My fourth lesson was designed to help me understand the desert environment better. Riding over difficult desert terrain in the traditional way, we had few supplies with us. That required that we move from water hole to spring seep. We moved in the morning and the late afternoon and evening and rested during the hot part of the day. Always the concern was for water, so we started looking for a slot canyon that Steve suspected might be in the rock formation that surrounded us. A slot canyon is really nothing more than a very narrow gorge cut through the sandstone rock by torrents of water that pour through the desert after a thunderstorm or snow melt. On a day when it might rain, it could be a deadly trap with no way out, but on a cloudless scorching day it was a haven. We needed to be savvy enough to know when the canyon could be a trap and when it could be a haven. Steve suggested we head for a deserted Navajo hogan, sweat lodge, and sheep corral that he had located. The mud covering the wooden frame of desert salt cedar and pine that formed the skeleton of the deserted hogan had long since vanished, just as the structure's architects had disappeared. The wood skeleton was worn smooth and weathered to a silver patina from years of sun, snow, and wind-driven sand. I knew that Navajo people lived all over this area but their living blended so well into the landscape that there are actually very few tracks indicating that they have ever lived where we were riding. However, what remained were all signs indicating the existence of water.

Steve did not know that the slot canyon was in that specific location: he was simply savvy about the desert and the behavior language messages of others living there now and in the past. He was aware of where a slot canyon with water should be so that he only had to track the movements of others towards the water source. As Steve taught me about wind and water, he was showing me how to read the rules of wildness in the desert setting that must be obeyed to survive (Snyder, 1990).

We rested at the slot canyon until the behavior of two hawks as they floated on the air currents told us it was cool enough to travel. Being savvy meant that we watched the birds to determine when it was time to travel, and the birds watched us ride because

we might have flushed out a rabbit or a snake. Such watching was the act of paying attention to the interconnections in relationships. For example, hawks and rabbits understand their relationship, and so they "do not break the compact with each other that one must play predator and the other play prey" (Snyder, 1990, p. 4). The rules of wildness bound us together in a relationship just as the process and structures of the classroom bind teachers and students together. This occurs even though the entities are sometimes only partially conscious of this complexity and of their interconnection to one another (Bateson, 1972). Steve is capable of learning, from the other desert dwellers, the information he needs to survive because he is savvy. He communicated this by how he lived and moved in the desert, and that way of knowing and living can be read in his tracks after he has passed by on the trail. As a teacher I learned that I needed to be aware that my students also track me through my way of going from their particular perspective.

After the four lessons, Hosteen decided I was ready for a final test: to help Steve look for the lost trail located between the white and red rock in Heart Canyon. We made a 15–mile ride to Heart Canyon to start looking for the trailhead. It was late afternoon when we arrived, which meant that if we could not find the trail, we would have to go the long way home, another 12 or so miles. We preferred not to ride home in the dark, but I was not apprehensive about it because of Hosteen's lessons. When we reached the mesa rim above Heart Canyon the sun was behind us and it began to light up the rock above the canyon in brilliant shades of red and orange. The canyon began abruptly at the edge of the mesa and it was at least 200 feet straight down from the rim to the floor. Steve dismounted, drooped his horse's reins over his arm, sat on a rock, and pulled his knees up close to his chest. Resting his binoculars on his knees he scanned the canyon walls for some sign of the wild horse trail Hosteen had said lies between the white and red rock. There were lots of red and gray rocks of different colours there, but nothing that could be considered white, that is, until the light changed angle. When the sunlight caught the very edge of the layer close to the mesa rim and hit the gray sandstone layer, it faded to a washed-out white. Directly below the gray rock that now gleamed white in the sunlight was a bright red layer. We then had a place to begin looking for the trailhead, but we had to move quickly because the light was fading. These various layers of rock weather

differently and, as we approached them, we could see that a very thin edge, maybe three feet wide, of red rock had developed where the now white layer had weathered away deeper than the layer below it. It was not much of a trail. If we were wrong and it came to a dead end, there was only a three-foot ledge with a 200–foot or more drop off to turn our horses around on. We could see the ledge continue for only about 100 feet and then it turned a corner on the rock face. This was a particularly intense test for me because I do not like heights.

We went with Steve's savvy and dismounted to lead our horses in single file along the trail. At the bend in the trail we had to step onto the sloping rock face where the ledge more or less disappeared because of an outcrop of hard rock that had not weathered out at the same rate. On the other side, as we cleared the turn, the secret of the trail became clear to us. The only time the entrance was visible is when the sun hits the rock in a certain way and that is when the sun is in the west and starting to decline. When the sun is in the east or overhead, the ledge does not show from the canyon floor. Clearly, it takes a savvy individual to know where to look. To discover the route we had to climb to the top of the mesa and know where to look back into the canyon. In effect, we had to believe the trail existed before we could see it. From below on the canyon floor side there was simply a maze of slick rock with all sorts of dead ends and drop-off edges that we could not see from below until it was too late to turn around. It required savvy to understand the relationship between the sun and the rock and know where the route was likely to be.

My Navajo mentors understand these subtle interconnections and relationships in their world as part of their savvy. I have learned that savvy enables me to read behavior like a story in a text that is never finished but continually open and requiring more re-reading (Jardine, 1994).

Appendix 3
Corporate Icons Derived from the North American West

The corporate icons from the North American West evolved during the 1700s and 1800s when many of the foundations of modern schooling were laid down as well. This was a period of conflict, famine, and disease when smallpox, bad whiskey, prostitution, and the slaughter of the buffalo did more to tame the so-called western frontier than any other factors combined (Howard, 1952).

The West, as a place, can be defined as the convergence point of many systems that were in opposition, producing negative tension that led to frequent instances of violence. This tension is often forgotten in the myth of the West, which casts the era as a revered time, a time of values and heroes to return to. In the midst of the negative tension between opposing systems in the West, the ability to change rapidly was a necessity for survival, especially where wildness and wilderness overlapped to produce both the place and the concept commonly called *frontier*. Along this conceptual seam of wildness, wilderness, and frontier, there developed a peculiar icon commonly known as outlaws as part of the resistance against corporate forces such as banks and railroads. Clashes between outlaws and corporate forces were violent as seen in such events as the Cypress Hills Massacre and the Johnson County War (Carlson, 2001).

The term *icon* is used to denote a mythical cultural figure from the North American West that is brought forward into the present where it has symbolic value. Typically these icons are associated with the idea of justifiable violence. The most constant of these symbolic icons is the image of a young man with a gun fighting for a noble cause that is worth dying for, if necessary (Cawelti, 1999; Rosa, 1969; Wright, 1975). This persona is so pervasive in American culture that it helps to define that culture. Slotkin (1994) explains that the effect of this icon has been to transform the United States into what he calls the gunfighter nation, commonly projected as a blended cowboy/gunfighter image perpetuated in numerous forms of media in both North America and Europe:

The concept of frontier—the idea of continually being on the edge of dramatic change—is inherent to the concept of the West. In the traditional sense, the frontier "signified America's yearning for a better life…a future without limits on hope, growth and happiness" (Dippie, 1982, p. 202). However, the source of the greatest hope was the myth of the West, not the opportunities of its reality. In fact, by the 1890s the conditions that gave rise to the myth of the West were all but gone, save in a few isolated areas such as the Outlaw Trail.

The myth, however, persisted because at the same time that the wildness of the "Wild West" was declining, wilderness was resurrected, restructured, and embellished as an object of conquest by corporate forces. The mythological symbols of violent expansionism were thus bonded to the ideals of American freedom, thereby rationalizing the conflict required for perpetuating that expansion. By the 1900s the concept of frontier and the mythologized historical figures from the West had become so central to American culture that America could not let their symbolic meaning die. These symbols lay behind America's concepts of national defense in which it was claimed that the nation had no onus or duty to retreat beyond the air at its back (Brown, 1991), much like the main characters in the movie *High Noon* and the TV series *Gunsmoke*. Above all else, frontier provided a conceptual location where fear emerged and was dealt with by accepted acts of violence. In effect, the frontier myths helped to venerate and perpetuate violence as a continuing norm in American society.

The final link between fear, frontier, and violence was forged by the carnage of the Civil War (Bellesiles, 2000) and brought forward into the West in the military campaigns against First Nations people, variously referred to as the Indian Wars. The acquired territory in these campaigns was added to the areas of the southwest that had been taken from Mexico in war. What is interesting is that the resulting heroic myths represented in the media about such events were more popular in the east within the very cultural context that had helped to destroy much of the real Wild West than in the west itself, where the reality coexisted with the myths until it was totally replaced by a mythological substitute. That mythological substitute became in fact a vehicle for bringing violence forward from the past to the present (Rosa, 1969) for the purposes of

rationalizing violent expansionism. It is ironic that, when the average person realized they were on the frontier of the Wild West, they were more likely to look for ways to get out of it, rather than to venerate it. This quest became the basis of the American dream.

Along the way, Hollywood, literature, comic books, and TV have confounded and multiplied the West of experience and the mythical West so that there is the West that I experienced on the Outlaw Trail, the West that could have been, and the West that should have been that we try to return to in one way or another in myth, which has become very persuasive.

I have never met a man of my generation who grew up in North America who, when asked, has said that he has not seen at least part of a western movie or read a western novel or thumbed through a comic book like *Kid Colt*, *The Rawhide Kid*, or *Straight Arrow*. We are imbued with the myth of the West, yet as Utley (1989) says:

> The reality within the myth is worth seeking. A legend cherished by all of the world lends significance to a life that is otherwise of concern mainly to a handful of antiquarians. Because of the legend, the life invites scrutiny, to see it can be compressed into its true human dimensions and to discover what it tells about violence on the American frontier and, indeed, violence in American society. (p. x)

Further, we must remember that

> A legend is a legend—Marilyn or Mike Fink—Kennedy or Custer—Evita or Elvis. No matter how determinedly the history teacher sets out to place them in proper context, legends remain curiously elusive. It is rare to be able to pinpoint the moment when history ends and legend takes over; the alchemy is usually too subtle. (Nolan, 1992, p. 3)

Stephen Tatum (1982) points out that from

> The numerous efforts to understand the…legend making process of the West from the course of American social and cultural history…we can discover much about changing attitudes toward the uses and consequences of violence, the relationship of civil law and moral justice, the prospects for individual freedom in an increasingly more bureaucratic society, and indeed, even the belief in a unified society with coherent purposes. (p. x)

The line separating the West of experience from the West of the imagination has become so blurred and often crossed that the mythology of the West is played out as a violent reality of the present, venerated and perpetuated by the mythology of the past.