Being Allies:

Exploring Indigeneity and Difference in Decolonized Anti-oppressive Spaces

by

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B.A., University of Victoria, 1997

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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This study explores the ways in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators have experienced working together as allies for social and racial justice. The study is grounded in anti-oppressive, decolonizing, and participatory action research paradigms. Theoretically, it is framed by anti-racism and anti-oppressive approaches that highlight oppression, exploitation, and power. Within the theoretical field of antiracism, there is a tendency to ignore Indigeneity, and the ongoing oppression and racialization of Indigenous peoples (Lawrence & Dua, 2005; St. Denis, 2007). This study puts Indigeneity and oppression at the forefront of ally development research.

The research was modeled upon an action research method called co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1996). The inquiry group involved seven group members, including the researcher. These group members came from diverse racial and social backgrounds. They were all women who work in diverse educational capacities (adult educators, nurse educator, counselor, teacher, lawyer). The inquiry spanned 11 weeks, with 18 hours spent together over six group sessions. Two Indigenous leaders joined the group in two sessions, to lend their experiences and insights on the role of allies.

Group members retained a high level of commitment throughout the study. The study was a success in terms of analyzing many of the issues Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators face when working together. It also highlighted the roles of allies and useful strategies for allies to use. The study was shown to have a high level of catalytic validity (Herr & Anderson, 2005) as many group members reported a high degree of both epistemological (*what they know*) and ontological (*how they become*) learning. The results of this study lead to new insights on how allies have traditionally been conceptualized and the role that ontology plays in learning. The study also discusses how the congruence between topic and method was navigated, and how that in turn led to the creation of an *allied space*.

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Acknowledgments

I extend a heartfelt 'thank you' to the six brave women who volunteered to participate in this research. You took the time out of your busy lives to wrestle with the topic and allowed yourselves to *be* in 'uncomfortable' spaces. Your commitment to the topic and the process was unshakeable. You are each responsible for the creation of our allied space. I wish you the best of luck on your life long learning journeys.

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Dedication

To the strong Indigenous leaders who participated in this research.
This work would not exist without your teachings.
You planted the seeds.
You inspired.

Frontispiece

If we examine critically the traditional role of the university in the pursuit of truth and the sharing of knowledge and information, it is painfully clear that biases that uphold and maintain white supremacy, imperialism, sexism, and racism have distorted education so that it is no longer about the practice of freedom. The call for a recognition of cultural diversity, a rethinking of ways of knowing, a deconstruction of old epistemologies, and the concomitant demand that there be a transformation in our classrooms, in how we teach and what we teach, has been a necessary revolution—one that seeks to restore life to a corrupt and dying academy.

-bell hooks

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Indigenous[1] people in Canada have been racialized, separated, and oppressed by settler cultures since colonization. Colonization has been described as a 'shared culture', between those who have been colonized and those who colonized (Smith, 1999). There is a long-standing history of ignoring the socially constructed and politically marginalized place in which First Peoples have been relegated (Smith, 1999). Some Canadian post secondary institutions have finally begun prioritizing issues of Indigeneity, especially how Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous research broadens understandings of Other ways of knowing, and promotes ethical, community-based research practices (Battiste, 2008). We are at a pivotal learning point in the field of education, with an emerging focus on Indigenous epistemology and Aboriginal education, and how these affect teaching and learning practices within the academy and other educational institutions. But how well is the university preparing pre-service teachers and graduate students to return to educational settings and 'work with' these new kinds of knowledges in a culturally-sensitivity way, and as advocates *with* Indigenous people?

As educators[2] in our schools and organizations, we continue to socially reproduce *what we know*, and reinforce behaviour and socio-cultural habits in line with our worldviews (Bourdieu, 1993). Antiracism theory has unfortunately ignored

[1] *Throughout this thesis the terms Indigenous and Aboriginal are used interchangeably to denote the First Peoples of Canada. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis are used when appropriate.*
[2] *The term 'educator' is used throughout this paper and includes those working in an educative capacity, in any field. This includes formal, non-formal and informal learning spaces.*

Indigenous peoples in its analysis (Lawrence & Dua, 2005), and instead focused on immigrant and multicultural issues in the Canadian context. Several Indigenous scholars and researchers in Canada (St. Denis, 2007; Lawrence & Dua, 2005) have advocated for antiracism theorists to expand their focus to include the ongoing racism and marginalization experienced by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in Canada. Therefore, it is critical to attach a *decolonizing anti-racist approach* to discussions of the interpersonal working relationships amongst and between educators of Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds. Of course racialized views and mistrustful relationships will not disappear overnight, but working to recreate a new positive sense of relations together will require both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike, consciously working to understand *historicity* (Freire, 1970): how our economic, political and cultural history informs the present and the future in Canada. These new understandings will involve open communication, honesty, and a commitment to working together as allies, to create a new sense of agency, a new sense of *what is possible*. This study argues that we need to create opportunities to open the conversation between educators, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who share the same commitments towards social, political and economic justice for Indigenous peoples.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & GOALS OF THE STUDY

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How has building racial-justice allies been experienced, from the perspective of a select group of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators?

2. What are some of the supporting and constraining factors, both personally and professionally, involved in building racial-justice allies?

The goals of this study are:

1. To use co-operative inquiry as a means to encourage cross-cultural relationships by sharing experiences of building *racial-justice alliances*—both *working with allies* and *being an ally;*

2. To promote individual and group learning on the potential of building racial-justice allies, both personally and professionally;

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study is grounded in social constructivist ontology, coupled with a critical and emancipatory epistemological framework. Ontology asks "what is the nature of reality" (Creswell, 1998), and seeks to understand how the researcher views reality and the world we inhabit (Strega, 2005). This worldview shapes a researcher's epistemological stance, or how 'knowledge' and 'truth' are viewed, and guides how research is viewed, or what purposes research should serve (Strega, 2005). A social constructivist lens views individuals as being responsible for the meaning they make out of experiences—that is, individuals are not passively ingesting knowledge, but are active participants in how knowledge is constructed (Schwandt, 2003). Imbedded in this analysis, is the view that "knowledge is not disinterested, apolitical, and exclusive of affective and embodied aspects of human experience, but is in some sense ideological, political, and permeated with values" (Rouse, 1996 in Schwandt, 2003). A constructivist lens guides my understanding of

race as being socially constructed, "a shifting and contradictory category that is constantly being constructed and reconstructed, and that is far from an 'innate' or 'natural' biological fact" (Taylor, James & Saul, 2007, p. 155). Through my ontological lens, knowledge is co-constructed based on experiences and situational factors. There is not one truth, but multiple truths and subjectivities, as a result of the iterative and recursive processes of sense making, always situated within a multitude of socio-cultural-political experiences and dimensions (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Epistemologically, the research is grounded in a critical and anti-oppressive framework. Critical approaches are those that aim to explore, critique, and transform society and social institutions, with a focus on problems of oppression, domination and power (Creswell, 1998). " 'Research as praxis' (Lather, 1986) is an emancipatory social science intended to redress structural inequities and challenge the claim that research can or should be value neutral" (Strega, 2005, p.208). Critical theorists are highly critical of the canonical 'research methodologies', and advocate methods which match its assumptions against power and domination. Anti-oppressive research takes this one step further, as issues of power and voice within the research itself are highlighted:

> Research must be about empowering the marginalized and promoting action against inequities. Questions about the relationship between the researcher and the researched are highlighted, as is the question of whose voice(s) the research (re)presents... It is concerned with empowerment and/or emancipation of those marginalized by society or in a particular sphere of society. It is avowedly and clearly political in intention and in process (Strega, 2005, p.208).

EXISTING RESEARCH

The literature exploring the development of *racial justice and social justice allies* among post secondary institutions is not as rich and thick as it should be, although there is some theoretical and empirical evidence. The large majority of research on the topic of building allies is from the United States, and primarily looks at undergraduate student populations. In all of the studies, an ally is defined as a white [Caucasian] individual and racial justice allies are "whites who are actively working to end racism and racial oppression" (Reason, Roosa Millar, & Scales, 2005, p.531). For the most part, racial justice and social justice ally research is concerned with how post-secondary administrators can assist young people (undergraduate students) in developing strong ally identities (Reason, Roosa Millar & Scales, 2005; Broido, 2000; Edwards, 2006). One of the exceptions to these studies is Canadian Anne Bishop's (1994) work, *Becoming an Ally*. Although it has been dismissed by some scholars (Reason, Roosa Millar & Scales, 2005; Broido & Reason 2005) as purely anecdotal, it takes a broader view of ally identity development, for young people and adults of all ages, working in any professional or personal context. All of these studies report, to some extent, on the need for internal transformations (mentally, emotionally, or both) in order to become a successful ally (Bishop, 1994; Broido, 2000; Edwards, 2006; Hardiman & Jackson, 1992; Reason, Roosa Millar & Scales, 2005).

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research is situated in an interpretive paradigm, and can be described as a *hybrid* of action research, participatory research and decolonizing research

methodologies. The primary research method used was an action research method called co-operative inquiry. The essence of co-operative inquiry is in recognizing the importance of an individual's subjective knowledge and experience (Heron, 1996). In co-operative inquiry, we assume that individual's knowledge is of importance, and there is value in sharing experiences. This aspect is also one of the tenets of decolonizing methodologies, in which local knowledge and experience is given the highest value (Kovach, 2005). In co-operative inquiry, group members use a narrative approach to share storied accounts relating to the topic at hand, which is similar to a decolonizing approach, where Indigenous methods, such as storytelling, are prioritized (Kovach, 2005). In this method, group members are expected to share together when participating in group discussion sessions, as well as engage in individual action and reflection between sessions. In co-operative inquiry, all participants (including the researcher) are viewed as both co-inquirer and co-participant. As with other types of participatory research, all participants share input on the research questions under exploration, and the group is encouraged to collaboratively make sense of the knowledge generated by the group (Bray, Lee, Smith & Yorks, 2000). The design of this research was to use co-operative inquiry as a structured process to promote an anti-oppressive and emancipatory learning experience for all research participants (including the researcher).

RE-CONCEPTUALIZING THE FIELD

This study helps to re-conceptualize the field of *social-justice and racial-justice allies* in several ways. This study is unique in looking at the concept of allies from the perspective of the target (Indigenous) group, and non-Indigenous groups.

By engaging in conversations beyond the binary of 'colonized' and 'colonizer', the study shows that an allied identity may be more fluid (less static) than previously conceived in the literature. This is important as it brings into question the conception that an allied identity is primarily the domain of whites. Many members of the inquiry were not white, yet still had strong allied convictions. As well, none of the studies investigated by this researcher have thus far looked in any depth at the relationship between *working with allies* and *being an ally*. This study shows the integral relationship is vitally important, as allies across and between target and dominant groups support one another.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant in several regards. First, it helped to re-conceptualize the fields of social justice and racial justice allies, by broadening its scope beyond the white experience. Through its collaborative process, it attempted to open a much-need conversation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators on the role of allies. It has also brought anti-racism theory to the fore in considering issues in Aboriginal education. Often, Aboriginal education is conceived of as the realm of Indigenous educators (St. Denis, 2007), and educators from the dominant members of society do not engage in a deeper understanding of Indigeneity and Other ways of knowing (Lawrence & Dua, 2005). Through the experience of *working with/being allies* with Indigenous members and each other, group members experienced Other ways of knowing and learning beyond a mind-centric epistemology—that is, a cognitively focused perspective on knowledge creation—to consider how an

embodied notion on racial ally learning essentially merges the epistemological with the ontological. Such a conception of collaborative ally learning illustrates the synergy that emerges amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators, and how new understandings beyond the binary relationship of Indigenous/non-Indigenous develop.

The study is also significant methodologically. The study is a hybrid of participatory, decolonizing, and anti-oppressive approaches—not only in method— but also in subject matter. It is this congruence between topic and process that enabled deep emancipatory learning and led to the creation of an *allied space*, a site of resistance and transformation.

SITUATING MYSELF

I grew up in a small town on Vancouver Island, and at the age of 23 decided it was time to see some of the world. For seven years, I lived, taught and traveled throughout the Asian continent. I also worked for several years, across Canada and abroad, in the international and community development sphere. I was trained in transformative adult education methodologies, and had many experiences facilitating short co-operative inquiry research seminars.   During this time I encountered a barrage of transformative learning experiences, experiences that challenged the very core of my identity and the way I thought the world worked. It became very clear that inequalities exist in this world due to power, domination, corruption and corporate control. Individuals do not have control over their destinies, but instead are cogs in the machine of the "old boys club", or what bell hooks (1994) calls '*imperialist-white-supremacist-capitalist patriarchy*'.

Yet this study finds me coming full circle on this journey from local to global back to local: As a teenager on the west coast of Vancouver Island I had many First Nations friends, belonging to on and off-reserve Nuu-chah-nulth Nations. As I drifted away from my roots and became involved in overseas development, working for the rights of Indigenous people in majority world countries, I had been blind to the colonizing processes and racial oppression that exists in my own communities, in Canada, in BC, and right here on Vancouver Island. It took a critical conversation with a brave South African woman to agitate my complacency, who encouraged me to take a closer look at the oppressive systems within Canada.

The momentum for this study stemmed from my experience as a graduate student in a directed study course on *Aboriginalizing Research*. Through that course, I felt I had undergone a transformative learning experience that allowed me to deepen my commitment towards becoming an ally with Indigenous peoples. The journey at times caused anguish and stress as I had to *decentre* or *decolonize* my beliefs and understandings outside of my epistemological and societal worldview. I did not expect to confront my own Western biases, racialized understandings, and cultural indoctrination through this course. I felt myself going through a kind of Freirian conscientization process, whereby I became aware of not only the master narrative we have been sold, but of the deep inner thoughts within my own mind— the naturalized racialization of Indigenous people which has been implanted by society and reinforced through my beliefs as a white Canadian by school, family, and friends. The course led me to try to *decolonize myself from my own culture*, to see outside of the lens I have been socialized into, to understand Other ways of being.

This is tricky business and not something that I anticipate ever being complete. It will be an entire life process of questioning and chipping away at what I know, how I know it, and constantly questioning those realities.

Part of this decolonization process is recognizing that I have grown up in a society in which difference is not valued by the dominant culture, of which I am a member. I have heard racial slurs and degrading comments and stories about First Nations people, probably throughout my entire existence. There is no denying that these behaviours and attitudes are still rampant in our society. I somehow believed I was above these beliefs [Thompson's (2003) "good white"]. What I have come to realize is just how deep the colonizing project really runs; and that I need to accept that at the very root of it, I'm a product of this colonial system just like the next white person. My ideas for this research began with this emergent understanding and caused me to wonder if others have experienced similar decolonizing processes, and if so, how this has this furthered their ability to advocate for and work with Indigenous people?

Encompassing my pedagogy is a belief in asset-based approaches over deficit or charity approaches to development and relationship building. I come into this research not as an expert, but as a learner, seeking to understand new ways of being in this world, both personally and professionally. I have a genuine interest in learning more about how Others have experienced allied development, and feel that group collaboration, one where lived experiences are given priority, and ideas and emotions are explored collectively, will bring greater insight to myself and other group members with me on this journey.

OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

In Chapter 2, I discuss the theoretical frameworks guiding this study, and introduce the current state of the field in allied-based development. In Chapter 3, I provide a rationale for the research paradigms and methods used, and provide details of the inquiry in action. In Chapter 4, I summarize the major learnings from the co-operative inquiry process, drawing upon the discussions and our stories to more fully explicate the decolonizing potential of the process and its concomitant embodied learning. In Chapter 5, I discuss how the research re-conceptualizes the field of ally building. I provide my insights on how our learning was supported by considering the importance of ontological ways of being and becoming, and considering the significance of having congruence between topic and method as a means of decolonizing research processes. I also reflect upon my own deep and transformational learning through the research process.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter One, I provided an introduction to the study, including an overview of the conceptual framework that guides this study. In this chapter, I will guide the reader through three major areas of scholarly discourse. The first theoretical field is *Aboriginal Education and Indigenous Epistemology*. This section will set the tone for understanding *why* there is a need for non-Indigenous educators to understand Indigeneity, as it investigates some of the issues that beg deconstruction from educators working within a Western-centric paradigm. In section two, I explore *Educational Approaches to Race*, which includes highlighting the differences between an anti-oppressive approach and a liberal approach. It is important to understand these differences as only an anti-oppressive approach really aims to unseat the root causes of oppression. In the final section, *Social-Justice and Racial-Justice Allies*, I identify the current state of the field in allied-based research.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION AND INDIGENOUS EPISTEMOLOGY

The most effective process by which cultural imperialism is imposed is through the public education system. Battiste (2000) emphasizes this point:

> No force has been more effective at oppressing First Nations cultures than the education system. Under the subtle influence of cognitive imperialism, modern educational theory and practice, have, in large part, destroyed, or distorted the ways of life, histories, identities, cultures, and languages of Aboriginal peoples (p. 193).

There is no denying that cultural imperialism still reigns, and education systems are the main vehicle for that process. The Western public school system is implicated in causing low self-esteem, loss of cultural identity, and alienation in Aboriginal youth and children, resulting in a myriad of social problems (Cook & White, 2001).

Racialization is described as "the overvaluing of particular bodily characteristics or differences that are imbued with a lasting significance [which] are produced and reproduced through the support of particular constructions of difference (Taylor, James & Saul, 2007, p.157). Through racialization, social inequities are viewed as deficits in individuals and individual groups. For example, Aboriginal students who do not complete high school are viewed as being "less intelligent" than non-Aboriginal students, rather than viewing their failure as a failure of the system. Social problems, such as alcohol abuse and domestic abuse, are viewed as deficits in the Aboriginal personhood—rather than as symptoms of the colonization project which has systematically been responsible for loss of culture, language and identity in Aboriginal groups.

The field of Aboriginal education is largely concerned with strategies and practices that are designed to allow Indigenous students to reclaim and strengthen their identities, value systems, culture, and languages. Indigenous epistemology and spirituality permeate and run through many elements of Aboriginal culture: through language, rituals and ceremonies, nature and the environment, mythology, the oral traditions, and the medicine wheel (Ermine, 1995). Battiste (2008) describes Indigenous epistemologies as holistically guiding Indigenous people's experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and memories:

Indigenous knowledge thus embodies a web of relationships within a specific

ecological context; contains linguistic categories, rules and relationships

unique to each knowledge system; has localized content and meaning; has

customs with respect to acquiring and sharing knowledge; and implies

responsibilities for possessing various kinds of knowledge. No uniform or

universal Indigenous perspective on Indigenous knowledge exists—many do.

Its unifying concept lies in its diversity (p. 501).

There is growing attention in academia around Indigenous epistemologies

and Indigenous ways of knowing, yet there is also the very real danger of

Aboriginality and the processes of decolonization being co-opted. There is no

denying that Western epistemologies have been in control of creating the truths, of

telling history from the perspective of the victor (Smith, 1999). It has been a master

narrative and other 'truths' have been denied. The terms 'cultural imperialism',

'cultural assimilation' and 'cultural racism' have all been used to describe the

process where one worldview has been imposed on the people who hold an

alternative worldview, with the underlying value that the imposed worldview is

superior to the other (Battiste, 2000). The two approaches are paradoxically at

odds with one another: the scientific, objective, fragmented, outward-looking

approach of the West differs greatly from the holistic, spiritual, inward-looking,

subjective approach of Aboriginal cultures and traditions (Ermine, 1995).

The right to decide what is "Aboriginal" and how Aboriginal knowledge is

presented should lie solely within the domain of Indigenous people and their

communities. But the political processes are complicated and most often

contradictory to this. Battiste (2008) discusses the tensions in protecting

Indigenous knowledge, and recognizes that the complexity is bound up in decisions

made of what counts as knowledge in academic institutions, "as the all-

encompassing macro terms of "knowledge" make it difficult to legislate protection

for it" (p.497). Smith (1999) reminds us that "'authorities' and outside experts are

often called in to verify, comment upon and give judgments about the validity of

Indigenous claims to cultural beliefs, values, ways of knowing and historical

accounts" (p. 72). Many academics, scholars, researchers, government officials and

the like still work within the same Western paradigm, guided by processes that

continue to maintain colonial practices, therefore thwarting stated attempts

towards decolonization. Rather than contributing to positive changes and shifts of

power, this further contributes to the essentializing of Indigenous cultures and the

creation of Western-imposed hierarchies of "authentic" identities for Aboriginal

people and their communities. There is a very fine line between recognizing

Indigenous ways of knowing as a "valid" form of experience, and judging Indigenous

people based on those [Western-imposed] criteria. There must be a greater

recognition that both 'colonizer' and 'colonized' have been part of this colonization

project (Smith, 1999), and there is no one experience to call "the" Indigenous

experience. As Battiste (2008) explains, Indigenous epistemology is not static, and

diverse experiences of colonization and loss of environmental conditions have

altered the transmission of Indigenous languages and worldviews.

  Many western people (myself included) have a tendency to view Indigenous

cultures as fixed entities, as either one or the other, whereby you are either

'traditional' or you have 'lost your traditions'. There is a lack of understanding of the range of experiences and realities that exists. Smith (1999) summarizes this point of view: "At the heart of such a view of authenticity is a belief that Indigenous cultures cannot change, cannot recreate themselves and still claim to be Indigenous. Nor can they be complicated, internally diverse or contradictory. Only the West has that privilege" (p. 74). These kinds of harmful essentializing disregard the history of colonization and puts the blame for loss of culture on Indigenous people themselves. And Westerners retain control of making judgments on who is and who isn't "Aboriginal enough".

Because of this unequal power relationship, the need to protect and guard Indigenous cultures from co-option by the dominant society cannot be underestimated. Ladson-Billings & Donner (2008) comment on this process:

> The mainstream remained silent while the Indigenous population was massacred and displaced onto reservations but now runs eagerly to participate in sweat lodges and powwows. Such fascination does nothing to liberate and enrich the Other. Instead, they remain on the margins and are conveniently exploited for the political, economic, social, and cultural benefit of the dominant group (p. 70).

We have for too long in Canada been promoting Indigenous worldviews and culture, *as though it is our [white] own, and when it is convenient*. This is especially true in the tourism sector, where totem poles and [misrepresentations of] Aboriginal history and the like have been touted as truly Canadian for over a century. Examples of this are easy to find, and the most recent example of mass consumption of Aboriginality by society at large is in the logo for the 2010 winter Olympics in

Vancouver: an Inuit Inukshuk. But as Ladson-Billings & Donner (2008) pointed out,

only the dominant society benefits from these token inclusions of Aboriginality: the

traditional political, social and economic realities remain unchanged for Indigenous

people. As a nation, Canada *pretends* it is an integrated and caring society, where

Indigenous people and their ways of life are cherished.

A deeper understanding of these issues is essential for educators, especially

non-Indigenous educators. Battiste (2000) cautions:

> Confronting cultural racism in Canada is a difficult task because cultural
> racism cannot be contained to any one portion of the state. It is a systemic
> form of racism that cannot be dealt with in schools through classroom
> supplements or add-on courses. Confronting the problem requires a holistic
> understanding of modern thought and the purpose of education (p. 195).

As Battiste (2000) explained, unsettling some of these hegemonic beliefs will not be

solved with quick-fix or patch-work approaches. It will require a deeper, more

holistic process to transforming people's beliefs and actions. It will also require new

theoretical conceptions as the fields of Indigenous epistemology, Aboriginal

education, and Indigenous research continue to grow and expand. Scholars in the

field of adult education have advocated for the need to redefine, or carve out, new

theoretical and pedagogical spaces in which to ground Indigenous epistemology,

decolonization, and Indigenous research. Sandy Grande (2008) conceptualized the

theory of *Red Pedagogy*: "an indigenous pedagogy that operates at the crossroads of

Western theory—specifically critical theory—and indigenous knowledge" (234).

Grande's (2004) framework is unique as it draws together Indigenous knowledge

and Indigenous inquiry with critical theory, creating a broader emancipatory

pedagogy grounded in past and present colonization, with a goal towards self-determination for North American Indigenous groups. Grande (2008) explains:

> To allow for the process of reinvention, it is important to understand that Red pedagogy is not a method or technique to be memorized, implemented, applied or prescribed. Rather, it is space of engagement. It is the liminal and intellectual borderlands where indigenous and nonindigenous scholars encounter one another, working to remember, redefine, and reverse the devastation of the original colonialist "encounter". (234)

According to Grande (2004), this new pedagogical construction is necessary as current poststructural and critical discourses are grounded in 'democratic' discourses, of which the underlying paternalistic and colonial nature of Indigenous people's reality is not properly understood or recognized. The unique relationship of Indigenous people and groups to the state, both past, present and future, is highlighted in Grande's (2004) pedagogical movement. Undoubtedly, the fields of Indigenous epistemology and Aboriginal education are complex, and the ways in which scholars, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, navigate amongst and between these constructs is still highly contentious within academia.

The next section will explore what some of the current approaches are to confronting and reframing racism, and argues for the use of an anti-oppressive approach.

EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES TO RACE

How well are our post-secondary systems preparing young educators to deconstruct the racialized narratives of the past and the present? Social reproduction theory, as theorized by French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu (1993), problematizes the process by which educational institutions implicitly reproduce the culture of the ruling classes, and ensure their dominance. In social reproduction theory, students who enter the school system with the proper "cultural credits" already in place (dress, mannerisms, behaviour, a specific knowledge-base, language use and accent, abilities in the arts) proceed through the system with these "invisible privileges", while other students without these kinds of cultural capital don't seem to 'fit' the system, continue to struggle their way through, all the while trying to earn credits (change themselves to fit the 'norm'). One of the key points to be made about social reproduction theory is that *it is the teachers and administrators of educational institutions who reinforce this system*. The large majority of teachers and administrators come from mid- to upper classes, and were themselves educated in the same socio-cultural systems. Philpott (2009) comments on this lack of diversity in teacher-training programs:

> Researchers in Canada, the UK, the USA and Australia highlight concerns that an increasingly homogenous population of teachers are now teaching an increasingly heterogeneous population of students (Johnson, 2002; Levine-Rasky, 2001; Mills, 2007; Milner & Smithey, 2003; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeichner, 2006a/b). Most, if not all of these researchers express specific concern that teacher education programs have attracted, and continue to attract, a predominantly Caucasian, female, middle-class pre-service teacher population. (p. 3)

How do we break this self-perpetuating cycle of "normalcy", when, as Schick & St. Denis (2003) conclude, pre-service teachers often deny that race matters, resist anti-racism analysis, and reject taking part in deep reflection of power and privilege? Bannerji (1987) comments on the complicated work of anti-racism training:

> Racism becomes an everyday life and "normal" way of seeing. Its banality and invisibility is such that it is quite likely that there may be entirely "politically correct" white individuals who have a deeply racist perception of the world. It is entirely possible to be critical of racism at the level of ideology, politics, and institutions…yet possess a great quality of common sense racism (p. 11).

As the Canadian population becomes more and more diverse, issues related to identity and culture, inclusivity, and diversity are driving changes to educational and curricular reform. Educational systems must be critically aware of the ways in which it is responsible for socially reproducing an oppressive social system by deciding what knowledge has value. If meaningful changes are to take place within our school systems, if we are to be genuine about shifting power and moving away from a Western-centric knowledge paradigm, we must also be serious about which change strategies we are using, and why.

The anti-oppressive framework is a broad heading for a multitude of 'difference-centred' social identity theories. They are ontologically opposed to singular-truth claims, and are rooted in subjective and individual experiences, yet come together in particular socio-historical experiences: "The specific and differential nature of oppression is acknowledged, but without losing the sense of collective experiences of oppression" (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 65). These difference-

centred theories include anti-racism theory, queer theory, and other social identity theories that espouse the elimination of oppression as their primary goal (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). As Kumashiro and Ngo (2007) notes, "the field of anti-oppressive education includes a multitude of theoretical traditions, with no consensus on how to teach in anti-oppressive ways" (p.xix). Where there *is* consensus though, is the positioning of the new difference-centred theories, as each identity theory does not claim to 'trump' the oppressions taken up by other theorists – instead there is recognition of a multitude of oppressions, and acknowledgement of how individuals experience oppression intersectionally. Dei, Karumanchery, and Karumanchery-Luik (2004) comment on this positioning, from the perspective of anti-racism theory:

> Through our individual constitutions relative to the dynamics of race and racial oppression, we focus our gaze through the lens of race. Importantly, that is not to say that we are placing some hierarchical importance to racial oppression, nor do we wish to obscure or dichotomize other subjectivities of identity that function internally, externally or interspersed throughout that category. We firmly recognize the theoretical and practical value of interrogating the interlocks and intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality. It is important that we identify and engage how various systems of oppression work to strengthen and support formulations and constructions of the Other (p. 3).

Moosa-Mitha (2005) situates anti-oppressive theories along a spectrum of social theories. Located along two axes, anti-oppressive theories are those that are *critical* and *difference-centred*. Situated along the remaining two axes, *normative* and *mainstream*, lies the liberal approach to social identity. While the point here is not

to create binaries and essentialize either approach, it is essential to compare some of their underlying epistemological and ontological worldviews. Liberalism is defined in universal and individualistic terms, overlooks historical oppressions, and either ignores or overlooks difference, as Moosa-Mitha (2005) explains:

> The basis on which people have the right to be treated as equals is not based on an acknowledgement of their difference; rather, it is an interpretation of equality that transcends difference through an interpretation of equality that is synonymous with "same" (Phelan, 2001). People have the right to be treated as equals because underneath social difference, we are all the same in our humanity (p. 42).

This insistence on 'sameness' is often recognized, in anti-racism theory, as colorblindness, or the refusal to "see" race as a socially constructed concept that perpetuates inequality. Instead, individuals are to be recognized for their intrinsic worth, based on a free, democratic system, where human rights are entrenched in "laws"; therefore, everyone has had as much opportunity as the next person.

> In the Canadian context, the discourse of multiculturalism that presents Canada as culturally neutral and as embracing all cultures is contradicted by the consistent presentation and construction of 'Canadians' as white. This conceptualization reinscribes the discourse that the social system is open and meritocratic…In this multicultural context, in which race plays a role in determining who belongs (or who is seen as citizen), differences are resisted, challenged, and subordinated because of the challenges they pose to the status quo. In fact, difference is antithetical to fundamental values, norms, ideas, and processes that are necessary in order to sustain society's hegemonic structures and ideologies (Taylor, James, & Saul, 2007, p.157).

Liberalism can be seen as de-politizing difference, in order to promote 'group

harmony' – promoting the harmony of the dominant class, and not challenging

social systems or normative assumptions of social institutions (Moosa-Mitha, 2005).

In order to elucidate the distinction between the anti-oppressive theories to

the liberal framework, I'll compare and contrast the multicultural (liberalist)

approach to education with the anti-racism (anti-oppressive) approach to

education. Both multicultural education (MCE) and antiracist education (ARE) are

approaches that go beyond curricular change. They are educational reform

movements that advocate for changes to leadership and policy, teacher education,

pedagogy, and evaluation (Gay, 2004; Moodley, 2001). The foremost difference

between the two approaches is in their end goals: multicultural education aims to

promote intergroup harmony and awareness of other cultures, while antiracist

education takes a firm political stance and aims to address racism and multiple

levels of oppression through institutional [educational] change (Joshee, 2004).

In terms of educational practice, MCE is characterized as 'adding'

multicultural content to an existing curriculum and celebrating ethnocultural

lifestyles (Solomon, 1996), while ARE attempts to restructure the curriculum and

educational institutions as more equitable and inclusive representations of society.

The two can be differentiated through the use of key concepts: multicultural

education is concerned with *ethnicism*, *culture*, *equality*, *prejudice*, *misunderstanding*,

and *ignorance*; antiracist education is concerned with *dismantling*, *deconstructing*,

reconstructing, *conflict*, *oppression*, *exploitation*, *racism*, *power*, *structure*, and

struggle (Gillborne, 2004). MCE has been called a liberal approach, while ARE has

been called leftist, even radical (Gillborne, 2004).

Advocates of an ARE approach critique MCE for holding a static or

essentialist view of culture—one that does not change over time, and has little

variation from members within one cultural group (Moodley, 2001). In MCE it is

'other' cultures that are 'celebrated'; the word 'culture' is never used to describe the

dominant culture (Moodley, 2001). Critics say this promotes ethnicism (mysticism),

instead of a more dynamic understanding of culture. The underlying assumption is

that the 'others' will assimilate into the dominant culture, while the members of the

dominant culture will gain an understanding of the Other's [static] cultural

background (Gillborne, 2004). ARE, whose roots are grounded in neo-Marxism and

therefore, concerned with class struggle, conceives culture as being fluid and

dynamic, and in constant flux due to multiple forms of oppression, especially socio-

economic class (Gillborne, 2004). Moodley (2001) comments on the static concept

of culture in MCE:

> If culture were conceived as a dynamic process by educators, it might lead to
> greater introspection about the nature of school and classroom organization,
> teachers' own modes of expression, their teaching and communication styles,
> their expectations, their biases, and the representation of learners'
> experiences in curriculum materials. All of these constitute crucial features
> of the hidden curriculum of ethnocentrism in classroom discourse and the
> lived realities of learners (p. 812).

ARE is more concerned with involving all stakeholders (students, teachers, staff,

management, etc.) within institutions and organizations in activist roles, to increase

awareness of societal inequality and barriers, racism and institutional oppression (Moodley, 2001). ARE, in its methods, involve critical awareness and action oriented programs that promote changes in individual beliefs and actions, and changes at the organizational or institutional level (Lopes & Thomas, 2006). MCE can then be characterized as a passive approach to cultural awareness, while ARE is more often an active and collective approach to dismantling systemic oppressions (Moodley, 2001). "Within pedagogy, liberalism demands that educators present knowledges outside of a political project, where the political nature of education, curricula, knowledge production, and relations of power remain absented from the classroom" (Tagore & Herising, 2007, p. 279). MCE scholars contend that ARE is too political and oppositional in nature to affect change in mainstream society (Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994; Lund, 2006). ARE is often misunderstood because of its outward political stance which people sometimes interpret as propaganda (Gillborne, 2004) or suggest that it 'brings up' racism and will actually incite and promote racist behaviours (Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994). Teachers, school leaders, and parents are often scared off by even the language itself (naming racism '*racism*') and prefer to keep the term '*multicultural education*' in place. ARE advocates respond that multicultural educational methods simply 'sugarcoat' the issues, and do little to bring about transformation or change in society (Moodley, 2001).

Through an analysis of these two approaches, the ontological and epistemological roots of the liberal and anti-oppressive approaches become clear. Even though the practices may exist on a continuum, the underlying orientations are considerably different. Surprisingly, multicultural education and anti-racism

education are primarily applied towards immigrant and other visible minority cultures, and almost ignore Aboriginality in their analyses (Lawrence & Dua, 2005). This has led some scholars to call for a reformation in the field of anti-racism, a call to develop a subfield, *decolonizing anti-racism*, which primarily tackles racial oppression of Indigenous peoples (Lawrence & Dua, 2005). St. Denis's (2007) paper, *Uniting Aboriginal Education with Anti-Racist Education: Building Alliances Across Cultural and Racial Identity Politics*, is a call for recognition of the need to adopt anti-racism practices into educational policies on Aboriginal education:

> By acknow-ledging a common experience of colonization and racism educators can enact solidarity and join together to challenge racism and racialization. Coalition and alliances can be made within and across the diversity within Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples lives through a common understanding and commitment to anti-racist education (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1087).

Clearly there is a need for Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators to ally together within the field of antiracism education.

The next section will explore the research thus far in the realm of social and racial justice allies. I will show the current conceptions of what it means to *be an ally*, as well as highlight several of the studies that attempt to illuminate how people build an allied identity.

SOCIAL-JUSTICE & RACIAL-JUSTICE ALLIES

Allied-based development is a growing field of study focused on people who belong to dominant groups of society, who join the struggle for social justice as 'allies'. In all of the research reviewed for this study, acknowledgements of 'white'

privilege or 'invisible privilege' are seen as fundamental understandings that must be unpacked when *becoming an ally*. 'Whiteness' studies analyze what it means to be white in dominant Western society, and allied-based development studies concur that recognition of unearned entitlements and conferred dominance (McIntosh, 1988), along with a deeper understanding of systemic oppression within power structures are essential elements of *becoming an ally* (Kivel, 2002; Rothenberg, 2002). This is consistent with the majority of anti-racism and anti-oppression theory, where the starting point is in recognizing one's own privilege, and understanding the shifting roles between being an oppressor and being oppressed (Moosa-Mitha, 2005).

One of the seminal works on allied-based development is Anne Bishop's (1994) book *Becoming an Ally,* where she reflects upon her own personal and professional experiences of aligning herself against racist, sexist, heterosexist, and ableist paradigms. She outlines three categories (or developmental stages) of people in the book: the 'backlashers' (or 'deniers'), the 'guilty' and the 'allies'. She described the characteristics and behaviours of the three groups of people: the 'backlashers' are those who refuse to believe they play any part in societal oppression; the 'guilty' are those who take on too much personal responsibility for societal ills, which results in paralysis and an inability to take action; and the 'allies', who recognize the broader processes of oppression, are critical of power structures, and recognize that lack of action is the same as inaction. Bishop's (1994) book outlines a six step framework to becoming an ally: (1) understanding oppression, and how institutional oppressions work; (2) understanding the intersectionality of different

oppressions; (3) consciousness and healing through guilt and shame; (4) taking action towards change; (5) becoming an ally and educating dominant groups; and, (6) maintaining hope to sustain your journey. Bishop (1994) asserts that often the first place of action must take place internally. Although Bishop's (1994) work has been criticized for being mostly anecdotal and not grounded in empirical research (Reason, Roosa Millar & Scales, 2005; Broido, 2000), a small area of research scholarship has sprouted up on social justice ally development.

In Broido's (2000) phenomenological study, she looked at how six white heterosexual undergraduate students in college understood the process of becoming social justice allies. Social justice allies were defined as "members of dominant social groups (for example, men, whites, heterosexuals) who are working to end the systems of oppression that gives them greater privilege and power based on their social-group membership (Hardiman & Jackson, 1982; Washington & Evan, 1991, as cited in Broido, 2000, p.3). Using an in-depth interviewing process, Broido (2000) concluded that five critical factors were common to social justice allied-development: (1) pre-college egalitarian morals and beliefs; (2) receiving information on social justice issues through courses, peers, residence life, and independent reading and knowledge; (3) making meaning of the information through discussion, self-reflection and perspective-taking; (4) developing confidence; and, (5) being given and explicitly offered opportunities to act as allies (students often did not seek out allied-actions themselves). Interestingly, some participant's reflections on increased confidence were in direct relation to dissolving the guilt they felt for their own privilege. This seems consistent with

Bishop's (1994) analysis of the paralysis which guilt induces, and the need to move beyond that level.

Broido's (2000) study is important for two major reasons: first, it was the only empirical study of its kind to document the experience of *becoming an ally* and to theorize a conceptual model; secondly, it implicated the role of the university and student affairs professionals in making sure that students receive not only courses on social justice issues, but were offered opportunities to build self-confidence through formal and informally structured *meaning-making* activities, such as listening/sharing of experiences, and networking events. Broido (2000) conceptualized the following three roles social justice allies can play: (1) inspire and educate dominant group members; (2) create institutional and cultural change; and (3) support target group members.

Another model of social justice ally development as conceptualized by Hardiman and Jackson (1992; 1997), is the *Social Identity Development Theory*. While the details of social identity theory are too vast for this paper, it fits well as it is a constructivist notion of social identities. According to Hardiman and Jackson (1992), individuals are bombarded with messages relating to their identities (girls/boys; rich/poor; white/black) from a very young age and the social behaviours that are acceptable with those identities. When we are young, we accept these identities as being part of who we are (they become normalized). It is not until we get older and more experienced in life that we may begin to critically examine some of these identities, especially those that do not match our experiences. People may enter stages of 'Resistance': "As a result of experiences and

information that challenges the accepted ideology and self-definition, agents entering Resistance reject earlier social positions and begin formulating a new world view" (1997, p.26). Members of dominant groups may reject the roles they have played in oppressing others in the Redefinition stage, and in the Internalization stage have replaced a former identity with one based on social justice values. Hardiman & Jackson's (1992) theorizing is essentially a developmental model of how individuals 'break out' of the cycle of socialization, and involves analysis from the perspective of both dominant and target groups.

In Reason, Roosa Millar, and Scales 2005's study, they look specifically at *racial justice ally development*. Racial justice allies are defined as "Whites who are actively working to end racism and racial oppression" (p.531). In their mixed-methods qualitative study, the researchers found four factors common to racial justice ally development: (1) pre-college experiences of race issues; (2) participating in racially-related coursework; (3) experiences being a "minority"; and, (4) encountering high-quality interracial social interactions (such as building friendships with Black students). Their study also confirmed previous claims that white students must be actively challenged to reflect upon their privilege in society, and be put in uncomfortable spaces in order to seriously reflect upon racial oppression. They also confirmed assertions from Broido's (2000) study where white students who held racial justice paradigms did not actively seek out allied actions independently, but instead waited for direct invitations to participate in events, or on committees.

Edwards (2006) presented a conceptual model on identity development of social justice allies. Edwards' model is focused on the *motivation* of allies during college, and he categorizes social justice allies into three categories: (1) Aspiring Allies for Self-Interest; (2) Aspiring Allies for Altruism; and, (3) Ally for Social Justice. He presents the model developmentally, but does not intend it to be a linear model where one progresses from one stage to the next. Aspiring allies may function in more than one category at any given time, according to the situation. Edward's (2006) conceptual model is pertinent in several respects. A multitude of studies on social justice activism relate levels of motivation to the success (or failure) of social justice initiatives, and to social justice "burnout" or sustainability. Thompson (2003) writes of the desires for 'good whites' to be recognized as exceptional, while Tatum (2003) reminds us of the motivation of the 'guilty white liberal' in taking part in social justice initiatives. Both Thompson's and Tatum's 'good whites' would fall into Edward's *Aspiring Allies for Altruism* category—which is still bound in a paradigm of working *for* the Other rather than *with*, and actually perpetuates the same systems of power and domination they are supposedly working against. Obviously, the issue of motivation is a key factor in analyses of allied-based behaviour.

All of these studies add to the field of *social and racial justice ally development*, yet they do have some shortcomings. All of the research studies are based in the United States, and the context of race relations is different in Canada. For example, all of these studies identified allied relationships between blacks and whites, whereas Canadian research studies may bring in a greater diversity of perspectives (including visible minorities and Aboriginal populations). As well, most

of these studies looked at the college/university experience of undergraduate students. They were primarily concerned with fostering social justice allied behaviour during college, but were not concerned with the long-term commitments to social justice outside of the college experience. If we are serious about affecting personal, professional, and societal change, than we must look beyond the college or university experience and ask *how are allies able to come together and stay together*, outside of undergraduate school experiences, in practical workplaces and settings. And finally, none of the studies considered the reciprocal role of allied-based development, that is, the view of working with allies from the perspective of the target (marginalized) group. However, as Van der Way (2007) cautions, working together in informal alliances or coalitions is not always easy: "Scholars committed to coalition and reparative politics acknowledge the resistance, tensions, and messiness inherent in such initiatives, while simultaneously arguing that these initiatives are absolutely essential to understanding and putting an end to the destructive impacts of colonization" (p. 995).

In the next chapter, I will explain the methodological paradigms of this research study, and describe how my attempt at working with/being allies—*this research study*—functioned.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, *methodological paradigms*, I will explore the philosophical underpinnings of the methodologies used in this study. I begin with a brief explanation of the interpretative paradigm, and then situate the study within a hybrid of action research, participatory action research, and decolonizing research. In the second section, I will explain the *research method*, co-operative inquiry, which is the method modeled throughout the study. And finally, in the section titled *co-operative inquiry in action*, I detail the outcome of the method. I begin by describing the recruitment process, I introduce the group members, and I provide details on other aspects of the group process.

METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGMS

Interpretive Paradigm

The study is grounded in the qualitative, interpretive research tradition, which is best suited to research in social settings, where the aim is to explore an issue or problem, and shed greater light on its complexities. Creswell (1998) writes:

> Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions in inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (p. 15).

In qualitative research, the researcher is not aiming to manipulate variables but attempting to capture the intricacies of a situation as it relates to people in their

everyday lives. As Creswell (2007) explains, "Human actions are significantly influenced by the setting in which they occur and one should therefore study that behaviour in those real life situations" (p.53). Although researchers and scholars do not unanimously agree on a definition for interpretive research, there is agreement over what it is *not*, and it is often compared antithetically to quantitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) explain:

> The word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress <u>how</u> social experience is created and given meaning. (p. 13)

The notion of *value-laden* research is a key element of the paradigm shift in qualitative research. Whereas positivist, quantitative research strives to remove bias and exist within a value-free environment, interpretive research recognizes that social research cannot exist as value-free, and the human (subjective) experience becomes the point of inquiry.

Now I will turn to describing two of the methodologies within the interpretive paradigm, and I will explain the study's hybrid nature.

Action Research & Participatory Action Research

Action research is defined as social research carried out collectively by a group of individuals who actively seek to address a problem or issue within their

own practice. Instead of the traditional research paradigm, where an outside researcher comes into a social setting to analyze a situation *for their own benefit,* action research projects arise out of an organization/institutions' members collective recognition of a need to address an issue, and seek answers to help improve their own practice (Noffke & Somekh, 2005).

> Action research has three elements: action, research, and participation. Unless all three elements are present, the process may be useful but it is not action research. Put another way, action research is a research strategy that generates knowledge claims for the express purpose of taking action to promote social analysis and democratic social change. The social change we refer to is not just any kind of change. Action research aims to increase the ability of the involved community or organization members to control their own destinies more effectively and to keep improving their capacity to do so within a more sustainable and just environment (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p.5).

Action research is often used in such professions as teaching, nursing, social service agencies, international and community development, governmental planning departments, non-governmental organizations, and in many academic disciplines such as sociology and anthropology (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Action research is thought of as "democratizing research processes" (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p.3) as it breaks down traditional notions of the researcher-as-expert; professionals working in their field are empowered to share their valuable knowledge, and collaborate together as co-researchers.

There is a wide variety to action research projects. In general, a professional action researcher will facilitate the research process with the stakeholders (co-

researchers), and work together to collaboratively define the issue, design the research strategy, analyze data together, and make recommendations for action. "Action research promotes broad participation in the research process and supports action leading to a more just, sustainable, or satisfying situation for the stakeholders." (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 3). Action research recognizes the importance of human experience in generating knowledge, and is also associated with reflective practices, such as Schon's (1983) reflective practitioner and professional learning communities (Noffke & Somekh, 2005).

Participatory research and participatory action research (PAR) takes the social reform and social change agenda further than does action research. While action research is more concerned with changes of an individual or group nature in the professional working sphere, participatory action research is most concerned with broad changes within power structures of society. Herr and Anderson (2005) sum up this distinction:

> Traditional action research tends to concentrate on an individual or group level of analysis of problems, whereas participatory research, with its more emancipatory emphasis, tends to focus on a broader societal analysis. Traditional action research tends to emphasize issues of efficiency and improvement of practices whereas participatory research is concerned with equity, self-reliance, and oppression problems. (p. 16)

Participatory research has its roots in Freirian liberation pedagogy, which at its core asserts that oppressed people have the knowledge to solve their own problems; that given the opportunity, the oppressed can 'liberate themselves' (Freire, 1970). Participatory action research projects generally address an issue or problem of

relevance to an oppressed or marginalized group of people. Using a PAR framework
allowed me to take into account issues of power and voice, and be outwardly
political in my stance towards anti-racism, anti-oppression, and decolonization.

Decolonizing Methodologies

*Negotiating and transforming institutional practices and research frameworks
is as significant as the carrying out of the actual research. This makes
indigenous research a highly political activity and while that is understood by
very experienced non-indigenous researchers and organizations it can also be a
perceived as a threatening activity* (Smith, 1999, p. 140).

Decolonizing[3] methodologies are emerging as alternative paradigms to
traditional research traditions. While there is little consensus in terms of a definitive
definition for decolonizing methodologies, the paradigm is often described by what
it isn't: "Research 'through imperial eyes' describes an approach which assumes that
Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to
hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of
the world, of reality, of social life and of human beings" (Smith, 1999, p. 56).
Acknowledging decolonizing methodologies as part of a research methodology
highlights that this is *not* a Western-imposed methodology but one which takes a
political and social stance against top-down, colonial, "expert" research paradigms
(Smith, 1999).

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[3] *Throughout this document, I use the term 'decolonizing' methodologies most frequently,
instead of Indigenous methodologies, or Indigenous research, although in the literature they
are often used interchangeably.*

One of the tenets of decolonizing research is the right of participants themselves to decide on the processes and methods of research to be used. Indigenous research is antithetical to Western ideas of ownership over ideas and processes—it is about communities themselves making their own definitions of research and of research processes and protocols. This is why PAR methodology threads well with decolonizing methodologies, as Kovach (2005) states: "One methodology from the margins – participatory research – has been an ally. The critical, collective, and participatory principles of participatory research has made it a popular methodology for many Indigenous projects in Canada" (p. 23).

Although we are still lacking in terms of an accepted definition for decolonizing methodologies, many Indigenous scholars and researchers have attempted to provide guiding principles for the paradigm:

> From an Indigenous epistemology, I draw several key assertions that can guide research: (a) experience as a legitimate way of knowing; (b) Indigenous methods, such as storytelling, as a legitimate way of sharing knowledge; (c) receptivity and relationship between researcher and participants as a natural part of the research "methodology"; and (d) collectivity as a way of knowing that assumes reciprocity to the community (meaning both two-legged and four-legged creatures)…" (Kovach, 2005, p.28).

Indigenous methodologies acknowledge research methods which research *with* people rather than *on* people. Jones & Jenkin's (2008) discuss how their working relationship (between colonizer and colonized) has evolved. They argue that rather than trying to learn *about* the other, the need is to learn *from* and *with* the other. This implies learning from the *relationship* you create together, and it

implies the participatory nature of the act: your role as a researcher is not only to focus on the outcome (Western research paradigm), but also to be attuned to matters of *process*.

This focus on *process* over *product* is a key aspect of the fundamental shift in this research paradigm. Smith (1999) points out the *processes* Aboriginal communities decide to use is often even more important than the *research outcomes*. Wilson (2008) writes extensively on the relational accountability of Indigenous research, and the need to balance the relationship throughout the entirety of the research:

> ...If the researcher is separated from the research and it is taken away from its relationships, it will not be accepted within an Indigenous paradigm. The research will not show respect for the relationship between the research participants and topic...Rather than the goals of validity and reliability, research from an Indigenous paradigm should aim to be authentic or credible. By that I mean that the research must accurately reflect and build upon the relationships between the ideas and the participants. The analysis must be true to the voices of all participants and reflect an understanding of the topic that is shared by researcher and participants alike (p.101).

This notion of topic-process balance can be exemplified through the use of narratives or stories as method. Just as the narratives we shared during this inquiry process are both method and meaning, the participatory research process we engaged in has been just as important as the topic at hand. In this study, there was a conscious effort to establish congruence between the epistemological and ontological frameworks, the method, and the topic.

Situating the Study as a Hybrid

This study can be viewed as a hybrid form of interpretive inquiry, merging elements of action research (co-operative inquiry), participatory action research, and decolonizing research. This hybridity arose from the desire to reside in an anti-oppressive and decolonizing space. It must be noted that there are limits placed upon this study, in terms of my ability to more fully ground it in one method or the other. These limits include:

- Time (only 4 months);

- Scope (only affecting a small "community" of learners);

- Individualized nature of the research (due to institutional requirements);

- Lack of research funding (limits availability of participants).

Issues related to positionality, or where the researcher resides, also help to situate the study. Action research projects generally take place within an organization or institution, and the members within that organization are known as "insiders". Although there is not one "perfect" or "pure" method to follow in action research, according to Herr and Anderson (2005), a continuum of possibilities exists: from the extremes of an outsider studying insiders, to an insider studying their own practice (autoethnography). Yet in this study, a functioning group did not exist – I initiated the group – which makes the variation between 'insider' and 'outsider' less distinct. As well, action research is best known for tackling practical issues, whereas participatory action research is more aligned with emancipatory research.

For participatory action research (PAR), Herr and Anderson (2005) create a continuum analyzing levels of participation by participants: co-option, compliance, consultation, cooperation, co-learning, and collective action. Using these terms, this study is best situated between the continuum of *cooperation* and *co-learning*: where participants share knowledge and create new knowledge individually and with the group, but the responsibility remains on the "outsider" (myself, the researcher) for facilitating the process and primarily "owning" the research. Although I would have preferred to situate this study in collective action – where all participants set the agenda for the study and are responsible for multiple levels of data analysis – my role as a student-researcher carries particular constraints as identified previously.

Other graduate students have touched upon the insider/outsider paradox in PAR. For example, Alice McIntyre, a doctoral student who published her dissertation in 1997, and later wrote a book on the research process, summarizes her reasons for choosing PAR methodology, even though issues of full participation were at the forefront:

> A recurring question in the PAR literature is whether the researcher needs to be requested as a resource by a community or group, or whether the researcher can determine that a problem exists and then decide to engage with a group in a participatory approach to solving it. I chose the latter approach and entered this study recognizing there were many predetermined aspects of this research that seem antithetical to the overall methodological stance of a PAR project. Whereas some PAR projects involve joint research designs between the participants and the researcher, the very fact that this was a dissertation proposal initiated by me and that it was contingent on institutional approval --prior to investigation and action--make that specific step problematic. Notwithstanding, I pursued the project

because of my belief in the underlying tenets of PAR: (1) an emphasis on the lived experiences of human beings, (2) the subjectivity and activist stance of the researcher, and (3) an emphasis on social change (cited in Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 100).

The three tenets of PAR are well and alive in this research study despite some of the limitations placed on full participation.

The study is also located within the paradigm of decolonizing methodologies for several reasons. Based on Kovach's (2005) four tenets of decolonizing principles, this research:

- Values experience as a legitimate way of knowing;

- Places an emphasis on using narratives, or storytelling, to describe our experiences;

- Created a close personal and professional relationship between the researcher and between group members;

- Focused on developing knowledge collectively, for the explicit purposes of personal and professional growth;

There was also an overt understanding on my part that the priority of the research *was the inquiry process itself.* While I was aware of my needs to produce this thesis document, the inquiry process itself, and the learnings therein, remained my primary goal, which is consistent with decolonizing methodologies. Yet the study does differ from Indigenous research in several regards. Most significantly, the research is not working within an Aboriginal community and contributing to community empowerment, as most Indigenous research frameworks emphasize

(Battiste, 2008). As well, although narrative is the primary method of inquiry, there are obvious differences between how stories were shared within this group, and the purpose and meaning of story in Indigenous contexts (Archibald, 2008). The complexities of the hybrid methodology described here will be elaborated on further in Chapter 5.

Due to the issues of positionality and participation, I chose to model this study most closely to an action research method called *co-operative inquiry,* which incorporates narrative inquiry as its primary method. I will explain this method in the following section.

RESEARCH METHOD

Co-operative Inquiry

Co-operative inquiry is an action research method popularized by John Heron in 1996. It is also commonly known as *collaborative inquiry*, which was the term used by Bray, Lee, Smith and Yorks (2000). "Collaborative inquiry is a process consisting of repeated episodes of reflection and action through which a group of peers strives to answer a question of importance to them" (Bray, Lee, Smith & Yorks, 2000, p. 6). Heron's (1996) book, *Co-operative Inquiry: Research into the Human Condition* gives an extremely detailed account of the underlying principles of the method. In summary, co-operative inquiry is grounded in valuing people's knowledge and experiences, what Heron dubs "the human condition":

> The human condition is the condition you are in, I am in, he or she is in. It is
> an incarnate condition and is known only by insider knowledge. Above all, if

we are to have communicable knowledge about it, the human condition is the condition we are in: it is face-to-face, interactive incarnation. It involves you and I in communion and dialogue with each other, each of us embodied in our shared world. To inquire into it is a matter of our insider knowledge (p. 200).

From this quote, you can see that subjectivity, inquiring into individual's subjective knowledge and experience, is the basis for co-operative inquiry. In co-operative inquiry (CI), groups cycle through *action-reflection phases*, alone, and as a group. Groups are generally small in numbers; Heron recommends between five to 12 people per group. All participants play a role in design and logistics related to the group's functioning, and data is generated and analysed by the group, and then revised in light of new knowledge or experience as groups cycle through phases of action-reflection. Reflection stages are analogous to sense-making of the "data", while action stages can be seen as the data "collection". In CI, groups meet regularly, over an extended period of time. While participants are on their own in their respective workplaces, they are expected to pursue the research actions as determined by the group. Examples of these actions may be: reading on the topic, asking peers/colleagues their opinions on the topic, reflective writing, and informal interviewing. When groups come together again, they share what they learned and collaboratively make meaning out of the new information. And so the cycles continue.

Co-operative inquiry follows in the tradition of participatory research, yet differs significantly from PAR in two regards:

1) The positionality of the researcher is more fluid;

2) It doesn't necessarily focus on social change.

In CI, all participants are positioned as co-inquirer and co-participant. Roles are much more fluid, and an outside facilitator is not necessary (as is often the case with traditional action research). *If* a facilitator is brought in to initiate a group, that person is not expected to be an expert in the topic at hand—which means there is not an inherent power differential, or an "expert" for participants to seek answers from. An outside facilitator is also expected to assume the role of co-inquirer/co-participant. Facilitation roles may also be open to change—the group may decide to rotate the role of the facilitator. It is primarily this aspect of researcher positionality that led me to propose using co-operative inquiry as method. Functioning more like a study or inquiry group, I was relieved of the responsibility of being "the researcher" and was more wholeheartedly able to throw myself into the role of co-inquirer/co-participant, and remove expectations of myself as expert. I was able to operate as a learner, and this lent itself well to the other co-inquirers trusting in that relationship.

The second point of difference between PAR and co-operative inquiry is that its focus is not specifically on social change, *although that does not preclude collaborative inquiries that focus on emancipation.* Bray, et al. (2000) state that "the focus of a collaborative inquiry group is on understanding and constructing meaning around experience—a focus that may involve learning for purposes of personal development, enhancement of some aspect of one's practice, creating a new context for one's practice or problem solving" (p. 38). Therefore, CI is said to be a relevant methodology for impacting personal change, change at the

professional or organizational level, and community/societal change. The action-reflection cycles of CI lends itself well to promoting transformation or conscientization. However, through my own experience in using this method in this research inquiry, it may be that a lack of emancipatory focus impedes its success as an anti-oppressive research strategy, as the focus is on group learning *over* individual learning, using consensus as the key tool. Issues related to this potential limitation will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Narrative Inquiry

As method, co-operative inquiry begins with a narrative, storied approach. According to Clandinin & Connelly (2000), narrative approaches are those that value people's lived experience, and study the ways humans experience the world. They offer the following explanation for narrative inquiry as method:

> Arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477).

Narrative inquiry is unique as it encompasses both method and meaning: it is the process used, but our stories are also the topic. Using a method that is based in narrative inquiry is congruent with decolonizing methodologies:

> Stories are who we are. They are both method and meaning. Stories spring forth from a holistic epistemology and are the relational glue in a socially interdependent knowledge system. In listening to the research stories of others, it is evident that research stories reveal the deep purpose of our inquiries. (Kovach, 2009, p. 108)

Narratives are important because they describe how each of us interprets our own experiences. They speak to the fluidity, or changes, in how we are able to interpret and re-interpret our experiences differently, based on our evolving experiences (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

Narratives of experience – of past, present, and future – were the primary method of inquiry used in this group process. Individuals shared their own interpretations of experience throughout the study: not simply as facts that are static, but shared for the purpose of re-examining their interpretation, and for the purpose of enriching each other's understandings. In an Indigenous context, oral narratives are becoming known as *Storywork*, and as Archibald tells us, listening to stories requires more than just our ears:

> Patience and trust are essential to listen to stories. Listening involves more than just using the auditory sense. We must visualize the characters and their actions. We must let our emotions surface. As the Elders say, it is important to listen with "three ears: two on the sides of our head and the one that is in our heart" (Archibald, 2008, p.8).

This element of listening and learning as a holistic process was noted throughout the inquiry. I will explore elements of ontological and embodied learning in Chapter 5. Now that I have outlined the methodological paradigms in which the study is situated, and the methods used in the study, I will begin describing the details of our inquiry group, and how co-operative inquiry was put into practice.

CO-OPERATIVE INQUIRY IN ACTION

Ethics

This study passed an ethical review with UVic's Human Research Ethics Board. A copy of the ethics certificate is attached as Appendix A. All participants in the study signed consent forms, and were aware that their participation was being documented for this thesis.

Recruitment

The study recruited two different groups of individuals: peers who would make up membership in the co-operative inquiry group and community leaders who would visit the inquiry group in a sharing capacity. My initial recruitment strategy was to balance group membership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals, and I anticipated inviting both Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders to visit the group. Community leaders were sought through recommendations made by my supervisor and committee. Recruitment for group membership was targeted at graduate students in the Faculty of Education at UVic, upper-level (4th or 5th year) pre-service teachers, educators studying across other UVic faculties, or teachers/educators new to the field. I chose these specific

groupings of graduate students intentionally. I wanted to work with individuals such as myself, who were both practitioners and academics/students, and may also be struggling with allied identities. The exception to this rule was the inclusion of pre-service teachers, who may or may not have had previous practical experiences as educators. To justify their inclusion, I considered the pivotal role (as change agent) they stand to play in public schools.

Upon securing my ethical approval, I began postering the UVic campus with an open invitation to participate in this research study and sent out a recruitment email on UVic graduate student listserves. A type of snowball sampling (Creswell, 2007) was used to send targeted emails to people recommended through my personal and professional networks. The listserves included: the graduate student's society, Indigenous student's society, pre-service teachers' listserve, Indigenous students in the faculty of education, and grad student listserves in departments from the Faculty of Education, and programs within the Human and Social Development Faculty (such as Social Work, and Child and Youth Care). I contacted administrators working in several Indigenous student units on campus: Indigenous Affairs, Aboriginal Education, the Indigenous Governance Program, the Indigenous Student's Society, programs geared towards Indigenous students such as the Indigenous Counseling Program, and the Aboriginal Languages Program. The email script and recruitment poster are included as Appendix B of this document.

Of the 31 people in total who responded to the recruitment email, I replied back to each of them with further information about the study. In order to retain

some control over the make-up of the group, (if they were still interested in taking part), I asked them to respond back to me by answering the following questions:

1. Whether they were a: grad student in Education faculty, grad student in another faculty, pre-service teacher, or new educator;

2. Whether they were Indigenous, non-Indigenous, or other;

3. If they could commit to the 4-month time frame;

4. How they would feel discussing sensitive topics like racism and oppression;

5. Any other personal details.

Of the 31 people who initially expressed interest, 7 of them self-identified as being Indigenous. Of these 7 people, 3 were located outside of Victoria (elsewhere on Vancouver Island or the Mainland), 2 did not express further interest, and one of them was a better fit for the role of Indigenous leader. Of these 31 people, only 2 were men (and non-Indigenous), and only one of them expressed a further interest in the study.

This left me with quite a dilemma: I either had to cut back the numbers of the group severely in order to "balance" the group between Indigenous and non-Indigenous members or rethink my "balancing" strategy. Time was ticking: I had by now already spent almost 3 weeks trying to recruit group members, and needed to begin the project before the (mostly) students who were volunteering to participate moved onto other activities at the end of the winter term. I reflected on this process in my research journal:

> It's been so difficult to 'choose' people, because I need to be so alert to the make-up of the group. There is a tension in polarizing Indigenous to non-Indigenous; though there is a variety 'in-between'. And judging "who makes an ally"—because some people are doing the work, while others have an

'interest', but maybe haven't yet had the opportunities to involve themselves, to get the jobs, to create the relationship. So I have to be that gate-keeper, and judge who is allowed entry. I have been reminded how hurt/angry I have felt in the past when I am 'discriminated' against because of my European ancestry, as policy dictates that those who have previously been disadvantaged/discriminated against be given opportunities. So I feel terrible turning people back. Yet I know that the balance of the group cannot be tipped to European white settlers. Three of us is plenty! Hopefully the use of Indigenous community leaders will help to balance the Indigeneity side…"

I made the decision to work with six women who I hoped would each lend a different lens to the inquiry. The group was chosen based on diversity of: ethnic/racial backgrounds, age, occupation, and their interest and experience in the topic. The two community leaders were both Indigenous women.

Participants

Inquiry Group

Here is an introduction to the seven group members[4] who made up the co-operative inquiry group:

Trish—Trish was in her final practicum of the teacher education program at UVic while we were in the inquiry together. She has since graduated. Trish is in her twenties, of European ancestry, and had moved from the interior of BC to study at UVic. She had relationships with Indigenous people while growing up, and her experiences with Indigeneity were part of her school-based experiences while in the teacher education program at UVic. Trish was concerned with bringing Indigenous and Other ways of knowing into the classroom.

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[4] *All names used in this document are pseudonyms, and identifying features removed as per the request of participants.*

Brandi—Brandi is a graduate student in the Faculty of Education. Brandi is in her forties, of Jewish ancestry, and grew up in Toronto. She self-identifies as having a disability, and being bisexual and polyamourous. Brandi had worked with an Indigenous group in the past as an adult educator, and had an interest in comparing the Jewish and Indigenous experiences.

Jo—Jo is a graduate student in the Faculty of Education. Jo is in her forties, of Coast Salish ancestry, and grew up in the Saanich community where she lives. Jo has worked primarily with Indigenous organizations, and is currently working on language revitalization of the SENCOTEN language. She had an interest in teaching back about her experiences as an Indigenous woman, and learning about Other's experiences with racism.

Lila—Lila is a graduate student in the Faculty of Education. Lila is in her forties, of European ancestry, and grew up in urban Ontario. She has experiences as a classroom teacher working on-reserve, as well as experiences as an adult educator working with Indigenous groups. Lila's interest surround how non-Indigenous allies can support Indigenous people, in education and in research.

Danielle—Danielle is a graduate student in the Faculty of Human and Social Development. Danielle is in her thirties, self-identifies as Métis, and grew up in Montreal. She currently lives on the Sunshine Coast, in an Indigenous community, as a nurse educator. Danielle's interest is in supporting Indigenous people in the healthcare system.

Ganga—Ganga is a UVic graduate of the joint degree program in Law and Public Administration. During our inquiry together, she was completing her articling term, and during the writing of this thesis she became certified to practice law in the province of BC. Ganga is in her late twenties, of South-Asian ancestry (Punjabi), and grew up in North Vancouver. Ganga's experiences working with Indigenous people and groups were school-based, during her degree. Her interests surround changes in the institutional structures that govern our lives—and how we can affect change to the people working in, and making decisions within, public policy and law.

Sue, aka "the researcher"—Sue is a graduate student in the Faculty of Education. Sue is in her thirties, of European ancestry, and grew up on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Sue has had relationships with Indigenous people since high school, and worked with one of the local Coast Salish groups on language revitalization. Her interests lie in exploring anti-oppressive frameworks and decolonizing antiracism.

Community Leaders

Both of the community leaders invited to speak to the group were Indigenous leaders, working in educative capacities in Victoria and the surrounding communities, with extensive experience in alliance building across and within Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups.

Donna—Donna visited our group during our third session. She belongs to the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation of the northern coast of Vancouver Island, and has been working on Coast Salish territory for several decades in and around Victoria. Her

work involves supporting Indigenous students and teachers, and advocating for Indigenous ways of learning and knowing. Donna is a firm believer in the need of non-Indigenous allies to support Indigenous people and groups.

Kay—Kay visited our group during our fifth session. Kay is a Coast Salish Elder from one of the local Saanich communities. She has been involved in the movement to achieve Aboriginal control of education since the 1970's. Kay is a knowledge keeper in the areas of traditional protocol and research ethics, and places high value on building relationships amongst and between different cultural groups.

Initiating the Group

I used email to coordinate amongst the 7 of us and to bring us together for our first session in a classroom at the First People's House at UVic. I had sent each participant an agenda in advance that included:

- Introductions: Tell us *your story*, and how it relates to you being here;
- Inquiry goals: What are you hoping to learn? What questions do you have?;
- Methods overview & setting ground rules;
- Interviewing each other: What more can we learn right now? What are our own experiences?;
- A handout on Allies (Session 1 materials are included as Appendix C).

A narrative approach was employed in this initial meeting as a strategy to elicit the subjective lived experiences of group members[5] and in keeping with the anti-oppressive framework of the study. We began our first session by each sharing

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[5] *From this point forward, the seven members of the inquiry group will be referred to as 'group members' rather than participants.*

"our story": who we are, and how the topics of racism and Indigeneity relate to our past and present experiences. Our first session was instrumental in setting the tone for our inquiry, and making sure that relationships would be built on respect. We each shared our personal and professional interest in being part of the group, and how our past and present experiences with the topic at hand have influenced us, and brought us together in this space. We shared "inquiry questions', by each taking the time to write a question(s) on cards. These were then clustered on the back of the door, for each of us to see each other's "goals" for the inquiry (Appendix D).

We then moved into setting ground rules for the inquiry process. Some of the ground rules required in-depth conversation, making sure we were all in agreement and understood the rules, such as discussing what "confidentiality" means to us, or how to respond if a group member does not respect ground rules. I presented an overview of the differences between this kind of participatory research and a more traditional research model, trying to instill the notion of being both "co-participant" and "co-inquirer", noting that none of us were experts but were all here to share and learn from one another.

The group seemed keen to slip into this egalitarian process, where I was not merely seen as facilitator, but a member of the group. To illustrate this, I've include an excerpt from my research journal, written post-session, on the topic of "enforcing ground rules" within the group:

> Now an interesting part came when one member asked 'how' do we enforce these rules. I said my preference would be that it's everyone's responsibility to speak up—call out each other if they feel rules are being broken. Speak up, but respectfully. Another member began raising concern that the group was becoming too structured. She didn't want to have a 'process' where we deal with members not sticking to ground rules. She wanted it to be informal—if

you have something to say, just say it (to me, to the others). Don't keep it quiet.

This discussion of the inquiry process becoming too "structured" set the tone for decisions regarding our group process, not only for that first session, but for sessions to come. In co-operative inquiry, individuals and groups make plans for action-reflection cycles: that is, the group is meant to decide collectively what "question" to look at in that cycle, and decide on the methods to use for that action cycle. As I moved to initiate that conversation in our final moments of the session, my ears were still ringing with the member's voice that things were 'becoming too structured'. I asked the group what question they'd like to look at collectively during that cycle, or if they would prefer to keep it open, and decide on their own questions, and methods of collection. No one in the group raised the opinion of wanting to look at a question collaboratively; from this lack of response it became clear that each of the group members wanted the freedom to pursue their own interests. So as to lead this by way of example, I let the group know what question *I* was planning to look into, and the methods *I* planned to use. I made clear that they were each welcome to use the same question, or pursue their own. Then I gave each member a research journal in which to record her thoughts and reflections during the inquiry process.

Members of the group suggested we meet at each other's houses, on rotation, rather than in the UVic classroom. Almost everyone spoke of the desire to move off-campus, and into a more comfortable space than an institutionalized classroom. The energy of the group members was high, as plans were being made to bring food, to watch documentaries together, go on outings together. Once our session broke,

most members continued to chat informally and get to know one another a little better.

Schedule, Logistics & Commitment

We made plans for our six group sessions to take place every two weeks, from February 24 until May 5, 2010. Thus the study spanned over 11 weeks. Danielle lived on the Sunshine Coast and so joined us each time through the use of Skype, an Internet video conferencing tool. Commitment to attending the sessions was very high, and none of the members missed a session, although during sessions 4, 5 and 6, one other group member also joined us through Skype (we used two laptop computers). In these cases, group members had out of town personal or work related commitments, which took them outside of Victoria. In one instance a member even conferenced with us from a Vancouver coffee shop! Such demonstrated the tremendous interest and commitment the group had to the co-operative inquiry process.

Sessions, on average, lasted 3 hours. We began with allocating only 2 hours, but it quickly became clear that more time was needed. Three hours was the average time per session, although on many occasions we went over that time, and one of our sessions with an Indigenous leader lasted four hours. Informally, several members of the group also gathered for what we called a 'documentary video evening', which lasted three hours. In total, the group spent between 18-21 hours together. Two of the group members also attended an Indigenous ceremony by invitation of a third group member. Between sessions, each group member also spent time involved in individual data collection, reflection, and analysis. For myself,

I spent an average of 2-3 hours between each session "researching" or "reflecting" on issues raised in the previous week's meeting. After reviewing the group members' final evaluation reports (see Appendix E for the framework provided to group members), it seems that individual time spent researching between sessions averaged 1-2 hours. During our last meeting, most members decided they would like to continue meeting together. We have since begun an online blog, where we share information and discuss ideas, and we plan to continue to meet monthly (instead of bi-weekly).

Co-operative Inquiry Research Questions

In co-operative inquiry, individuals spend time during sessions involved in action-reflection cycles. Our group did not collectively decide to follow any one question per session—we left it open for individuals to pursue the questions that were of most importance to them. Therefore, I cannot provide the research questions as pursued by the group as a whole. Instead, I can provide the questions I chose to undertake during this inquiry process. Some members reported following my lead during some cycles, and pursuing the same or similar questions.

The first three inquiry questions are the research questions guiding this study, while the final two questions grew out of the organic process (what the inquiry revealed to me), session by session, and what became of upmost importance to my understandings emerging from the co-operative inquiry process.

Cycle 1: What have I experienced when I acted as a racial-justice ally? Where and why have I had successes, and what have been challenges?

Cycle 2: What have others experienced when working with or being an ally? Where

and why have they had successes, and what have been challenges?

Cycle 3: What are some of the issues that Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators

face when working together, and what are some strategies to overcome

them?

Cycle 4: How are Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada governed

differently? How does the Indian Act and government policy play into all of

this?

Cycle 5: How can I learn to listen outside of the 'colonization project'? How can I

'decolonize' my mind in order to be aware of colonizing practices, and see

things from other points of view?

Co-operative Inquiry Research Methods

The following research methods were used during co-operative inquiry

cycles, either during group sessions or pursued individually (as reported during

sessions and on the member's final evaluation reports):

- Narratives or stories of lived experience by participants

- Narratives or stories of peers/colleagues/friends/family as related by

    participants

- Reflective journaling in a research journal

- Informal conversations with persons outside of the group (outside

    informants)

- Artistic works (drawings, photographs, poetry, etc.)

- Sensory information (documentaries, video)

- Secondary literature (books, journal articles, websites, or other documents)

- Sense making activities (mapping exercise)

Format of Sessions

The format for each group session was roughly scheduled as follows:

1. Report back on each member's questions for that cycle, the methods they used, and what insights or further questions they bring with them. (This often involved members reading portions of their research journal or sharing stories of a personal nature of events that happened since we last saw each other, that were relevant to the topic under discussion).

2. Open discussion, where individual members shared stories and experiences on aspects of racism, oppression, or *working with/being an ally*. (Group members would discuss together and deconstruct those experiences, and offer insights, suggestions, new understandings, or new interpretations of the events. During these open discussions, new stories would present themselves to help illuminate each other's experiences and interpretations.)

3. Plans for individual action and reflection for next cycle. (Group members fell into a routine of planning their own "research" for the ensuing weeks, preferring the freedom to follow their own questions and use methods that presented themselves. Each session I presented my plans for the following cycle, giving any member the opportunity to follow the same "research" with

me if they chose. Some members chose to follow my lead, while others had
their own paths to follow.)

I followed up after each group session with an email to reinforce some of the
logistics we had decided upon, such as where the next session would be held, and
who would be joining us. I also made it a point to restate what my *research plans* for
the next two weeks were: what question I was looking at, and what methods I was
planning to use. During each two-week cycle, emails were often exchanged between
the group, sharing online or other resources, or commenting on aspects of learning.

Indigenous Leaders

During Sessions three and five, an Indigenous leader joined our group.
During those sessions we did quick check-ins with each other either prior to or
immediately after our guest visit. These sessions centred on listening to *the Leader's
stories and experiences on racism and alliance building*, as well as asking some of our
own burning questions and sharing our own experiences. Digesting, understanding
and debriefing from sessions spent with Indigenous leaders was an ongoing process
through the inquiry sessions, as we individually and collectively made sense of
Leader's stories, words and lessons.

Group sense making

In the "pure" form of co-operative inquiry, analysis of data should take place
concurrently to data collection—as co-inquirers are spiraling through cycles of
action-reflection, reflection cycles explicitly include making sense of the new data
and interpreting it according to experience. Group reflection is primarily concerned

with "reflection/analysis" of new knowledge and ideas, while individual action

stages can be seen as " data collection" stages. Inquirers may bring "raw" data back

to the group for group analysis, or they may have also been spiraling through 'mini-

cycles' of action-reflection on their own. At the end of the inquiry, there should be

overall agreement of the analysis, although individuals are likely to have their own

personal learnings, which may or may not match the group's analysis.

Due to the anti-oppressive framework in which the study is situated, and the

desire to have the freedom to follow our individual research questions, our inquiry

functioned differently. As group members went off on collection and reflection *that*

were different from one another, it was difficult to initiate group consensus during

each session, at least as an explicit activity. Because each member was pursuing her

own questions, I began to realize the difficulty in accomplishing group sense

making, at least in a formalized way. I was not even necessarily sure if the members

<u>wanted</u> to be involved in that aspect of the inquiry, and so I began with an email,

encouraging the group to think reflectively on some of the stories we had been

sharing, and what potential themes or learnings they could detect from our stories.

Near the end of session four, we discussed group sense making and how they would

like to collaborate. The group decided that it would be best if I did an initial analysis

of the data, and bring some themes I had identified back to the group for discussion.

I volunteered to circulate excerpts of transcripts from our recorded sessions

together: stories we had shared with one another that were quite meaningful. I

hoped that these transcripts might encourage members to become more involved in

the analysis, and provide their own reflections, rather than rely solely on my

interpretations of our learning and experiences as a group. However, during our subsequent session, only a few members had actually had the time to look at the transcripts in much depth. Although I continued to send out excerpts from sessions 2-5 to the group, members either lacked time, ability, or effort to participate in group sense making, at least as an explicit activity. We did manage to have a group check-in during session four, where each member had a chance to comment on the process thus far.

In preparation of our final session, I prepared a final evaluation, and gave this to members two weeks in advance. We discussed it during our fifth session. I asked each member to "map their journey" during this inquiry process, and note new learnings. The evaluation also consisted of 7 open-ended questions for us to discuss as a group during our final session. These questions related to the research questions of this project, and to the themes I had drawn in initial analyses of our stories and our sessions. This evaluation form is included in Appendix E. During our final session together we also shared each other's inquiry maps (4 members completed the exercise; photos of 2 are included as examples in Appendix F), and discussed major "aha" moments within the inquiry process. Unfortunately, due to time constraints caused by technological difficulties with our Internet connection (and the need to connect to two of our members via Skype), we did not have the opportunity to complete the open discussion from the questionnaire. Instead, five of the members provided me with written responses to the evaluation discussion questions.

I provided all group members (including Indigenous leaders) with a copy of their words used in this document for member checking. This included their stories, any quotes I planned to use from them, and anywhere I may have summarized their words. They had the opportunity to clarify meanings or alter descriptions if they chose.

Analysis and Interpretation

Although we did not explicitly, in a formalized way, come to consensual agreements on all aspects of learning within the inquiry, there was less formalized analysis taking place within the group. Conversation by conversation, and session-by-session, group members raised ideas, constraints, and strategies for the roles of allies. Many of these themes were raised again and again, and in this sense became consensual. These themes provided the impetus for the analysis I report in Chapter 4, and are a result of the coding and sense making/interpretation activities I took up between and after our sessions. Although the ideas belong to the group, I was essentially tasked with organizing and bringing my interpretation to the co-operative inquiry process.

An important point to note is that while each group member shared stories and experiences, these stories can be interpreted differently by every member of the inquiry group. This tension of sense making as an interpretive event is also known as the hermeneutic circle (Schon, 1983): when individuals are involved in dialectic processes, each interprets words and ideas differently based on a multitude of personal factors, access to particular discourses and knowledges, experiences and

contexts. As this thesis involves my interpretation of events, stories and experiences, it is impossible to report with certainty what happened for each of the other group members. What I report is a function of what they shared with me and how I interpreted those stories. As I also experienced the inquiry process myself, this thesis is a testament of my interpretation of that process and a representation of their experiences.

Data Sets & Coding

I collected four sets of data during the co-operative inquiry process. First, all six inquiry sessions were audiotaped & transcribed. Discussions of learnings and written responses to the final evaluation form were the second set of data I collected. Four group members completed a map of their "inquiry journey" for our final session, and these inquiry maps are the third data set. And finally, I used the reflective writings from my own research journal.[6]

I began coding the data by reading the transcriptions of our sessions together as we cycled through the 11 weeks of the inquiry. I began to notice very obvious themes that related to either constraints (negative or painful stories) negating the development of allied identities, or supports and roles of allies (positive stories of allied actions). I also began noticing particular themes around identity, the space, and racism that began to thread throughout the process we were engaged in. The

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[6] *I had initially intended to use each member's research journal as a data set, but gave members a choice whether to submit it in entirety, or supply me with specific sections from it. No member chose to give me their journal in entirety, and only one member supplied segments from it. Most members voiced concern that it was too personal to submit for publication in the thesis document. I have therefore removed their research journals as a data set, but continue to use mine to report on my own learnings and interpretation of the process.*

themes of constraints and supports reported on in Chapter 4 represent the themes most commonly described, although there were other less common themes that I did not report in this document. My initial analysis of sessions one through four were central to the development of the final evaluation form I prepared for the group. Our final discussion session on learnings, final written evaluations, and the inquiry maps were used to further refine the themes developed through my analysis.

Dissemination of Results

The results of this study are being written, first and foremost, as partial fulfillment of my Masters degree. The group however, as a part of our collaborative process, agreed to consider disseminating the results of our experience in some way at a future time, such as in a written publication or as a form of artwork. These decisions will be guided by the group members themselves, and may emerge as the group process continues to unfold. This is consistent with the anti oppressive methodological framework adopted for this study.

Limitations & Challenges

There were important limitations placed on making this study a truly participatory and collaborative process. For example, due to my role as a student at UVic, and the requirements of research practices which gives me "credit" for completing the study, I was bound by convention and specific formal review processes as set by the University and the Faculty of Education at UVic. The individualized nature of degree credits presents challenges to 'authentic

participation' of members—there is an obvious power dynamic at play when one group member stands to gain more than the others. The power dynamic was alleviated somewhat, as I was accepted as a member of the inquiry group, but it was still *entirely my responsibility* to document this process for the purposes of *my* degree credit. Therefore, my role as "the researcher" cannot be erased. Although this project is rooted in PAR theoretically, in practice many elements come from my initiation of the project, including the design, the research questions, and the analysis.

I was also limited in the time and effort I could put into this project. Usually a co-operative inquiry group would meet once a month, over a period such as one year. I shortened this time frame to 4 months for the entire study, including the recruitment period. This meant that our group met bi-monthly instead of monthly, for a total of 6 group meetings. Time was the largest constraint during our sessions: since we were rotating houses each session, issues with the use of technology often caused delays. We never seemed to have enough time during the sessions to discuss all that we could have. The limited amount of time also affected the level of direction I felt was necessary to provide, as well as the level of other member's participation. This again affects how it is viewed as a PAR project.

Lack of funding was a challenge, as I had no means (such as stipends) to gently persuade participation, or provide incentives to group members or to Indigenous leaders. Many student-researchers gain research funding before embarking on a PAR project in order to provide their participants some incentives (stipends) or to cover other incidentals (costs of transportation, etc.), especially

when a project is running over a longer length of time. The success of this project

depended solely upon the commitments made by group members. This challenge

also proved to be its success—only highly motivated individuals interested in the

topic at hand chose to spend their time on this project.

Another challenge was is in creating a respectful space for discussion and

debate on such a sensitive subject as race and racism. Heron (1996) makes mention

of the potential in CI to work through emotions and anxiety, especially as groups

grow closer and feel safe together. I became mindful of the more emotive and raw

content of the stories we shared as we progressed deeper into the inquiry process

together. Although feelings of discomfort and tension were expected, it was not

until our final session together when some participants verbalized feeling

"emotionally drained" or "over-sensitized" to the issues. It was clear that we had

created a *safe space* to have these conversations, but I had not anticipated that it

would take until our final session together for these emotions to reveal themselves

so clearly.

Setting the tone in a respectful manner was of primary importance to the

success of the study. Care was taken to establish group rules (such as confidentiality,

active listening, respectful statements, etc.), and as facilitator, I had planned to keep

us to those agreed upon rules. But, as the inquiry process played out, I found myself

retreating from the role of facilitator, as I myself became more fully immersed in the

inquiry and focused on my own learning and reflective processes. It was extremely

challenging and mentally exhausting in the initial sessions to shift from facilitator to

group member and back again. In later sessions, I found myself relying on others in

the group to take responsibility for their own behavior.   There was only one member of the group who consistently seemed oblivious to sharing "airtime" with the others. To offset this issue, I introduced a talking stick to help establish boundaries around "airtime", but this also was not always successful.

Quality of Research

In quantitative research, rigors of credibility and validity are applied to ensure that the research is "valid" and "true". For interpretative and participatory research, these quality checks are revised, as the goals and epistemological stance of research is altered. Within the literature regarding participatory action research, quality checks concern the relations and engagement of individuals participating in the research:

> Lather writes 'our framing is shifting validity from a discourse about quality as normative to a discourse of relational practices' (2001). Habermas (1979), posits that truth results from an emancipatory process, one which emerges as people strive towards conscious and reflexive emancipation, speaking, reasoning and coordinating action together, unconstrained by coercion (Bradbury & Reason, 2006, p. 343).

There is some variation in validity criteria and terminology from researchers in the field of action and participatory research. I chose to follow Herr and Anderson's (2005) validity criteria, which are compatible with the goals of action research, and are outlined below. All of these criteria were monitored throughout the study.

Process Validity

Process validity (Herr & Anderson, 2005) is concerned with using an appropriate research methodology, and in keeping that process on track. Bradbury and Reason (2006) call process validity '*Quality as Relational Praxis'*. For collaborative inquiry, Heron (1996) calls this '*research cycling*' and states that: "research outcomes are well-grounded if the focus of the inquiry, both in its parts and as a whole, is taken through as many cycles as possible by as many group members as possible, with as much individual diversity as possible and collective unity of approach as possible" (p.131). The commitment of every member to attend each session is a clear indicator of process validity: even when members were not physically in Victoria, they still were present via Skype. The ability of group members to pursue their own topics of interest also led to high motivation levels; although this created an interesting dilemma in terms of consensus building on group learning, the shifting of process from *consensus building* to *freedom in expression* was appropriate for this study. There was also diversity amongst the *type* of data collection put forth by individuals: some members were clearly bringing forth data they had "researched" through methods such as informal interviews, website, books, and journal readings, and other "tangible" methods, while other members consistently brought forth stories and reflections on personal experiences. For most members, it was a mix of these types of data collection, which is the crux of co-operative inquiry (action and reflection combined).

Authentic Relationships

As a subset of process validity Heron & Reason (2006) have identified *authentic relationships* in co-operative inquiry as being a measure of a study's validity. They stress the relational aspects of members working together to be of the utmost importance "Since inter-subjective dialogue is a key component in refining the forms of knowing, it is important that the inquiry group develops an authentic form of collaboration" (p.150). Care was taken from the outset of the study to build positive group dynamics, and an atmosphere of trust and safety. Taking care of the relational aspects of participants was of paramount importance to having open discussions. Moving our inquiry outside of the institutional walls of the university, into each other's homes, helped immensely in setting the tone for a safe and welcoming environment. Members often commented on how comfortable they felt in our conversations together, and attributed that to the home environment (along with good food at each session). From the final written evaluations, every member reported having developed at least one or more authentic relationships with other group members. That being said, some members also made mention of one or two difficult personalities in the group.

Dialogic validity

Dialogic validity (Herr & Anderson, 2005) refers to a process similar to a peer review, in which a friend or colleague outside of the research group acts as a kind of 'devil's advocate' or 'critical friend'. This measure ensures that researchers are looking outside of their own subjective interpretation of results or events, open

to alternative explanations, and helps to reach the goal of generating new knowledge. I engaged my research supervisor in this type of discussion, particularly in terms of group facilitation and group sense making. It was important for me to bounce ideas or interpretations of events with this mentor, who assisted me in making better informed decisions on process facilitation and methodological issues.

Catalytic validity

Catalytic validity is defined as "the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it" (Lather, 1986b, p. 272, in Herr & Anderson, 2005). This measure of quality is closely related to emancipatory learning, and is one of the general aims of this research. I kept a very detailed account of my own experience (using a research journal), and I paid particular attention to points of new knowledge and being moved to action. I had tried to inspire this same commitment in co-inquirers, and by the end of the research, hoped to use the details (thick description) from everyone's research journals to analyze in terms of catalytic validity. Since I am no longer using the other inquirer's research journals as a data set, I analyzed final written evaluations and final session discussions in reporting on other member's learnings. My own research journal is used to show a high degree of catalytic validity.

According to our final session discussion, and individual written evaluations, everyone involved in the research developed deeper understandings of the issues at hand. Some individuals were surprised to find deeper learnings in places they hadn't suspected. Herr & Anderson (2005) note that they should also be moved to some form of action.   Six members of the group were able to verbalize new

behaviours or "actions" they hope to integrate into their way of being, while one member spoke of "planning to act"—that is, not yet having put new ideas into action, but feeling stronger and more prepared as a result.

This chapter laid the groundwork for the methodological paradigm in which the study is situated and the methods in the study. I introduced co-operative inquiry as method, and gave a detailed account of how our inquiry group functioned. I discussed some of the limitations and challenges of the study. Lastly, I described how quality checks were applied to the study, and the outcomes of those in terms of relational practice. In the next chapter I will provide the results of the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter is divided into two main sections that highlight the results of the inquiry in terms of the research questions. The first section, titled *The Space*, contextualizes our discussions, and points to the establishment of the safe space in which we shared. Some of these factors included our discussions about identity, our discussions about allies and decolonization, and our discussions on racism. The second section, *Constraints and Supports to Allies*, reports on the major learnings in the research, in regards to the research questions. This section is again separated into two sections: one discussing the constraints, and the other discussing the supports. Throughout this chapter I will thread quotes, stories and excerpts from all group members, in order to more fully bring the inquiry process to life.

The guiding research question of the inquiry was to ask: how has building racial-justice allies been experienced, from the perspective of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators? What are some supporting and constraining factors, both personally and professionally, involved in building racial-justice allies? Narratives do not unfold in linear fashion, and the stories we shared with one another often contained interpretations of experiences across intersecting topics. While our discussions centred on racism and oppression, we did not try to answer the research question in an epistemological way. That is, we did not sit down and say, "So what are the constraints and supporting factors in building alliances with one another?" Instead, stories arose from emotional centres of our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls, and we shared our interpretations of our experiences of racism and oppression, and our experiences of *working with/being allies*. Our stories

showed complexity in how we each understand, or try to understand racism within ourselves and within society, and how we have each individually struggled with our identities as allies.

THE SPACE

This section of the chapter is meant to contextualize the kind of real or imagined space we created together. In order to understand the lessons we learned from one another, it is imperative to first understand what brought each member to the inquiry group, and how our backgrounds impacted our learning. While individual stories varied greatly, many of the reasons for being here did not. Without naming it, we were talking about our identities as allies. The excerpts you will read also point to the kind of space we were creating—a decolonizing, anti-oppressive space, a safe space for difficult and often confusing conversations on race and racialization. Understanding *why* this space was important to seven individual women is essential to understanding the lessons shared.

Our very first session was spent telling 'our story'—who we are, why we joined the group, and what we were hoping to learn together. I noted a spectrum of cultural confusion, or confusion inhabiting cultural spaces within society. These touched upon moments when we are each oppressor or are oppressed ourselves. We discussed racism, our experiences with racism and our understandings of these ideas. We each spoke in highly emotive ways: of guilt, of confusion, of anxiety, of sadness, of paralysis, of conflict, of anger. There was a desire to clear some of the

confusion of "space" and the spaces we each reside in everyday. These may be invisible spaces, but that does not mean they are not real.

Identity struggles

My very reasons for initiating the group were to learn if others had been struggling like me with strengthening an allied identity. I spoke of the paralysis of guilt from my white settler heritage that has plagued me for many years, and left me as an ineffective ally. I said to the group during our second session:

> … If I could take away a lot of this "white identity" that I pack around with me, I would happily do it, because so much guilt and shame goes with that white identity that I can't hide or cover up. And I just carry around all this shame all the time…If I'm talking about colonization, and what happened to Aboriginal people, and I'm the white girl, I have that, I carry that shame and that guilt with me all the time….But I wish people who could see me for who I am, instead of who they think I am. I am put in this category, as being the same as them, and I'm not. But no matter what I do, they don't see that…So how do you have that ally identity as part of you that people can see right up front?

Others discussed their own identity struggles. For example, Ganga talked about not always fitting in with her South-Asian heritage in Canada, yet found herself welcomed in India on her first visit there—she told people she was "Canadian" and they told her, "No, you're Indian". For Ganga, there is a confusing binary between her Indian heritage and the First Peoples of Canada, as both groups are commonly referred to as "Indians". In Punjabi, her family members refer to Canada's First Peoples as their "eldest uncle", which is a term of respect. She often referred to the division between the two worlds she inhabits:

> I was just trying to figure out whether there is a different side of me that is my Indian self and if there is a different side of me that is my 'on, outside world, classroom self', because there has definitely always been some sort of distinction between 'home' and 'outside'. You have to kind of make sure that

> you're saying the right thing, because everything is different on the outside, right? And you want to keep up with everybody in terms of that.

For Ganga, it is an ongoing struggle to align her multiple identities. This notion of having *multiple selves* or *hybrid selves* was a theme that continued throughout the inquiry.

Danielle, who passes as white, discussed the confusion with her mixed European and Métis background, and describes having what she called a "traditional Canadian upbringing"; implying she had a traditional *white* upbringing. She struggles with the confusion of being an ally with Indigenous people, from the perspective of one who is Indigenous herself, yet has few cultural ties to her heritage. In one of our sessions, Danielle said: "Well I have a Métis [heritage]—I'm Métis. And I don't acknowledge it openly, because I don't really know what that...what that means really." She spoke of the desire to understand herself better:

> On a personal level I'm hoping to maybe understand myself a little bit better as well. I have what I sort of call, a little bit of cultural confusion. I come from a mixed background, and I don't really identify with any one culture, or one type of upbringing, so this [the inquiry] might help. I have Aboriginal ancestry as well as...Western European, so it's sort of a mishmash...

For Jo, who has grown up with a strong Coast Salish identity, her struggle is to co-exist in both her traditional territory and the mainstream community of Victoria. Jo spoke of her own confusion and the confusion involved in bringing up children in this racialized world, where Indigenous people need to exist in two, often competing, cultures—the need to *'walk in two worlds'*:

> I had a lot of identity issues growing up because of being an Aboriginal female girl in school. And going from an all Native school into the public system was really a culture shock for me, because I didn't know how to be, didn't know how to act, and I didn't know anything about being colonized... You know how...how I used to say 'walk in two worlds', but [my instructor]

says you have to learn to walk in both. So that's part of the reason why I'm here and wanting to learn too, to…I guess maybe feel the awkwardness of conversation that comes up and being able to learn from that too.

Brandi spoke of her Jewish identity, but because of the fact that she passes as white, she feels her ethnicity and her traditions are not visible to others. She struggled with wanting Others, those she builds alliances with, to see more than her 'whiteness'— to recognize her cultural roots to oppression that are her Jewish heritage. At our first session, Brandi spoke of the confusing relationship she has with Aboriginal peoples, mostly due to a negative experience she had working with an Aboriginal men's group:

> I've never had a 'love you/hate you' relationship with any other group, other than Aboriginal…men, mostly! But there is something about my experience with Aboriginal men that is really hard for me to understand where that's coming from; maybe because they see me as the "white woman"; but please instead, see me as the white disabled woman, which might have some resonance with struggle and suffering; but it's caused me a lot of turmoil.

Brandi struggled with wanting people to see beyond her 'whiteness', and to recognize the struggles she also endures as a Jewish, disabled, bisexual women.

Recognition of the intersections of oppression brought a lot of meaning to the group about our evolving hybrid and allied identities. Lila discussed her whiteness and the guilt of her 'white settler' history as being a barrier to her identity as an ally. She also struggled with the need to *explain* to Aboriginal people *why*, as a white woman, Indigenous issues are important to her:

> A lot of times people would ask, "why", "why do you do this, why are you involved" and I never really had a very good answer. And so I've been exploring that a lot lately and trying to figure out why do I, or have I, and this keeps happening in these jobs, these positions, and I should have a good answer. And I recently found out that the home that my mother was born in—my parents are both third generation Canadian, they came from Scotland and Ireland—and my mom, my grandma's land, her mother's land was

recently discovered to be one of the oldest territories in Ontario where there were people living, and so that's kind of interesting, for about 4000 years. And so someone said 'well maybe there's something to that, maybe there's a connection to the land that you don't quite understand, that might be responsible.

For Lila, it seemed important to her to understand why she connects so profoundly with Indigenous struggles. Trish, also from a white settler background, struggled with not knowing her own European background, and discussed how power and privilege played out in her upbringing, where she learned little of Aboriginal cultures as she grew up. Trish's main struggle was in trying to learn to respectfully incorporate Aboriginality into her classroom teaching: "I'm here because I'm going to be an elementary educator and hope to incorporate both Aboriginal and Other cultures and ways of knowing and knowledge into the classroom. And maybe get others to do so as well." From our initial sessions, when we shared our stories, it was obvious we each had our own emotional baggage, inner turmoil and identity struggles we were working through. Without realizing it, we had each been speaking of our *allied identities*—and the desire to create authentic relationships, based on understanding and respect, with people from Other groups.

Allied space

The space we created was a safe and comfortable environment for each of us to listen and learn from one another. The tone for the allied space—the space in which we not only got to discuss being allies, but also experienced being allies—was quickly set, as each member was eager to discuss these sensitive issues. We each came into the inquiry with some form of an allied identity—that is, the focus of the inquiry was to *strengthen* our identities, not develop an identity anew. This desire to

have "open" and "safe" conversations on racism, oppression, and multiculturalism

was consistent throughout the inquiry. I told the group:

> ...Even although I'm doing a Masters program, and many of us are doing schooling there at UVic, I didn't find that there were spaces to talk about these issues. I found that everything there is very PC, very politically correct, but you just have to walk one line and say one thing and think one thing, and you're not really bringing in a critical thought of certain things, and you're not able to ask these complicated questions...

Jo spoke of her desire to have these difficult conversations:

> I'm here tonight because... I'm really interested in what other people say about racism; it's a conversation I want to have from different cultures; I want to have open discussion about it; I don't want people to think they can't ask questions and talk about it because those questions are really important.

> I did a check-in with the group during session four, to assess whether we

were on track with the inquiry and to see how the other members were interpreting

the space we had created together. Each of the six members at that time concluded

that they appreciated the space we share together. Brandi shared this comment:

> I'm just enjoying the opportunity to share perceptions and struggles, and new understandings, and you know, in a relaxed setting, as opposed to a very...we've talked about that before in a classroom, which is more rigid and directed. I think it's a privilege to be able to do it this way. Because I think for me, it becomes more integrated sometimes when you're just kind of experience something.

Danielle commented on the structure of the group:

> The structure is a little less...it's more loose than what I had expected as well. But I can see sort of the benefits of that, in that it leaves me open to just focus on whatever I want to sort of...you know that pertains to <u>my</u> interest within this topic, which I kind of like. And I like just being open and allowing myself to just be receptive to the things that are happening around me, whether it's in my work life or my personal life. And just sort of being attuned to maybe this subject coming up without me necessarily probing for it. And it's really quite amazing that just what has come <u>to me</u>, versus me actively going and looking for it. So in that respect I think it was good.

Jo commented on how this space felt for her, particularly as she was the only

member of the inquiry group with a strong Aboriginal identity:

> I think this has been a really comfortable environment for me, and I'd rather
> be in a less structured—to feel more…I guess, more of a safe space. And that's
> kind of how I feel…And I really like that…I think, if you don't make that
> connection with people, then you don't really get their true, their true self
> and to be able to feel safe and ask those questions, and talk about those
> things that maybe aren't always easy to talk about and. I think for me, it's—
> I've just been really able to listen to what, you know, when we're talking
> about racism, and answering the questions, you know, not being awkward
> about being the only Aboriginal person sitting here when we're talking about
> it.

The space can also be seen as a site of *decolonization*: it was never under

debate whether Indigenous people are an oppressed group, or whether racism

towards Indigenous people in Canada is systemic in the mainstream culture—this

was a given, and was the foundation for our conversations. I told the group in our

first session together:

> When I came back to Vancouver Island, this was almost 2 years ago, it was a
> big wake up call for me…to feel this deep kind of…almost segregation, going
> on between the white community and Aboriginal communities, and so this is
> why sort of my interest has led me to look at anti-racism education, and
> forwarding these kinds of racial-justice alliances… And for me personally, as
> a white woman, to find where is my place in that, and what role can I play…

Brandi spoke of the desire to align herself to Indigenous peoples, because of the

similarities she sees in both the Jewish and the Aboriginal experiences:

> The difference as I see it as the Jewish experience and the Aboriginal
> experience, is that direct day to day discrimination, taking away of rights,
> killing, abuse, all that stuff, if we're talking about the period of…specifically
> the 2nd world war, cause there's been other periods for Jews as well,
> pogroms, and the Spanish Inquisition and all that stuff. But at some point it
> came to an end. There were periods and then they come to an end. So then
> there's recovery time, where you can rebuild, right? And the difference that I
> see between our experiences and the Aboriginal experience, is that the
> Aboriginal experience is still ongoing. The government still controls rights,
> they still control movement, they still control lands, and they still control

> what happens on-reserve/off-reserve, who's a status Indian or status Aboriginal, excuse me, and who isn't… And that's the difference—is that it's still in present time. So whereas Jews, whereas my mother who lost most of her family and all of that, she can sit and cry and remember her mother, and tell us stories about all of her relatives, but when she wakes up in the morning, her life is good. There's nothing, on a day-to-day basis, to prevent her from doing anything that she wants. Really…Except for the occasional bit of anti-Semitism. But it's not systemic anymore, and that's what I'm trying to say. And that's the difference between the two experiences. …

That excerpt really elucidates the decolonizing nature of the discussions held together: there was a consensual recognition that colonization is an ongoing process perpetuated by governments, the media, and the processes of socialization. We discussed how these oppressive practices snake their way into our lives in insidious ways. Ganga shared with us her experience attending a Rotary Club meeting for the first (and last) time. She joined the club because she was encouraged that it was the largest voluntary group, a very inclusive and apolitical group. She told us, she went to their meeting and:

> … I don't want to go to the [Rotary] meetings because they sing 'God Save the Queen' there—and I was just like 'this is not happening!'…I would have to leave the room, that's totally disrespectful and I'm not willing to do that! And I'm not willing to wake up in the morning and hear this before I go to work, that's like torture!…They all turn to this small picture of a Queen, Queen Elizabeth…it's just like really makes me very, very unsettled, because just from my background too, it's like, it's absolutely <u>not</u> happening, you're not getting any words out of me, that have to do with that song.

Ganga went on to describe the struggle with pointing out oppressive practices to others, versus the desire to just "fit in". This struggling allied identity, being strong and confident in "shaking things up", was a form of support that members in the group offered one another. There was recognition that the first place to begin 'thinking outside the box' was to work on ourselves—to "decolonize ourselves". There was a recognition that we are all part of the colonization project, we have

been socialized into the mainstream, and in order to recognize the oppressions that

are committed everyday, we have to work on strengthening ourselves first.

Struggles with racism & racial conflict

Throughout the inquiry, group members struggled with the complexities of

racism and group conflict, and noted the multifaceted ways in which we each

experience, interpret, and respond to racism. Understanding the roots of "racism"

was a common desire of most members of the group, as our understandings and

interpretations dictated the strategy we should use in response to racist behaviours.

But it is important to note that although we each align ourselves socially and

politically with a particular social justice lens, we also recognized that we ourselves

are not outside of the colonization project and have also been socialized into

particular ways of thinking. Ganga commented on this aspect in one of our earlier

sessions:

> …The way I see it is that we're all racist. And so there's a part where you
> know, you get that reaction like "I'm not a racist!" you know, you kind of have
> to come to realize that when you walk down the street and let's say you see a
> particular type of person walking towards you, you're more likely to have
> certain reactions than if another particular person were walking towards
> you. And you <u>know </u>that that's because of the colour of their skin, even the
> socio-economic factors linked with that, even thought that person might not
> represent at all those things that you link in your mind with it…

There was true consensus on this idea—we did not put ourselves outside of the

sphere of judgment, but instead were becoming more comfortable with confronting

our own internal biases that we attributed to being a member of this society, and of

the outcomes of socialization. Danielle, in one of the later sessions, told us:

> Also to know thyself, I think that also ties back into, just being aware of
> people, but being aware of <u>yourself</u>…what are your biases and what are your

beliefs about certain things? And your beliefs and biases may not change; they may over time, but not initially with just recognizing them. I think what will happen though is you'll at least know how to control your biases, or how to respond, or learn how to respond in different situations. And then maybe with time you'll begin to think and be different.

This aspect of 'knowing thyself' was a theme that arose through our discussions. It will be elaborated on more fully in the next section.

Effects of Schooling

We discussed where racism comes from, and our list, although not exhaustive, included: society, socialization, ignorance, misunderstandings, schooling, family and friends, colleagues, the media, and governments. School systems were noted as being one of the main sites of enculturation—spaces where we learn how to fit in to the mainstream, and deny ethnic backgrounds. Ganga noted the way in which Indigenous presence was ignored during her schooling in North Vancouver:

> For me, going through the education system, I thought that this [the history of Indigenous peoples] was really missing in terms of learning about where you live. And I thought it was really important. And also perhaps coming from a different perspective, also feeling a lot like, you weren't included and…noticing that the way things were presented weren't quite the version you had heard.

Jo discussed the ways in which the public school systems, in particular the residential schools, affected her:

> I am a survivor of residential school. And I say that because both my parents were in residential school. They both went to Kuper Island. My mom was there from ages 6 to 16, and my dad was there probably ages 5 to about 15. So they were both in there about 10 years. So that whole process there really took away their parenting skills. It took away those nights when they were supposed to be sitting there telling us about who we are as Aboriginal people.   And we lost a lot of that. We lost a lot of the…closeness I guess. My parents didn't know how to parent.

The Indigenous leaders also made mention of how school systems impacted them.

Kay discussed her childhood, and the fear of being taken out of the tribal school and

being sent to the white public schools:

> Because they were so much afraid of the public schools—so much afraid of
> the public schools. The size of the public schools, the location of the public
> schools, the isolation, the discrimination, the racism that happened. They
> were more afraid of the public schools, I think, than the residential schools,
> because they're huge and they're big and they're large…

Donna commented on the racial abuse she suffered while growing up in North

Vancouver:

> And what I talked about earlier, having to go through a lot of things…I mean,
> my husband and I experienced racism, racism was rampant in the early 70's.
> Like when I went to school in North Vancouver in the early 70's, to be called
> 'squaw' and other choice names was the norm."

Kay sees the school system as being responsible for not allowing difference through

their doors, resulting in a lack of understanding of the myriad of ways we come to

learn and *be*:

> My god, I sat in a meeting up at UVic once not too long ago, where people said,
> "talk about your background". I'm WSANEC, I'm [from my traditional territory],
> I'm Coast Salish, you know, I would tell my origin right away. I saw people
> stumbling through it. They couldn't talk about it. They didn't know how to talk
> about it. And that's because maybe we put everyone together in a mold, and
> thought they were all the same. Because I saw people who couldn't talk about
> their origin. Their origin. You know each one of us is coming from different
> places, be it Irish, Aboriginal, Mexican, whatever. We're all coming from different
> places and we could talk about it, but a lot of the people who were sitting there
> in that little group couldn't talk about it. They couldn't talk about their own
> story…I think it has to do with trying to make everybody be the same, you know?
> The residential schools tried to make us over, to be like everyone else, they tried
> to make us over, to fit into the larger, they called it the 'larger society'. They
> changed our hair, they changed our clothes… they totally took us away from the
> Aboriginal place. And I think it's a matter of, in the education system… it deals
> with one way of learning. One way of teaching. And look at how different
> Aboriginal people are. I learn so much better sitting in a group with you. Sitting
> and listening to somebody all the time, up there at the podium, it was terrible. I
> could learn a lot of things from a lot of people, and I think that's what they expect

us to do, we all should be looking, seeing, and feeling and being the same. And we are not all the same.

This aspect of ignoring difference rather than embracing it was discussed throughout the inquiry, particularly in relation to liberal multiculturalism.

Inter-group & tribal group conflict

Discussions about racism went beyond the typical 'colonizer'-'colonized' binary; discussions concerning intergroup racism and tribal group racism were also raised. Some members of the group conceptualized that racism is not only perpetuated by 'white people' against minority groups but within minority groups as well. For Ganga, she discussed racism within the South Asian community:

It's like I love my people, therefore I need to hate the other people, to reinforce that I love my people. It's like an identity thing. It's really bound up in who you are, and what you've always done, and you don't want anyone to take that value away from you, even if it's a wrong value, you don't want people to tell you that.

In that excerpt, you can see that perpetuating racism can be a form of 'social bonding'—where the expectation is to align yourself with your own ethnic group, in order to show solidarity. Brandi commented on how this has often played out in the Jewish community:

In the Jewish communities, there isn't a caste system, but the more religious you are, the more practices you incorporate, and that's going to be very different from somebody who's more secular. Or an Eastern European, who—for a long time, it's less so now and I think that's a good thing—but for a long time there was a very racist separation between Eastern European Jews and North African Jews. Or, middle-Eastern Jews, like Iranian Jews, there was that separation, "Oh we're this", or German Jews, you know.

Jo mentioned how racism is enacted between the three tribal groups of Vancouver Island, how rivalry and territoriality perpetuates racial thinking:

And I think that for me, for us, our Aboriginal communities, I'm from [Coast Salish territory], and someone from Ahousat...like there's racist things, like racist comments between our Aboriginal people, that say "Oh they're from Ahousat, the way they talk, and their dialect, and all this and that and the other thing.

After debriefing from our session with Donna, the Kwakwaka'wakw leader who shared with our group, Jo noted some of the tensions that arose for her internally when differences between the two tribes were being discussed:

I felt kind of...because I'm Coast Salish...I had to remember that I'm not here representing all Coast Salish people, I'm just here as myself. But it's easy to go to that place [of territoriality]. It's so easy to go to that, and that's...it's...what kind of racism is that for her and I? Like, do we contribute when we talk about Kwakwaka'wakw, they call them "Kwakis" or "Kwa-kwaki's"—something like that, some people do. You know when people say that, and wondering in conversation, or if they're talking about Coast Salish people and how they talk about us, you know do they contribute with that conversation? So you know that's kind of where I went right away, and then I stopped myself, and went "Don't think like that" because you know, this is just a conversation, and it's a safe place to have that conversation.

In that excerpt, Jo reflected on her interaction with Donna, and her awareness of her own internal territorial processes that arose when discussing the differences between the Coast Salish and the Kwakwaka'wakw. . Kay, the Coast Salish Elder who shared with our group, discussed how conflicts amongst the three tribes of Vancouver Island are often caused by differences in tribal protocol:

We're sitting around and so and so is upset with the Nuu-chah-nulth, and the Nuu-chah-nulth are upset with the Kwagiulth, and the Coast Salish are upset with the whatever else. Because the protocol from their standpoint was totally different than the other person's...And unless we sit down together and talk about those things, the protocol is going to cause terrible trouble. And we just had an incident of that over at Songhees. And it was all over the place, and I saw it was too late. But protocol and ethics are terribly, terribly important. And I don't understand why we're not sitting down and talking about it together, the protocol and the ethics of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal. What happens to all the cross-cultural communication?

Learning about inter-tribal conflicts through the stories shared by our three

Indigenous members, deepened our understanding of the role that allies and

alliances can make. Danielle summed up this major learning in our final session

together:

> And really the main "aha' moment I had, was that…really it was building bridges between non-Aboriginals and Aboriginals, but I realized that it's not just those two distinct groups. That even within the Aboriginal community there needs to be bridges built and alliances created too. So that was kind of like a real "aha" for me, that you know, there's so many variations even among the Aboriginal groups that we have here, that everybody needs to really work together and work on realizing what's different and how they're different, and yet how they're the same. And work on how we can you know, come together to make these alliances.

Many members of the inquiry group agreed that our conceptions of alliance building

had been broadened by our understandings of difference amongst tribal groups.

This concludes the section of this chapter that contextualizes the inquiry

space we inhabited together. The next section brings out some of the major

learnings from the group in relation to the research questions.

CONSTRAINTS & SUPPORTS TO ALLIED RELATIONSHIPS

In this section of the chapter, I present results of the different ways in which

allied relationships are constrained or supported. This analysis is my interpretation

of the main ideas: the constraints, the supports, the roles and the strategies as

discussed during our group sessions. Many of the roles and strategies outlined in

this section were discussed at length by the group, and taken up in terms of action

orientations, or *new ways of being*. This chapter also begins to introduce the notion

of *ontology* in learning, that is, the ways in which we interacted, shared, discovered,

and learned, beyond an epistemological mind-centred activity.

Constraints

From the stories we shared, I analyzed some common threads that seemed to constrain, or be a detriment to, the relationship of working with/being allies. In the pages to follow, I will describe the following seven constraints, using our narratives to illustrate these ideas:

- Cultural Misunderstandings

- Essentializing

- Impatience & Despair

- Insider/Outsider Relationship

- Lack of Confidence & Courage

- Liberal Multiculturalism & Political Correctness

- Power & Privilege

Cultural Misunderstandings

In many of the stories we shared, we were reminded how cultural misunderstandings often result in behaviours that are offensive to members of certain cultural groups. This deters the individuals from making an authentic connection. This happens between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people and groups, as well as between Indigenous people/groups of different tribes or cultural traditions. A prime example of cultural misunderstandings was a story told to us by Donna, the Kwakwaka'wakw leader. I will summarize Donna's story: A relative was in the hospital in Victoria with cancer, and the nurse had asked the patient where she lived. Upon hearing where she was from, the nurse made the connection

between the place and a book that she had read titled *I Heard the Owl call my Name.*

The relative agreed that the book was written about her home territory. The nurse,

feeling proud of herself that she had made a cultural connection to this Native

woman, then asked her "so I guess the owl has called your name"? The nurse did not

realize the implication of this seemingly innocent question, but in the Mousgamagw-

Dzawadaneuk tradition, when the owl calls your name, you pass on to the place of

your ancestors, the spirit world. The relative was so shocked and devastated by this

question, that she did not have the energy to correct the nurse, and the nurse never

learned the cultural inappropriateness of the statement. That story clearly

exemplifies the kinds of cultural faux pas that, although quite innocent, do

enormous damage to a burgeoning relationship. Kay, our Coast Salish Elder made

mention of these kinds of misunderstandings in the area of protocol:

> … Protocol is such a major area. I don't think people realize how much
> protocol impacts in our areas... There's things you can't do, and people will
> pick it up right away: tribal group to tribal group to tribal group. And we get
> very petty about it. Yah, we can get very petty. And you can't just do that. Yet
> it is a big issue. If you don't know what the protocol is, in the community that
> you're going in, and they realize that you know nothing about our protocol,
> they're going to totally turn away from you.

In this excerpt Kay was discussing the need for non-Indigenous researchers to

understand culture and protocol with the Indigenous communities they are working

with, but later she also discussed how cultural misunderstandings about protocol

create tension and mistrust between tribal groups and leaders as well:

> And I worry about the students in Victoria, because I've seen them in conflict
> together. Kwagiulth, Nuu-chan-nulth, Coast Salish. They're in conflict,
> because they're from different areas, speak different languages, have
> different history, have different whatever. Instead of seeing the beauty in our
> diversity, they saw the conflict.

Clearly, a lack of understanding about Indigenous cultures, within both Indigenous

and non-Indigenous communities, creates conflicts, and deters the building of allied

relationships.

Essentializing

Essentializing Indigenous groups, or making false assumptions about Other

groups is a serious constraint on building an allied relationship. Donna shared with

us a story that really captures the essence of this:

> "I remember going to Camosun [College] and they had an [Indigenous]
> student council. I remember they had asked me to participate in a talking
> circle and they said, 'well we'd like you to come in because we want to have a
> circle, like we did traditionally, where everybody's equal…And I looked and I
> said "Well I need to tell you something…I'm going to speak specifically for my
> Nation. You couldn't find a Nation that had more status and rank than the
> Kwakwaka'wakw let me tell you that. We historically had 365 potlatch
> positions, and everybody knew what everybody's rank and status was, and
> the minute they walked in the door of the big house, they would be escorted
> to their seat based on their rank and status. And yes, we had chiefs who
> spoke for our families and our house. I said "I think you need to think about
> that before <u>you</u> make a generalization about First Nations people, that in fact
> many of our societies did have status and rank." They were speechless. They
> just thought we were all equal, and you know, the circle certainly works as a
> healing tool for many aspects, but it's not everyone's traditional form of
> governance.

As is the case in that story, essentializing groups of people is not committed

intentionally but mostly out of ignorance to the complex set of differences amongst

groups. We discussed how essentializing damages alliance building, as often people

have an exotic or romantic view of Other cultures. Allies need to learn, in greater

depth and detail, the specifics of the cultural groups they are working with and

across.

Impatience & despair

Throughout this inquiry, as we shared stories of inspiration and hope, we also shared stories of despair, of impatience, or doubts in actually affecting social change. Certainly, one of the biggest constraints on being an ally is keeping your outlook positive and renewing your energy. In our final session together, Brandi told us:

> I had a very stressful week…and I figured out that in part it's because I've become highly sensitized through this group, to tune into sort of racist interactions, and it's left me on tender hooks…And it's really stressful, you know? So I would say, that this process of over-sensitization, of racist or oppressive practices, can be actually, it's mini-traumatizing.

Several members of the group agreed with Brandi's assessment, as impatience and despair ran counter to many of our positive stories. While one of us may have just shared a successful story, another shared a story mired in shock and disbelief at ongoing oppression. There is a serious tension here between being a change agent and keeping yourself abreast of the bigger picture, versus falling into despair at the slow pace of change. Jo's words illustrate this tension, as she reflected upon an incident at one of the public schools:

> I always hope that when my kids are in public school they'll get treated as though people don't see colour, or don't treat them differently, but this week has been so eye opening…You know it's just really frustrating at this school. Going to that [Indigenous research] conference, and hearing all of these things, all Aboriginal academic things that people are doing in our communities, all of us that are going on and trying to make change in our community, to be the change for our children, and at the same time we're sitting there at a conference listening to all this, and our kids are still going through this at school. How long is this going to take? How long is that going to take for that change to happen?

Although, as allies, we are aware of how slowly change happens, that does not mean

we are patient. Danielle shares with us the tension in taking the time to educate

someone:

> And so I do take those opportunities to educate from a different perspective,
> and never mind the race, let's look at the other issues that are possibly the
> factors there. But it can be certainly very challenging, to try to do that in a
> way that…Sometimes all I want to do is say "wake up! What are you saying",
> right?

Obviously keeping oneself focused on 'the big picture' is needed. It is all too easy for

allies to get bogged down in the day-to-day oppressive structures and practices that

exist in our lives.

Insider/Outsider relationship

We discussed issues of gaining access to Indigenous groups, and being

accepted within a new community. Most of the non-Indigenous group members

spoke of being unsure how to gain access to Indigenous communities or groups.

Ganga commented on this:

> I guess, how do you, if we're trying to build alliances between Aboriginal and
> non-Aboriginal, then how do you get into those spaces, and how do you start
> to feel comfortable in those spaces where you might be able to do that
> witnessing? Because I don't think I've…you know I've taken a course with
> Indigenous women, and that was really good and I learned…but once the
> course was over, it kind of came to an end…

Another constraint that we discussed was the relationship between one who

belongs to an Indigenous community (insider) and one who comes in to work

and/or live (outsider). Lila discussed how for the three years she spent working in

Sechelt, she always felt like an outsider and just could not seem to bridge the

cultural gap. Brandi made mention of this as well in her experience working at the

Aboriginal men's home, and I noted the same sense in my short stint working with

an Indigenous organization. Jo shared with us how uncomfortable she would feel if

she went to live in another territory, a territory that was not Coast Salish. She said:

> I don't think I could do it. I don't think I could leave my territory and go
> somewhere else. If it was my husband's, like the Yukon, I would go. But to go,
> just go somewhere? Like up to Fort Rupert to work, I don't know if I could do
> it. I would feel too like, out of place… But if it's another territory, like let's just
> say it's my husband's territory, if it's his family, I would feel a connection,
> because my kids would be connected. But if I was to go to Fort Rupert,
> or…somewhere far where our cultural ways are really different, I think I
> would find a way to be part of that, but it would take some work…I know that
> we're Aboriginal people, I can easily fit into Fort Rupert without anybody
> knowing that I'm not from there, but there are some things that <u>we</u> know
> about each other, that we can kind of go "Oh they're not from here, because
> they do it that way", you know. So it would take some work for me to be in a
> different territory…and to feel that connection.

This admission from Jo really helped to contextualize for the group of us who are

non-Indigenous how deep family and cultural ties run in Aboriginal communities.

She clearly articulated that it would not be an easy fix for her to become a part of a

community outside of the Coast Salish traditions. Donna put this into perspective for

us, as we discussed the sense of trust needed in the insider-outsider relationship:

> "There's an orientation, a transition period, when the community tests you
> out. They'll test you out, #1 are you going to stick it out, stay there and be
> with them no matter what? … But often that is a test, because many of our
> communities, if you go out to our more remote communities, have people
> who come and go all the time and sometimes there's not sticking power. And
> so that disconnection and mistrust starts to occur with new people coming to
> the community, so trust issues are huge."

Evidently, issues of trust are at the root of the tension between the insider/outsider

relationship. Power and privilege, and the colonial relationship, also plays a role

when we are discussing Indigenous and non-Indigenous interactions.

Lack of Confidence & Courage

Beyond the emotions of guilt and shame, our stories also carried messages of the courage and confidence needed to be an effective ally. I shared with the group my fear of offending Indigenous people out of ignorance:

> Because I find for myself I have this big fear. And although I've lived many places around the world, in many different cultures, I've never had fear of asking about other people in other cultures, in other countries about their culture. But I find that because I'm here, because I was born and raised on [Vancouver] Island, I should know these things. So I have a fear of asking about things that I feel guilty about, I feel like I'm ignorant about, or things that I should already know…Like if I ask the question of something that I don't know, whether it's about protocol, or ceremony or something, I'm losing face.

Several members of the group agreed that it is often difficult to know *who* to ask, or *when* it is appropriate to ask culturally related questions. Trish, with her teacher education background fresh in her mind, gave us insights beyond that of the student—that of the new teacher. She mentioned what constrains her and many other new teachers from confidently integrating Aboriginal content into their classrooms:

> We had one course on Indigenous Studies in our program [at UVic]. And basically the majority of people in my program now feel like they have a huge fear of teaching anything to do with teaching Indigenous Studies because 1) they don't want to do anything that will offend, and 2) well partially I think that if you're going to do something with someone else's culture, it takes like so much more effort to research and find out how to do it properly and like how to find out all the information and it's just a lot more time, and teachers are kind of busy…. It's so hard because it's [multiculturalism] such an iffy term and in the school system you just don't want to get into trouble.

This excerpt really illuminates a new teacher's struggles to incorporate Other ways of knowing into the curriculum, yet being fearful of 'toeing the line', and fearful of offending people. The fear of insulting people from Other cultural groups came up

often. I told the group: "There's a real…for me, I feel a big danger, in this kind of work, and trying to assimilate myself into other people's culture. I think there's some kind of respectful boundary that has to be there." And finding that boundary can often be difficult to negotiate. Brandi shared with us an interesting story that unfolded while we were in the inquiry group together. One of Brandi's Aboriginal classmates, at the end of her class presentation, left a flipchart paper for colleagues to share insights on. One of those insights was to the effect of 'Why don't Aboriginal people just move on and get over it?' At first when the comment was written, the women was shocked and quite offended, but Brandi found as the weeks went by, the woman seemed to be backtracking, second guessing herself, calling herself "oversensitive". She basically concluded that what she had read *must not have been intentional* since everyone in the class is so open and accepting of diversity. Undoubtedly, a "don't rock the boat" or "don't make waves" position is easy to default to, rather than bringing attention to oppressive acts and risk further persecution. In this situation Brandi was ready to support her colleague, but her colleague lacked the courage or confidence to bring it to the forefront. This story really highlights the relationship of allies—of *those who work with* and *those who are allies.* Clearly, both sides of the relationship need to draw on courage and confidence from each other, in order to stand up for socially just acts, to 'rock the boat', instead of being carried along with the mainstream current.

Liberal multiculturalism & political correctness

Throughout our inquiry we often discussed how 'surface' or 'cosmetic' multiculturalism, and political correctness is detrimental to building authentic allied

relationships. Liberal multiculturalism, as we saw it, is removed from a capacity to

develop a deep understanding of Other cultures. Instead it is a way for certain

groups or individuals *to be perceived as though they are aligned with diversity*, but

acceptance is only on the surface. Ganga commented on the annoyance of ignoring

these important issues in her work within the government:

> …Even publicly, it's all P.C. so we don't talk about it, we don't talk about all
> these interesting cultures that are right here. I don't know, it's so interesting
> for me, because in a place like India…even when I was growing up in Canada,
> I knew that everybody has their own culture, and you'll never understand
> other people, and they all have their own languages, and that's just the way
> things roll. But here [in Canada] it's very much like, everyone comes, like
> mentally, it's like this idea that it's kind of empty space. Or that everybody
> should be the same. There's kind of this underlying "try to be the same as
> everybody else at school", at least when I was growing up. And it changed
> gradually, and there was kind of 'multiculturalism light' as you say…but how
> do you really get people talking in something like this, but in such a big
> organization, and it's so well structured to avoid that I think.

Ganga was critical throughout the inquiry of the role government plays in

reinforcing colonial practices through a lack of criticality towards race and

multiculturalism. Brandi shared with the group her disappointment with a

community group who asked her to speak at a multicultural forum. The problem

with the forum was they planned to hold it on Saturday, the Sabbath, and a day of

rest for some Jewish people:

> …Which version of multiculturalism, and on whose standards are these
> people running these multicultural events? It's sort of like "Oh let's do
> multiculturalism like it's a dog and pony show", so we can all feel good about
> ourselves, but not really tune in to the traditions and the cultures that we
> actually need to address. So it's sort of like, cosmetic multiculturalism, if
> that's a term, without really delving into what the group's needs are. Like this
> time it was the Sabbath, next time it could be Eid, or Divali, or you know, an
> Indigenous holiday, and on and on and on. They just seem to want to do it on
> their own terms. And I'm just incensed by it. They don't get it! They go "Oh
> well we're sorry but…", and the work's not getting done on that basis, it's like

they're playing on it. You know they call it multiculturalism, but is it really multiculturalism or multifaith?

These examples show the desire of the group's members to see deeper understandings of what multiculturalism and diversity in Canada really means. Allied relationships and the building of allies is certainly constrained when people and ideas only change on the surface. This is detrimental to viewing the Other as being authentically aligned with social and racial justice.

Power and Privilege

Discussions of power and privilege played an extremely large role in our inquiry. We began from the understanding that within our society, white settler culture holds the power and privilege, yet it is not always easy as a non-Indigenous ally to 'shed' that power and that privilege. And often, as in the case of two of our group members, the guilt and shame of the past, of Canada's colonizing history, can hold someone in a state of paralysis, where they actually become an ineffective ally. I shared with the group a story of my attempt to take a course in the Indigenous Governance program at UVic:

> I attended the first day and found myself as the only non-Indigenous student in the room. The discussions surrounded self-determination and governmental control of land and resources. The entire time I spent in the class (and it was a very long class—almost 4 hours!), my stomach was tied in knots, and I just wanted the floor to swallow me up. And for me it was so hard to be there, I just felt so guilty and so shamed the entire time. And in the end I had to drop the course. I was going through too many emotions. For me it was too hard to be there; I couldn't stand to listen. I felt like all the statements were pointed at me because of my whiteness.

In that situation, I was not able to affirm my role as an ally with the goals of the class—although they were totally aligned: social and economic justice for

Indigenous people. I was in a state of paralysis, and rather than endure the

uncomfortable space, I withdrew completely and dropped the class. Donna shared a

story with us, highlighting the ineffectiveness of the state of paralysis:

> When we first started to talk about the residential schools…it was at the
> Victoria conference centre, and when people told their stories it was largely
> for the non-Aboriginal audience at this conference. There was a panel of
> residential school survivors. There was this non-Aboriginal woman who
> listened to the presentations and when the three presentations were over—
> she was literally paralyzed with the information. Like paralyzed. She'd never
> heard about residential schools, and when she heard the stories, she was
> overwhelmed with the information… A word of caution for us, is that
> sometimes we're so used to telling our stories, and sometimes they're really
> horrific, but these stories are told often in our families and in our
> communities, so they become "normal". These experiences have happened to
> so many people, they verbalize it a lot, but for other people it can become
> paralyzing, and that's what happened at this conference. This lady could not
> get off her chair. And she was crying… It was significant because it was when
> we first started to go public with stories of the residential school. We then
> realized that when we're telling our stories, we need to watch how we're
> telling them. We need to take a look at that, because we're traumatizing
> people. I mean it is important to tell our story, but if we are traumatizing
> people so much that they can't move, we've got a problem. Our goal is to
> educate and create awareness around the residential experience.

Through this story, Donna taught us the importance of *how* you approach allies and

build alliances, no matter what the colour of your skin is or the struggle you are

fighting. She obviously understood that paralysis was not a helpful or supportive

state for an ally—because if an ally is so shamed by the power and privilege they

hold by virtue of the colour of their skin and a colonial history, then they are

ineffectively able to build relationships within and across communities and its

members. And that is then one less person fighting your struggle with you.

The power dynamic embedded within the *charity discourse* of 'helping those

in greater need than you' can also be seen as being detrimental to an allied

relationship. At the heart of the philosophy of charity is the notion that what you are

doing is "good" and "virtuous" and that those receiving charity should be "grateful"

for what others give them. Brandi, who uses crutches to help her walk, shared with

us a story of how the charity discourse affects her negatively:

> It was raining, I was late, and getting out of the cab, going into the seniors
> centre…to vote. And I was just walking over the threshold, when a women
> said to me "you're almost there dear"; and I said to her "Your editorial
> comment is not necessary". And as I turned away she said, "Bitch!"…What
> that is about, is the stereotype of the disabled person, especially a woman,
> who is supposed to be 'grateful' for any attention or acceptance that she gets.
> And if she's not grateful, then she's a bitch….

We spent time discussing how the charity discourse transfers to the views held by

many non-Indigenous Canadians about Aboriginal peoples: that they receive

financial support from the government and therefore should be grateful for

anything they receive. Discussions concerning the differences between how

Indigenous people are governed are absent from this charity discourse. Ganga

pointed this out to us as she shared a story of one of her community meetings where

they were deciding on criteria to give out project funds to a family. The group had

previously decide to disperse the funds based on:

> The criteria of who's most in need and shows that in the narrative, in their
> application, and it should also be based on somebody who's making a
> positive impact in the community who needs to be kind of paid back for
> that…And just one of the people, one of the many people who are involved in
> this project sent an email out that said, just today, 'Well why don't we choose
> a needy First Nations family that's facing a lot of barriers'.

We discussed how the underlying message in that story was that 'all First Nations

families are needy' (which is a stereotype in itself), but also how the members of the

(almost all) white community group sincerely thought the charity approach was the

right approach to use. There was a lack of understanding or desire to learn more

about the systemic causes of oppression towards First Nations people, and a lack of

desire to move beyond alternatives to the charity approach. The charity discourse is detrimental to building authentic allies because it does nothing to shift power relations. Instead, it simply reinforces who is in a position of power over the other, as the receiver of the charity should be grateful for receiving anything at all.

Supports, Roles, and Strategies for Allies

This is the final section of this chapter. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the roles, supporting factors, and strategies for allies. The Indigenous leaders who visited our group helped immeasurably in providing us with a deeper understanding of the roles of allies. They both shared a deep commitment to building allied relationships, and completely supported our endeavor. Their support and encouragement helped to reignite our passions to continue on this path. Donna told us:

> We need allies and advocates. There are not enough First Nations people in the jobs and occupations that we would like. We are in a capacity crunch. And I always say "we need allies and advocates to work with us." If we were to wait for us to have enough Aboriginal teachers, and not count on the other teachers to teach Aboriginal content, it would take us 100 more years to get Aboriginal content into the classroom. So that's why we need allies and advocates in any work that we do.

Throughout group discussion and from member's final evaluations, I would articulate the following six roles, supports and strategies as being learnings we developed together:

- Know Thyself

- Know the Other

- Build Relationships

- Reframe the Experience

- Plant the Seed

- Heal Yourself and Inspire Others

Know Thyself

One message became crystal clear to us: that knowing Others is not possible

until you know yourself. We began calling this *know thyself*, or *decolonize yourself*.

We discussed the need to recognize internal mental and emotional processes—to be

honest with what your mind is processing—and only through truthful recognition of

those internal conversations can you begin to change your thinking from the inside

out. We saw this personal change as being a starting place to building authentic

alliances. Donna explained to us:

> And I always say, 'know thyself'. You need to know what are your
> perceptions of First Nations people. What are your perceptions of Jewish
> people? What are your perceptions of East Indian people? What are your
> perceptions of white people? 'Know thyself' is critical, because those are the
> messages that get transmitted when you're interacting with people. Your
> words just add to it. But it really is your mental thoughts. We know that 80%
> of our messages are non-verbal. In cross-cultural relationships, that is even
> more critical, because people watch each other, and have perceptions about
> each other.

'Knowing thyself' was seen as critical to working with allies or being in allied

relationships *authentically*. As I noted in the previous section, many of the

constraints on allied relationships concern internal processes of understanding,

such as the *charity discourse*, responses to *power and privilege*, notions of *liberal*

multiculturalism and *political correctness,* and *lacking courage and confidence*. In

order for some of these elements to be undone, our group felt that 'knowing thyself'

was critical to understanding your thought processes, and begin the work of

"decolonizing the mind". Only then can we better understand the biases and

perceptions that are a result of socialization, rather than our genuine beliefs and

values. And only then will we have the courage and confidence to stand up for

ourselves and for others. Brandi inspired us with her strong confidence to speak out

against injustices:

> I've lost jobs by speaking out…and I've spoken out a lot at UVic. But I've learned though, I've learned I hope, you learn to sort of do it strategically, so you can at least keep yourself safe, but still get the message across. Because at the end of the day I find that if I don't speak out, I'm the one that has to look at myself in the mirror every morning. And I have to sleep at night…. So that is always my deciding factor…

And as we were each working through our own struggles with hybrid identities,

struggles with courage and confidence, and struggles with power and privilege, Jo

brought us the philosophy of 'what grounds you':

> …I think my question is always 'What grounds you?' Whether it's nature, whether it's identity, whether it's you know, "oh my grandmother used to make the greatest whatever," you know, what grounds a person? I think that's probably what my question would be. I think it's really…[people] really want to be part of something and really want to belong, but don't know how to find their way, don't know how to be there, don't know how to get there, to just be genuine. To be. I get you want to be part of this, you want to belong somewhere, but what grounds you as a person? Cause I know I have this friend; she kept constantly saying this over and over. She's Métis, and she would say, "I don't belong, I don't belong anywhere". And you know for me that was really hard to listen to, to listen to her all the time, it was really depressing. We were depressing each other by saying that you know? "What do you mean you don't belong?"; "I don't belong here, I don't know where I come from, I don't know who my people are, and when I go to the Métis Association, they tell me I should go over there". And I'm like, I really thought about that. And I think that's the kind of question that I came up with, "Well what grounds you?", "What do you love to do?" "Oh I love doing drama and I love doing this". And I was like "Love it then! Get to that place of just loving yourself and belonging somewhere.

Synthesizing the philosophies of 'knowing thyself' and 'what grounds you' helped several group members feel more comfortable claiming the hybrid spaces of their identities. Danielle in particular spoke of how the philosophy has impacted her:

> And really what I'm taking away from all of this is really that it starts with me. I'm the key to everything that is going to happen from now on in my life and in my experiences. It starts with me. So whether that's change, whether it's helping to educate people, it's got to come from me first, and that means I think that I have to be the one that's going to carry these messages forward…And I liked what Jo said about getting grounded. You know Jo, when you talked about your friend who is Métis, and you know she was always saying she doesn't know where she fits in. Well I have a Métis—I'm Métis. And I don't acknowledge it openly, because I don't really know what that…what that means really. So…being grounded and just sort of thinking about what's really important in my life…

Clearly, Jo's conception of 'what grounds you' made an impact on Danielle, and her identity struggles. Although each of us was on our own paths and in different stages of our identity work, 'knowing thyself' was of primary importance to most of us in the group. And in order to know ourselves better, there may be a need to move beyond the spaces where we normally feel comfortable, and for each of us to be willing to sit sometimes in tense spaces. Danielle comments on this:

> I really think just in all the conversations that I heard tonight, and particularly from Kay, that really we need to challenge ourselves to just go a little bit beyond our comfort zone, like she said earlier, to move outside the box, and whether that's in exploring other people's ways or preparing and observing people's differences, just acknowledging how we are different and the same to other another, but actively openly speaking about that. And so exploring things outside of our comfort zones is where I think it really all begins.

The group agreed wholeheartedly to this conclusion, as an aspect of knowing thyself is who you are in relation to Others.

Know the Other

Just as 'knowing thyself' is a complicated process, so is getting to authentically know the Other. In our discussions, and as described earlier as a constraint, learning about the Other requires going beyond a surface understanding of each other. An ally's responsibility to 'know the Other' can be seen as working to minimize the negative effects of *cultural misunderstanding and cultural appropriation*, and to minimize the trust issues inherent in the *'insider/outsider' relationship*. It requires moving beyond the discourse of multiculturalism and diversity, and requires an understanding of *difference* rather than simply recognizing *how we are all the same*. Kay, who is committed to building alliances between and amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups, shared with us how important it is for her to help people understand those differences:

> I feel that our Saanich people have to help, our non-First Nations people understand us as WSANEC people. As [my traditional territory] people. Many times people have looked at me because I'm educated, if I open my mouth, they can see that I'm educated. And I think that's what they respond to. I don't think that they see how different I am, you know? And I'm starting now to see that as a People, we really need to help people understand who we are.

Allies must begin the work of authentically understanding difference. For myself, along with some of the other members, I struggled with knowing when it is appropriate to ask culturally sensitive questions, and knowing *who* to ask. Both of our community leaders agreed that certain people within Indigenous communities take on the role to educate. And so part of the role of an ally is to seek out the people who are willing and able to educate Others. Jo commented on how an ally can make those connections, and put herself in the role of educator:

> Become an ally…with an Aboriginal community. Like if you ever end up working in an Aboriginal community or working with Aboriginal people, and then find out who are out there. Like for me in the Saanich community, I'm out there, so I'm a good ally—to anybody in the Saanich peninsula, because I know a lot of the communities, and I know a lot of the people, and that's kind of where you get to that place of learning about the Longhouse, and you know, finding out about the different tribes, and what people do, and things like that. You know that's always the best place to go; line yourself up with somebody that's from that community. And somebody that's out there. And willing to be helping. Not, you know, trying to shove your way into 'be a friend' with somebody who doesn't really want to be a friend, you know?

This excerpt points to the importance of properly navigating with community and seeking out those who are willing to work with allies. It brings up the relational aspect of allied work.

Six members of the inquiry reported a deeper understanding, and respect for, the diversity amongst Indigenous groups. By and large, this shift in understanding was sparked by conversations held by Jo and Donna. These two members discussed many differences between the Kwakwaka'wakw and the Coast Salish tribes. Donna reminded us that "It is interesting because when you're out there, there is that distinction that is really important tribally and culturally…We definitely are not all the same: Vancouver Island, three different languages, three different ways to do ceremony and process." Jo discussed how important the tribal journeys are to Indigenous community members, to encourage a respect for the different tribes participating:

> We always encourage our community members to come [on tribal journeys]. Because it's a way to understand all of the different diverse Aboriginal people that are doing different dances and songs. And then when we [Coast Salish] go, we're the ones who don't have any dances or songs because we hold ours in ceremony, in winter dancing.

Gaining a deeper understanding of protocol was a theme that threaded through

these discussions. The need to not essentialize Indigenous groups based on their

membership of being "Indigenous" was stressed. Kay, similarly, emphasized the

importance of understanding different protocol when working across Indigenous

groups. She said:

> The protocol is also a very difficult area, because we're talking about protocol
> with different tribal groups, and that's what makes it even more difficult. And
> so those things haven't been worked out yet. The protocol and the ethics
> around each tribal group is so different, and it's very difficult to pin that
> down. We're still running around that, you know, the protocol that happened.
> And the protocol is so important. You move into Saanich and not
> understanding the protocol and you won't be there very long... That would
> be the case anywhere else. You see that when they're doing the tribal
> journeys. The protocol is different from one community to the next. And we
> need to begin to understand that those protocols and ethics differ in each
> place, with each tribal group. That's what makes BC so difficult...

This excerpt speaks to the complexities involved in learning about protocol, but the

underlying message is *the need to learn from and with one another*. Allied

relationships cannot be built across tribal and cultural groups if they are based on

misunderstanding and ignorance of Other's culture. This deeper understanding of

the *differences* amongst Indigenous groups, of *not essentializing Indigenous groups as*

one entity, was seen as a necessary element to becoming an authentic ally. In our

final session together, Brandi described her new awareness of diversity amongst

Aboriginal groups:

> The other thing that really struck me that I learned that I didn't know before,
> and this was what Kay was talking about, was getting to know cultural cues
> in the Aboriginal communities, and the various tribes that have different
> practices. Because what I didn't put on here [my inquiry map], but I'm going
> to is that I had this stereotypical idea that Aboriginal people, I admit it, were
> essentialized. So that all of their practices were all the same. And what I've
> learned from this process is that, no, everybody's very unique and they have

to be respectful of each other's lands and spaces, and all that stuff. So that was a big learning for me.

Most group members agreed that the inquiry process had brought about new understandings of Indigeneity and difference.

While we were lucky in this group to have intimate conversations that helped each member more deeply process the diversity amongst Indigenous groups, we also noted a few strategies that support learning *with* the Other. These included engaging in inter-group dialogue and experiencing the culture. Donna shared a story with us, enforcing the message of how important experiential cultural exchanges can be to cross-cultural understanding. In this story, staff members from a local college attended an Indigenous ceremony:

> Members of the Lansdowne School Staff experienced an amazing cross cultural experience in the Esquimalt Nation big house. One of their students was involved in their traditional ceremonies and the staff was invited to attend the ceremony. They did their homework and asked what they could contribute to the ceremony. They brought in apples and oranges, and they placed them on the Bighouse floor.   It was the most amazing moment to watch some of the staff from Lansdowne walk into the Esquimalt Bighouse and walk onto the floor, put down the apples and the oranges, and then go sit down. Then suddenly they were transformed into a world that to them must have been like going back a hundred years, the culture and traditions were being practiced like they had for hundreds of years. They also were able to see the children, and understand why they would be so tired the next day.

Donna went on to emphasize not only how important it is to gain access to these cultural experiences, but also how imperative it is to make sure you ask the right questions and follow proper protocol during these experiences:

> If you have opportunities to participate, or somebody invites you to sit in a feast or a gathering, and you can sit for 10 hours or 20 or 30…it's a really good experience. There are times when you will ask, "how do I get these experiences?" There are community events, powwows that happen in Saanich during the summer, various cultural events put on by community organizations and families. It is good practice to go and observe, it is quite

amazing, because you know what, by listening and observing you will start to learn the protocols. Protocol, when we use the word protocol, we <u>mean</u> protocol, there are strong cultural protocols in each community.   One of the key protocols to observe wherever you may be working is to always acknowledge the traditional territory of the local First Nations. In Victoria we are visitors on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people. When we talk about protocol, every place you go will have a cultural protocol. What we mean by that is acknowledging—like I say, find out whose land you're on—and then as much as you can, find out what are some of their customs and traditions... That's what I mean by protocol. If someone invites you, just say "Is there anything that I should know? What can we do? Where can we sit?" Those kinds of processes are really important.

This excerpt clearly highlights the need for allies to ask culturally sensitive questions before experiencing Indigenous ceremonies and activities, in order to understand processes of protocol.

Another element of knowing the Other which was brought to the group, was to recognize variability in the ways people *know/be/experience* the world. We should not assume the way we each interact in the world is for all Others. Kay commented on this in terms of communal ownership:

Because everything out here in Saanich is owned by Saanich. The history, the culture, the values, the language, it's all communally owned. And it's hard for researchers who come in and meet people on an individual basis to realize that they're dealing with a communal ownership. And that's the reason for all the protocol, the guidelines, the whatever else, around research. Because you have to get the consensus of the people, you know? Even though, the stories, we each, we have things that belong to Saanich…and we have things that belong to individual families. And that's what a lot of people don't' really understand.

This notion of collective ownership was new to many members of the group. The Indigenous members of our group also brought in the notion of holism—of understanding heart, mind, body and spirit. Kay told us:

You know I was always taught that I have a heart, I have a mind, I have a spirit and I have a body. My whole person has to be taught. I wasn't learning that in school so I got bored… simply because I just couldn't take it, it was so

different from the way I lived. And I think there's a lot of people out there like that. You know this, and it's not just First Nations people…

Donna and Jo both discussed their personal understandings of spirituality, and how

it plays a role in their lives:

> When I talk about spirit, I want to be real clear: I'm not talking about religion. To me what spirit or spirituality is about is connection. It's connection to yourself, to each other, to the world, to the environment. That's what it is. Spirituality is connection… (Donna)

> I can really understand the spiritual connection, and I often say that, like I'm really spiritual. And I never ever say "not religiously", but I really believe it is about connection. I pray to the creator, and I say my prayer, it doesn't matter where I'm at, if I need to say a prayer I'll say it. (Jo)

Jo went on to share her own reflection of how she experiences the world:

> Somebody was talking; I don't know if it was today, or in this room, about…you know, "We have to really think hard about what we're feeling. Sometimes we have to really have to think about it." But I think it's kind of the opposite for me. Cause I feel things first. And then I think about it. I'll be like 'Oh what was that all about?'. You know that might be opposite for some people, they get that thinking happening first and then start feeling. But I know that for me, as an Aboriginal women and how I was raised, the feelings for me always come first, and that's because of language, because I'm learning our SENCOTEN language. And I noticed that I can't understand it, but I can feel it. So there's lots of things to put out there, and it's not always easy to understand, but if you're open and accepting to it, then…

Members interpreted these holistic learnings in various ways, in ways that affected

them both personally and professional. Trish noted how the inquiry has changed

her understanding of incorporating multiculturalism into her classrooms:

> I realized that it's like you have to change your whole curriculum and your whole way of teaching, your teaching pedagogy in order to do it really well, because one week of multiculturalism is not a good way to do it at all. And to teach with just the food and the outfits is how I think I learned. So it's creating events all throughout the year, throughout your curriculum, that have that let that scaffold onto each other, to become multicultural and learn about Other cultures.

Danielle summarized how these new understandings are helping her enact changes

in how she performs her duties as a nurse:

> ...And just being inquisitive. Being the one to ask when working with other groups. To learn about them, rather than always being the one to put my side first. It's more about "So tell me about you and what does that mean to you?", as far as you know whether it's culture, or certain practices... or how they even want to even run a program, what are the important values for them. So understand it from them first and then try to tie in my own values and beliefs around that....

These excerpts really illuminate the need to learn about and with one another, but

not only in an epistemologically-mind centred way. We should not assume that

Others interact with their worlds in the same way we each do. There was an

understanding that each one of us embodies more than just the mind, and it is these

additional elements of heart, body, and spirit that should not be ignored when

learning and building allied relationships.

Build relationships

Another major learning for members of the group is to make building

relationships a priority. Both of the Indigenous leaders brought to the group a sense

of urgency in shedding the negative colonial relationships between Indigenous and

non-Indigenous groups, as well as the need to work harder to bring tribal groups

together. Kay told us:

> Building relationships is so important to me right now. Building a relationship. Building a relationship with District 63. Building a relationship with Camosun College. Building a relationship with UVic. Building a relationship with the Friendship Centre. Building a relationship with all the other tribal groups in BC. And sometimes that's overwhelming to me, you know? And unless we build those relationships with each other, we're not going anywhere. Because the tribal groups in these communities are too small. You know, to really take off and get off the ground. So that building that relationship is very important. And it's certainly not an easy task.

Helping to build those relationships is clearly a role for allies to take, and the allied

relationship is two-sided. Jo spoke of the insight brought to her through her cross-

cultural discussions with Donna, and how this helped her to see that people across

tribal groups need to align together:

> Kind of my, I think my aha moments were, you know…I kind of knew that
> people thought we [Indigenous people] all had the same [cultural] things
> happening, but I think it was when Donna and I were talking and were having
> that conversation and me asking her questions about her culture…You know
> I was able to do that, and have that safe space to do it, where I've never had
> that before. So that was one of those "Wow", and I know I could go talk to her
> about anything now. So, really important for me, to build allies. And I'm
> always in places where I hear that, I'm hearing that a lot now, "We want to
> build allies" or we want to find out who our allies are.

Clearly, Jo appreciated the safe space of the inquiry that promoted cross-tribal

exchanges.

Many of the members of the group reported a newer conception of the role of

allies and building allied relationships. Danielle commented on how these new

understandings affect her:

> And really the main "aha' moment I had, was that regardless…I kind of that
> that really it was building bridges between non-Aboriginals and Aboriginals,
> but I realized that it's not just those two distinct groups. That even within the
> Aboriginal community there needs to be bridges built and alliances created
> too. So that was kind of like a real "aha" for me, that you know, there's so
> many variations even among the Aboriginal groups that we have here, that
> everybody needs to really work together and work on realizing what's
> different and how they're different, and yet how they're the same. And work
> on how we can you know, come together to make these alliances.

Trish commented on how important it was to bring the two Indigenous leaders into

our inquiry group, to share their expertise, and how important it is for teachers to

build those relationships:

I just really appreciated the two ladies coming in, from the different communities. Because what I've learned with Aboriginal, or with teaching Aboriginal education, is that it's a good idea to have people in from the communities. But it's just hard for some people to even get those connections, to even get them into the classroom. And now I have connections in Sooke or Victoria if I ever decide to teach there. So I really appreciated everything they had to say, and I thought that they brought a lot to our group.

Reframe the Experience

While relationship building might seem obvious, what our group discovered was that the crux of relationship building *is not simply in the doing,* but in <u>how you are doing it.</u> It is an ontological shift—where ontology is concerned with how you enact your principles, and how congruent these are to your words, behaviours, and attitudes. Donna began her session with us from a genuine place of openness:

I'm really open to any kind of questions. I believe in my life that I've gone through a lot of different stages, and I always feel that it's my role to be a bridge, and I also feel that I've gone through my own kinds of experiences around racism, around healing, around process, and I think what I've come to in my life, from both my parents, my grandparents and great grandparents, I believe my role is to be a bridge. So no question offends me, I think I've heard them all almost, anything I'm open to hearing. Because I think that's what creates that dialogue.

The group often revisited *the way of being* in which Donna interacted with us, and in her desire to be a cultural bridge for us. There was a genuine desire on her part to interact with us in a positive way, in a way that would promote learning and change. Her *way of being* with us was not interpreted as a one-off speaking engagement, in which her role was to lecture and 'educate' us. Instead, she was quick to establish trust within our group, and presented a way of interacting together that would not result in her taking offense or judging us in some ways, but to promote deep

learning. In our final session together, Lila commented on how this respectful

relationship affected her:

> I think my big aha was probably when Donna came, and she talked a lot about…the fact that nothing that we could say would offend her. And I just felt like I had so much respect for her, that she doesn't go out looking to be offended. And it just seems like so often that's what people do, like they're looking to be offended…That was just really interesting, cause I think when we talk a lot about, or hear a lot about racism and racist and so on, it's to the point of anger and calling people [out], and that's not what it sounded like she's about at all…I just like that she isn't looking for it. And it just seems like so often you're in situations where it feels like people are just focusing so much on noticing those times when there are offensive things that you could perceive that way…I'd like to look at her as a mentor in that way and think about how can you think about racism and anti-oppression and that sort of thing from that kind of lens of not looking to be offended. So I think that for me that was a big thing…Because I think there are opportunities that you see all around you all the time, that you can choose to be offended by or choose to look at it a different way. And she just really made me think about it, as a really concrete way of seeing things differently.

This aspect of 'choosing to look at a situation in a different way' became a strategy

that we advocated for.

We called this strategy *reframing the experience.* We talked about finding the

opportunity to support change, in any given situation, rather than being part of the

negativity. It involves the ability to shed the common reaction of being offended, or

being judgmental, towards someone else's ignorance or cultural inappropriateness.

Jo shared a story with us that highlighted her use of this strategy. Jo's family was

dealing with an intrusion by a government Ministry. Jo told us:

> When you work in a [Aboriginal] community you don't just come and work in a community; you come and find out who's in the community, who are the Elders you can go talk to. There are people who are the knowledge keepers in our communities, that know who's who, and who we can talk to if somebody's having a problem.

The Ministry worker did not follow proper protocol within the Indigenous community, and presented themselves in a very threatening manner to Jo's family. There was real tension between the ministry worker and the Aboriginal community members since the worker didn't follow the family plan that had been set out. At first, Jo was frustrated, annoyed, angry and eager to lay blame on the worker's obvious lack of cultural understanding. But then she told us:

> Just a couple of days before that, one of the leaders in our community, I was talking to him about [the Ministries], and be part of our team and work with our families a little bit better. And he says, "You know, when I was talking to my grandfather, and my grandfather got mad at me when I was sitting there complaining about somebody doing something wrong, a family doing something wrong, he turned around and he got really mad at me, he said "Why don't you go help them then?" So I really remembered that that day. Like I know these people that are sitting here really need help. That's kind of the attitude I had when I went in, whereas I could've just sat there and pointed my finger…I didn't look at that as a racist thing, I looked at that as opportunity…they were, they needed to know a little bit more. And I just said, find out more. And I became their ally. You know? I said, I'll be your buddy and I'll help you through this…

This story really captures the essence of *reframing the experience*. It involves making a choice when you are interacting with others: the choice to assume someone is 'not on your side' and be offended, or the choice to engage with someone for positive change.

Danielle shared a story of an interaction that took place between herself and a white nurse, one who had strong biases against First Nations people. In this story, Danielle initiated a conversation with the other nurse, one based on trust and respect:

> I think in our ongoing everyday practices as nurses, I think these one on one conversation—because this was just a conversation over coffee break—I think it's those moments when people are their most genuine, and we can have these little heart to hearts with one another. And I didn't come across as

the "You're going to listen to me and you're going to learn something," it was more just sort of 'Where are you coming from?'…. Learning from each other. She's being candid and honest, and feels safe enough in this environment with me, and so I respect that. And I'm not going to shoot her down for that. Because I think that's a valuable moment. If I shoot her down, she may never speak about that kind of stuff with me then. And I think I'm a front line leader [at work], and so I think I am in some degree of authority and leadership to help promote that change. So I <u>want</u> to be there to do that. I want to be the one who has those conversations with people. I might not be the right person all the time, but I thought this was a great opportunity. And I think at the same time, I'm going to take this opportunity, to use it as a tidbit of education, maybe she'll take away something, maybe she won't.

Within this story you can note the strategy of *reframing the experience*, as well as the strategy of *planting the seed*, which will be discussed shortly. Danielle, in that instance, made the conscious choice to engage in critical discussion, but in a positive and open manner. Ganga also commented on the negativity it creates when we engage people in ways that blame or attack them, and the need to reframe these opportunities:

> When you become maybe more like a friend or something, and then you can have the kind of conversations that wade into territory where people will have to differentiate between you know, what do you think, and they're gonna have to say what they think, which can be more of a dialogue, rather than something that's like "You're a racist, that's it!". …So if you're gonna go and be negative to someone else, then sooner or later it's going to bump around and come back to you. And somebody's going to be negative to you. So rather than doing that, see those opportunities, when you feel the negativity, say 'well why is this energy negative, and how can I turn it into a positive.

Lila commented on these windows of opportunity, and noted:

> I wonder if the difference might be between a formal learning opportunity and an informal one. I wonder if sometimes we have better learning experiences in informal opportunities to communicate. Because there's an option there to have a little more of an emotional level to someone. And I think if you connect to someone on an emotional level that you have a greater opportunity to effect someone's change in their beliefs and attitudes, rather than in a formal learning opportunity, where we sort of live 'in our heads', where it's academic, and it's product-based.

It is clear that we were speaking about interacting with others from a similar place of respect in which Donna had interacted with us. We noted how much more value there is in building a relationship with someone once you have an emotional connection together. This aspect of emotional connectivity is part of the ontological *way of being*, and a way of interacting as allies. Donna shared a story with us about one of the white teachers who joined the tribal school in her traditional territory:

> One of the teachers that went to [our traditional territory], it was amazing, people absolutely loved her. And I was thinking, 'What makes Simone so unique?' And then she left and then she came back, and one of the things that we found was that she became an integral part of the community. And there's always a thing I say, that she attended the functions that happened...but was a part of the feasts, and the potlatches, and the community activities, but also was interesting for her to bring the gift of music to the village. What she did was...what I came to understand is, and often when I speak to pre-service teachers at UVic, I'll say, it does end up coming down to what is in your heart. Because people will know that you are sincerely interested in what it is that you want to learn, and that your spirit is there. And I think what I see in Simone, when she left and then when the people asked her to come back and I often looked and went, "What makes her different?" And that's what it was. Just that personal connection, that part... And I say, and I've seen it, when you work with First Nations people, and your spirit and your heart are there....they will feel that...and that you're an open learner. Whether you're red, yellow, black, or white. Because what happened in [my traditional territory] and what I noticed with Simone...was they didn't see colour anymore. Simone wasn't white. Simone was Simone. And part of the community. And so what happens is when those connections are made, you don't see colour anymore...

This story highlights the ontological way of being that is necessary to create authentic relationships. A relationship must be built on trust and respect, and emotional connections must be made. The notion of creating authentic relationships also builds on the previous learning of 'know thyself'—about being authentically 'you'. Authentic relationships can only be built when one has a strong sense of who they are, and who they are in relation to Others.

Plant the seed

One of the roles most discussed by our group was the notion of educating

Others. For us, allies had strategic roles to play not only in supporting Other groups

and individuals, but a role to play in advocating for change within the mainstream

population. This involves engaging in conversations with people when you hear

them say something racial or derogatory towards another group of people, and

critically engage them in new ways of thinking. We called this *planting the seed*.

During our second session together I explained how important I think educating

Others is:

> The other thing that I find, in my experience, really helps, is if you can
> educate someone on something that maybe they didn't know. Because I think
> a lot of this racism that is all around us, is due to ignorance, and I don't mean
> intentionally...it's people not really knowing the deep issues, the deep
> understanding. And I think a lot of times if you can say something a little
> bit...not that you're trying to rile them up, but say it in a respectful way,
> like...for example, somebody might say to me, or someone in my family or
> whoever, might say something really derogatory about an Aboriginal person.
> And I'll say "Well you do know what you're seeing is a symptom of
> colonization, and not the cause", or something like this right, turn their
> thinking around a little bit...I think educating helps. If you can do it in a way
> that's not lecturing...

Lila shared with us how this strategy worked for her in chipping away at the

intolerance she found in her own family members. She shared a story of her youth,

where she was banned from dating a man with a South Asian background. Lila

refused to perpetuate the racial intolerance, and continued her relationship with the

young man. She saw that as the beginning of "educating" her family, who she says

have changed, at least in her presence: "Mine know better than to say things around

me that they used to. They know it's just not acceptable. Occasionally they'll slip, but

they realized they've slipped." Brandi also discussed how this chipping away

eventually resulted in change in her family:

> The family, at least in my case, where certain things used to be said, they're not said anymore. Because the whole family has changed. You know what I mean, over time attitudes have changed…So I mean that's because the people of us who were changing in the family kept saying it over and over and over and over and over again, and so then there's no saying and doing, and so then there's no denial anymore…after 20 years…

In both of these cases, we see that the strategy of *planting the seed* was employed,

and with some degree of success. We cannot be certain that internal beliefs have

actually changed, but at least outwardly there has been recognition that racial slurs

are not welcome in all conversations. Danielle shared with the group the

educational strategy of not attacking the person, just the words:

> One of the things, I was thinking about in the last week or so is how do you not confront, but how do you respond to a remark that is racially charged or prejudiced? What do you say to somebody? I've always been very…you know silence…Like if I don't say something to somebody they'll get the message, but sometimes silence can be taken as condoning that behaviour or those kinds of remarks…[So] that was really my question for the week, and so I think I came away from the little bit of searching that I did this week with sort of a couple simple statements that I think I might be comfortable enough to say to somebody. Such as "Did I just hear you right? Did you just say…" or "I can't believe you just said that, that could be taken as a racial remark"…Something like that, just to bring to light that people need to be conscious of what they're saying and that they're…you know, held accountable for it…It's easier to make them accountable for that statement than it is to make them admit, 'Oh yah, I'm a racist', which they would probably never do.

At the very least, this kind of censuring encourages an awareness of other points of

view, whereby previously the individual may have thought everyone who *looks* like

them also *thinks* like them, and holds the same values and beliefs they do.

Eventually, this kind of censuring may actually reinforce positive changes in beliefs.

These 'dropping the seed' conversations can be long or short, depending on the

relationship there. Brandi shared a story with us, with shows how the strategy can
even be used with strangers:

> I was in a liquor store around Christmas time, and these two young guys
> were like looking at the different bottles and stuff, as I was, and one was
> talking to the other, and they were quite young, and the one said to the other
> "Oh I have to move back with my dad again because I can't afford my
> apartment" and the other young man said "Oh that's so gay!" And I kind of
> turned to them and said "You know it might be a drag, but it's definitely not
> gay", and they kind of went, you know, they were a bit shocked, but I couldn't
> let that by because I'm bisexual and I find it really offensive, the use of the
> word or the phrase, "Oh that's so gay", I find it offensive. And I wanted to let
> them know that I did.

The metaphor of *planting the seed* was useful because as allies, we receive
little in terms of immediate reinforcement for our efforts. And we usually do not see
the results of these efforts, as they may not surface for years, or even in our
lifetimes, or to people we remain close with. This metaphor was useful as we
struggled with maintaining the confidence and courage to commit to an allied
orientation, while encountering resistance and negativity. *Planting the seed* became
a way for all of us to *imagine the possible*: the bigger picture of the role we play in
creating a world we want to live in. While the conversation may seem insignificant,
even hopeless sometimes—by planting that seed, we are chipping away at those
deep-seated beliefs of racial intolerance and ignorance. We may not be there to
watch the seeds grow, but if enough people work on chipping away at those layers,
eventually it will contribute to a change in consciousness. Donna shared the
importance of looking at this strategy with a lens to longevity:

> Sometimes I find when I'm just feeling a little overwhelmed, I will run across
> one of my former students. And they will reinforce that the seed was
> planted… Like you say, when you get the feedback 30 years later, it's really
> gratifying…oh gosh, it helped a bit! You know what I mean? They don't tell
> you right away, because it doesn't come through. So when you're working it

doesn't come through right away, so I think that's what I've leaned to
appreciate. That those children that I taught in a classroom that I thought
weren't even listening, in fact, got it. And so they don't even know they got it
at that time, it's not until later. So I think that's really important as well in the
work.

A commitment to this strategy involves faith, imagination, and an ability to keep

focused on the bigger picture and see each seed planted as contributing to change

over time. I told the group:

That's what I feel like. I really feel it deep down that what we're doing in this
room is planting seeds for the future. And the ways that we're going to
become in different ways is really going to affect changes in ourselves and
other people around us. So it's a really future look…

Heal Yourself & Inspire Others

During our sessions together, we became more acutely aware of the toll

social justice activism has on our mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing. Clearly,

falling into impatience and despair are a huge detriment to the work of allies,

especially when positive changes are seemingly few and far between. Yet allies are

also the ones who must motivate and inspire Others. Clearly, keeping oneself

mentally, emotionally, and physically energized is one of the greatest supports to

the work of allies.

Donna brought the concept of healing and self care to the group. Donna, who

has spent her entire adult life fighting oppressive systems, cautioned us of the need

to keep our bodies, minds, and souls balanced. She said:

And I think if you know you're going to be a change factor, that's huge. No
matter what job you do, whether it's teaching, or whatever it is you do, holy
smokes you have some really rough days, and it seems bleak and dismal. So
where do you get your light, where do you get your light? That's normal, and
if we understand that as normal, then we can deal with it better. Because we
aren't going to be happy all the time, but if we understand that we're going to

have those ebbs and flows, and we're going to have those whirlpools…if we can understand that then we can know we'll always come up.

Donna is highly sensitive to the toll the work as change agent can take and recommended that we each find a form of self-care and inspiration that would work for us: whether it's counseling, massage, reiki, exercise, group work, or anything else. Our group continually came back to the notion of self-care and healing as we helped one another navigate the ebbs and flows.

We were reminded that it is important to not only celebrate the small successes, but look at the history of change too. The notion of *looking back* and recognizing how far you've come is important in the worlds in which allies inhabit: because of the inability to often 'see' change happen, we're often unable to recognize when it has happened. Because of Donna's wealth of experience over time, she inspired in us a sense of the positive:

> If I can share a little bit of my story, I'll say "Look at me, I'm 56 years old, and you know what? When I grew up in my community, it was divided right in half. Right down the middle. Indians and whites. And when my dad grew up, and my dad's 80, there was a gate, a physical gate, Indians and whites. And if the Indians were caught on the res. [reservation] or vice versa, at the sound of midnight, you were thrown in jail. So when I'm growing up, the posts are still there, that divides the white and Indian end. And the mental gate is still there. But the residential school…" So what I try to explain to them is that it's really been a short time, like when I was in grade 4 was the first time I went to public school. And that's when we were allowed, from K-12 to be allowed to go to public school…

Kay also shared with us a sense of positive change and a sense of hope for the future, specifically within the post-secondary institutions of Victoria. She said:

> You know, I never ever thought that during my lifetime, really, that I would ever see what I see now. I never thought I would. I thought before anything, I would be gone, and UVic would still be crawling along, and Camosun would still be crawling along—and now that, the faculty, the programs, the staff they doubled and tripled! And you know I think UVic and Camosun college

are very much on their way to becoming very unique in Aboriginal Education. I really do. And I think it's changed because the faculty members are there, you know? And the students are coming in. The programs are being built. The services are being built. We're still struggling; we have a long long ways to go. But we're there, you know?

And the inspiration and motivation from our Indigenous leaders gave hope to each one of us, who in turn inspired one another. Lila told us:

> When I was working with the Sechelt Nation, that's why I left after three years, because I think I was just too young to get it, that the stuff I was doing was so peanuts in the grand scheme of things, and it was going to take eons for real change to happen in that community. And I just couldn't see enough of the effects of what we were trying to do, that I just couldn't take it. It was too stressful... And now that I'm old, I think I can look at it differently. And think that you just need to know that what you're doing gets things off that path that we're on, and onto another one, and that it may take decades, but it's just...someone said, I forget how they worded it, but the small slice of the pie or something like that, but have to create that small thing, thinking that eventually it'll create change.

Through time and experience, Lila has been able to look at change in the greater scheme of things. She is now able to inspire Others with her long-term vision of positive social change. Danielle, in our second to last session, pointed out the change she sees taking place within a short period of time in her workplace:

> Change is happening and it's positive, it certainly is, I mean we can observe it in the community all the time. But, I think some people feel that the change should be happening more quickly, and sometimes I feel that way too, as the emergency coordinator, I see that the relations sometimes between the health care staff and the Band members aren't always as good as they could be, or what I envision them to be, but even from two years ago, I can see that there's changes. Now two years is a long time for small steps but those are actually pretty big steps, the things that we've accomplished. Having the staff understand some Longhouse practices, and what we could expect as health care practitioners by somebody who's coming in after having undergone certain rituals, but then also for the health care, for the First Nations members, if they're coming in knowing that we know and that maybe we'll ask some pertinent questions, just having that little bit has, I think, bridged the gap that much more. So I mean, change can be so slow, and it can be so long in coming, but one builds on the next and on the next...progress can be so slow, but if we all don't get so caught up maybe in how much progress

> we're making but just that each little bit that we do is acknowledged, I think that helps to continue to motivate us, so we don't get caught up in feeling like we're not making progress and it's not positive. It can be two steps forward and three steps back sometimes, but I think that it still needs to happen, and it begins with us, really.

These were very inspiring words for all of us to hear. Danielle had managed to *reframe the experience* of working with/being allies, and we all agreed with her enthusiastically. For myself, I also learned about the complexities involved in alliance building and working with/being allies. I told the group in our final session together:

> Another big learning that I had is the complexities of strategies as an ally. Because I think there's so many. You know I was thinking even last week…Just how complex these processes are that each time it's so different, you have to think about so many variables and you have to think about so many different things that are going on, in order to decide what kind of strategy you should use. You know you were talking earlier about confronting people as a strategy, or educating people as a strategy, there's so many different strategies, and it's complex on when to use them. So that's one of the big learnings that I go with—we're not just going to come out of this, or at least I haven't come out of this with a one-strategy-fits all, I can use this, I can pull this out of my pocket anytime that I want and it's going to work. It's not as simple as that. So that was a really big learning. Cause I kind of wanted that. I wanted the one or two things that fit all, and this is going to work in every situation or whatever, and realized, no, that's not the way the world works, that's not the way life works…

Clearly, the strategies, roles, constraints, and supports involved in *working with/being allies* are complex. Allies have roles to play both in supporting Other members and groups, but also a role to play in educating dominant group members. At the same time, allies must be continuously engaged in their own learning about self, about Others, and be in sync to their own emotional, physical, and psychological needs.

This concludes the findings from the inquiry process, in relation to the research questions. In the next section I will elaborate on several of the key elements I was attuned to through this process, which were touched upon in this chapter. Some of these relate to the topic of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships, while others relate to matters of process.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I discuss further some of the key aspects of the research, and place them within the context of theory. The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, *the ontological turn*, I will describe how an ontological lens helps to understand the experience of this research, and explain how an ontological focus may help bridge the divide between Eurocentric and Indigenous ways of knowing. In the second section I will discuss how the congruency between topic and method throughout the inquiry led to the creation of *allied space* as a site of resistance and transformation. Next, in the section on *allied-based development,* I will compare the outcomes of this study to the current literature on allies and allied relationships. Finally, we will turn to matters of the *process of inquiry*, where I will discuss the ways in which the methodological outcomes of the inquiry could be considered anti-oppressive.

THE ONTOLOGICAL TURN

An ontological lens is useful to describe the experience of learning in this inquiry group, as it recognizes the ways in which our mind, body, heart, and spirit came together to promote new understandings. Strega (2005) offers these definitions for ontology and epistemology:

> An ontology is a theory about what the world is like—what the world consists of, and why. Another way of thinking about ontology is to think of it as a world view… An epistemology is a philosophy of what counts as knowledge and "truth"; it is a strategy by which beliefs are justified. Epistemologies are theories of knowledge that answer questions about who

can be a "knower"; what tests beliefs and information must pass in order to be given the status of "knowledge"; what kinds of things can be known (p. 201).

Strega (2005) contends that for many Indigenous peoples, the basis of knowledge is connection: connection to one another, to everyone, and to everything. We spent much of our inquiry discussing elements of holism—heart, body, soul and mind. At the heart of Indigenous epistemology is the understanding that heart, mind, body and soul are all interrelated and connected; there is no distinction between epistemology and ontology, as they are not interpreted as being separate from one another (Battiste, 2000). But in the West, our understandings of epistemology grew out of the Enlightenment era, in which 'science' and 'knowledge' began to merge (Strega, 2005). This also became known as Cartesian dualism, in which mind and body are separated, and only "rational" and "scientific" truths became accepted as knowledge; where mental thought is privileged over other kinds of knowing (Fenwick, 2003). This privileging of 'thought or 'intellect' has meant that the role of the body, heart, and spirit, or *the other aspects of ourselves that make up who we are* have generally been ignored or dismissed. Strega (2005) explains: "Enlightenment epistemology rests on a dualistic foundation, in which qualities such as rationality, reason, objectivity, and impartiality are privileged over and opposed to irrationality, emotion, subjectivity, and partiality." (p.203).

This focus on "rational" thought and the intellect can also be seen in the ways in which educational institutions teach. Looking at ontology as a *way of being* and epistemology as a *way of knowing,* Dall'Alba and Barnacle (2007) criticize post-

secondary institutions for their focus on knowledge acquisition rather than a focus

on learning. They contend that it is only when one's knowledge is integrated and

internalized into their actions and practice, *into their way of being*, that knowledge

becomes fully realized. Here I will remind you of the words of Kay, our Coast Salish

Elder, who argues for holism in learning:

> And I think it's a matter of, in the education system… it deals with one way of
> learning. One way of teaching. And look at how different Aboriginal people
> are. I learn so much better sitting in a group with you. Sitting and listening to
> somebody all the time, up there at the podium, it was terrible. I could learn a
> lot of things from a lot of people, and I think that's what they expect us to do,
> we all should be looking, seeing, and feeling and being the same. And we are
> not all the same.

Kay has touched upon two key elements of learning: the importance of social

learning and the importance of experiential learning. These two concepts underlie

what Lave and Wenger (1991) have termed *situated learning*. In situated learning,

the emphasis is on the relationship between learning and social situations:

> Rather than defining it [situated learning] as the acquisition of propositional
>
> knowledge, Lave and Wenger situate learning in certain forms of social co-
>
> participation. Rather than asking what kinds of cognitive processes and
>
> conceptual structures are involved, they ask what kinds of social
>
> engagements provide the proper context for learning to take place (Lave &
>
> Wenger, 1991, p. 14).

Social theories of learning assert that learning is not *solely* an epistemological

process, at least in how epistemology has been viewed as primarily the function of

the mind. Instead, learning happens in social situations, where the focus is on

educating the whole person—by viewing agent, activity, and the surrounding world

as equally responsible for learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). *Experiential learning*

theory has also been touted as one of the primary ways in which educators can more effectively shift learning from an epistemologically-mind centred activity, to a whole body (embodied) learning process (Fenwick, 2003).

There is a growing body of scholarly thought concerned with the epistemological and ontological split within learning practices, termed *the ontological turn*. The *ontological turn* is a call for educational institutions and learning practices to shift to recognizing holism in learning, and stop ignoring the Other ways in which we learn. Dall'Alba & Barnacle (2007) explain that "What it means is that we do not primarily access things conceptually or intellectually, but, instead, through being constantly immersed in activities, projects and practices with things and others" (p.681). The notion of experiential learning, or *learning by doing, learning by experiencing,* is also highlighted in Indigenous learning systems:

> The embodiment of experiential learning is an ancient concept: indigenous ways of knowing, for example, have maintained that spirit, mind and body are not separated in experience, that learning is more focused on being than doing, and that experiential knowledge is produced within the collective, not the individual mind (Fenwick, 2003, p.128).

The *ontological turn* has also been conceptualized as important in a complex world. Barnett (2004) asks readers "what is it to learn for an unknown future?" (p. 247). In his analysis, Barnett shows that educators must pay more attention to how students internalize knowledge—that is, how knowledge affects their *way of being*—in order to more fully support their transition into citizens who can engage meaningfully in this complex world. Barnett (2004) explains:

Former periods of history, may, for instance, have see quite profound changes taking place but, they could be argued, they were changes in the infrastructure of life; they were changes to the ways of engaging with the environment (the agrarian and industrial revolutions); or, were changes in social institutions (the rise of democracy and personal freedom). Now, what we are witnessing is a new kind of world order in which the changes are characteristically internal. They are primarily to do with how individuals understand themselves, with their sense of identity (or lack of it), with their *being* in the world; this is a world order that is characterized by ontological dispositions (p. 248).

I am reminded of the many conversations held in session together, where group members discussed whether we felt supported through our academic institutions or not. At least five of the seven members voiced being disappointed with the lack of critical inquiry or the focus on mind-knowledge (lecture-style) learning. Ganga shared with us a story of her experience at UVic that highlights this lack of understanding towards ontological learning. In her degree program (joint law-public administration program), Ganga had electives to choose from. For one of these electives she wanted to take *Earth Fibers: Learning in an Indigenous World.* Because this course was external to her program, she had to seek permission, and have her advisor sign off on her attendance in the course. Her advisor tried to dissuade her from taking the course, stating that it had no relevance to her learning and she would only be learning to 'knit' in the course. She had to argue vigorously to receive that signature – because although she felt the relevance of the course to her *way of being in the world*, her advisor was not attuned to recognizing the value of ontological learning. Several of us in the group were able to give similar examples,

where the academy, instead of embracing ontological and decolonized learning,

continues to emphasis transmission-style knowledge acquisition.

Experiential learning theory and an ontological lens help to describe the

experience of this research. Each member of our inquiry group reported deeper

understandings from the inquiry. During our group sessions together, I would argue

that our learning was more focused on *being* than doing, in that we embraced the

moments we had together to experience, share and learn, rather than focus on

finding an outcome, or creating any product. We focused on learning from and with

each other and allowed ourselves to bring in our *selves* in entirety. We bared

emotions and spoke from raw centres of our hearts and souls. We experienced this

same authenticity from our Indigenous leaders. It may have been this sense of

freedom to explore, coupled with the way in which we allowed ourselves to interact

and be, that created the fertile ground for learning. We were genuine together. We

were not disconnected from our emotions, intuitions, and physical reactions, but

instead learned through and by connecting with our sense of being, and the

emotions we carry with us everyday. We prioritized learning beyond a simple mind-

thought connection. Through topic and process, we privileged Other ways of

knowing, and were able to more deeply synthesize these understandings into our

way of being. For myself, I feel transformed in my new awareness of the diversity

amongst Indigenous groups, and a heightened sense of appreciation for diverse

voices and experiences. It is clear that the safe and comfortable space we created

together was conducive to learning. Through the *experience* of building racial-justice

alliances together, and the *experiences* of learning with Indigenous leaders, embodied learning took place.

Using an ontological lens to describe the ways in which we learned is vital to understanding this inquiry. The ontological turn is important, because it involves reconciling ontology with epistemology, rather than keeping them separate. In doing so, we get closer to understanding learning as a holistic endeavor that involves our entire being, rather than simply the mind. It is also important because it invokes Other ways of knowing in a way that is not co-opting. As a white, non-Indigenous woman, I have no desire to claim access to Indigenous ways of knowing, or Indigenous epistemology. That privilege is reserved for Aboriginal people, as Battiste (2000) reminds us "it is also important that they [Aboriginal Knowledge] are recognized as the domain of Aboriginal peoples and not subverted by the dominant culture" (p.194). But what I will offer is that an ontological lens to learning offers us a way to tap into our humanness—by recognizing that we do learn through other aspects of our being. And in thinking about ontology in learning, the traditional power dynamic can shift, as Indigenous leaders come to be revered as knowledge keepers in this area—as guides and mentors to other scholars and researchers as they explore bridging the gap between Western notions of ontology and epistemology.

An ontological lens helps to explain the learning that took place in the inquiry. From my perspective, it points to the need for post-secondary institutions to stop ignoring the ontological as it is inherently integrated in learning processes. Notions of ontology will be revisited again in the next two sections. Next, I will

discuss how the intersections of topic and process led to the creation of allied space, a site of resistance and transformation.

EXPLORING ALLIED SPACE

In this section of this chapter, I will describe *the space* group members created together. *Allied space* is the term I am using to describe our inquiry space, and it is grounded in the intersections of two theoretical constructions: *decolonizing spaces* and *third space*. I argue that the allied space we created together was only possible because of the congruency between the topic at hand, the methods used, and the ontological ways in which we interacted together.

Throughout this inquiry, *decolonization*—as topic and as method—was at the forefront. Bhandar, Fumia & Newman (2008) discuss decolonizing spaces, writing that: "in a Canadian context, working for social and structural change must begin from an acknowledgement that we are part of a colonial culture that is significantly embedded in the social, political and economic structures of everyday life" (p.7). Our inquiry together was grounded on the preface that colonization is ongoing. We did not come into the inquiry space with the understanding that colonization was something relegated to the past, but instead discussed how we are each responsible for 'decolonizing yourself'. For many of us, this is a subjective process, and was similar to our notion of 'Knowing Thyself'. Chandra Mohanty (2003) states: "...decolonization involves profound transformations of self, community and governance structures. It can only be engaged through active withdrawal of consent and resistance to structures of psychic and social domination" (p.7). Mohanty (2003) implies that decolonization is an ongoing process, and her notion of

beginning with the self, and deconstructing yourself, rings true with our group

discussions of knowing yourself holistically (mind, body, soul, heart). Again, this

brings up aspects of the ontological—that *who we are* is much more than mind and

knowledge.

Lawrence and Dua (2005) propose that the theoretical field of antiracism

must expand to include *decolonizing antiracism.* They caution that antiracism theory

should not be void of discussions of decolonization:

> In continuous conversations over the years, we have discussed our
> discomfort with the manner in which Aboriginal people and perspectives are
> excluded within antiracism. We have been surprised and disturbed by how
> rarely this exclusion has been taken up, or even noticed. Due to this
> exclusion, Aboriginal people cannot see themselves in antiracism contexts,
> and Aboriginal activism against settler domination takes place without
> people of colour as allies (p.120).

Others have also noted the absence of Indigenous issues within discussions of

racism in the Canadian context (St. Denis, 2007). However, while our group was

grounded in *decolonizing antiracism,* this does not mean there was no tension there.

While some group members consistently drew from a decolonizing anti-oppressive

approach, for others this was not always an easy or comfortable place for them to

reside. There were waves of change in our conversations: between residing in these

decolonizing antiracist spaces, and a tendency for some conversations to take on a

more liberal flavor. At these points, instead of discussing root causes of racial issues,

some members were more concerned with multiculturalism, promoting cross-

cultural understanding, and searching for similarities across groups, rather than

noting the differences that make them so unique. I found the spaces between a liberal approach and an anti-oppressive approach to sometimes collide and merge together. Often conversations and stories carried elements of both, and it was not always easy to stay grounded in one approach over the other. I think this insight draws awareness to the tension between theory and practice and the persistence of multiculturalism as a dominant discourse that continues to enable ongoing colonization in Canadian society. It also demonstrates the continuing need to decolonize spaces, even when they become or feel uncomfortable.

The decolonizing space we attempted to create can be analyzed through postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha's (1994) theory of space. Bhabha's (1994) analysis of two concepts are essential here: *hybridity* and *third space*. He discusses the rise of *hybridity* in a postcolonial world*:* "where difference is neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between*…"(Bhabha, 1994). He is speaking of individuals with hybrid identities, or identities which don't really fit neatly into one binary or the other. The essence of this *in-betweenness* is seen as a superior cultural intelligence; where the hybrid individual occupies a privileged and celebrated space, since they are able to negotiate more than one culture (Meredith, 1998). According to Bhabha's (1994) theory, hybridity encourages *opening* of third spaces: it is in these third spaces that new possibilities for identities are imagined and new understandings of the Other are built. Third spaces push the boundaries of essentialized identities, such as the 'colonizer' and 'colonized'. Meredith (1998) explains:

Thus, the third space is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a

productive, and not merely reflective, space that engenders new *possibility*. It is an 'interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative' (Bhabha 1994) space of new forms of cultural meaning and production blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question established categorisations of culture and identity. According to Bhabha, this hybrid third space is an *ambivalent* site where cultural meaning and representation have no 'primordial unity or fixity' (Bhabha 1994). (p.3)

I find this analysis especially useful, as concepts of cultural hybridity and space were raised often in our group discussions. The notion of 'space' as both material and symbolic was not initially on my radar. Of course I had intended to set the tone for a 'safe' space and a 'respectful' space to discuss sensitive issues, but I hadn't clearly understood yet what it means to think of 'space' as both real <u>and</u> imagined. Identity issues were at the forefront of our inquiry, and we discussed the different ways we either took up or discarded some of the identities of 'colonizer' and 'colonized', 'Aboriginal', 'Canadian', and 'Immigrant'. Reading Bhaba's (1994) analysis, I feel we *did* blur the boundaries of identity, and allowed ourselves to be open to a third space, a place where we imagined new possibilities now and found hope for the future. The strategies we advocated for were bound up in new possibilities: we discussed how 'planting the seed' or 'reframing the experience' allows for a new reality that is founded on social justice. We drew comfort, strength, and insight from one another.

Yet rather than call it a third space, I prefer to call it an *allied space*. For me, this description captures how we trusted one another's intentions and authenticity—as allies we created this space together, while discussing the topic of

being allies. We created an *allied space* where we could understand each other's trials "out there"(in reality; in the mainstream), but "in here" (in this *allied space*) we were safe to resist and become 'something else'. We could shed those confusing identities (or the need to explain ourselves), as there was an understanding by members here, an understanding that *in this space as allies* we could imagine new possibilities and shed constraints of everyday oppressions.

My belief in *allied space* comes from the personal changes I experienced as a result of this study. I moved beyond binary thinking, and was able to more positively view <u>myself</u> as hybrid—and not a hybrid meaning 'less than', but a conception of my hybridity as being 'more than'. That is, my identity became no longer bound to the constraints of being only 'colonizer' and only 'white'—I no longer feel confined to allow those terms to define who I am. I also deconstructed stereotypes and moved beyond essentialized views of the Other members of the group. Although I would applaud all the members of the group for setting the tone for this space to grow, I owe my own evolving anti-essentialist conceptions of the Indigenous/non-Indigenous dichotomy, or 'colonizer' and 'colonized' to the Indigenous members of our group. Thankfully, the comfort that took place in this space was not merely one-sided, or relegated to the non-Indigenous members of the group. During a mid-point check in, Jo told us:

> I think this has been a really comfortable environment for me, and I'd rather be in a less structured, to feel more…I guess more of a safe space…And I really like that…I think, if you don't make that connection with people, then you don't really get their true, their true self and to be able to feel safe and ask those questions, and talk about those things that maybe aren't always easy to talk about and. I think for me, it's, I've just been really able to listen to … when we're talking about racism, and answering the questions, you know, not being awkward about being the only Aboriginal person sitting here when

we're talking about it…because I don't feel awkward in this circle to be able to talk about and share. Like how it is for me as an Aboriginal person, and what we go through and what we talk about… I think that's what's really important, the conversations that we have.

I believe that this *allied space* was made possible because of the deep congruency between topic and method, and the relationships between researcher and participants. We not only used decolonizing methodologies, but we discussed decolonization as topic. We discussed oppression and the desire to be anti-oppressive in our day-to-day lives, and we did so in an anti-oppressive manner, where each member was free to explore their own interests. We were guided by participatory methods, but it was the individual group member's choices in deciding how they would participate, in their actions, in their words, and the stories they shared. We not only discussed what it means to *work with/be allies*, but we practiced and experienced it in the process. This deep congruency within the research is what allowed an authentic allied space to develop, a space where members trusted that "in here" we were open to new possibilities. This research holds up to relational accountability, as described by Wilson (1998).

In the next section, I will now look at the ways in which the results of the research are or are not compatible with the current state of the field in allied-based development.

ALLIED-BASED DEVELOPMENT

In this section of the chapter, I will compare the outcomes of this research to the literature on allied-based development, as introduced in Chapter 2. According to the outcome of this study, I argue that the literature on allied-based development is lacking in two main conceptual ways:

1. Assertion that only 'whites' can be allies;

2. Lack of focus on the integral relationships of allies;

The congruency I did find within the literature and this study is the focus on the ontological—that an allied identity concerns 'the self' and personal transformations to beliefs, understandings, and ways of being. I will explore these ideas in the following three subsections.

Beyond whiteness

The literature concerning allies uniformly conceptualizes allies as "white"— that is, an ally is a white [Caucasian] who aligns themselves with a marginalized group. In the social justice literature, allies are defined as "members of dominant social groups (eg. Men, whites, heterosexuals) who are working to end the systems of oppression that give them greater privilege and power based on their social group membership" (Broido, 2000, p.3). In the literature on building racial justice allies, Reason, Roosa Millar and Scales (2005) define allies as "whites who are actively working to end racism and racial oppression" (p. 531). As I identified earlier in Chapter 2, most of the studies thus far have taken place in the United States, and usually the relationship under study is that between black (target group) and whites (dominant group). Throughout this study, I came to understand that allied identities

go beyond the categories of coloured and white, and even beyond the binaries of

Indigenous/non-Indigenous.

Because of the background reading I had been doing, I came to this research

with the same conception that all allies are white. Thus began the recruitment

search for Indigenous and non-Indigenous members, with my intention being to

bring in a balance of Indigenous and white members. Because of the lack of

Indigenous membership, I chose to diversify the group to members beyond

Caucasian backgrounds: I'm so glad I did. The diversity of backgrounds within our

group led to a real transformational understanding of diversity for me. I spoke of

this with the group during our final session together:

> For me I really had a deeper appreciation for diversity with this group, not
> just in that token diversity that we always talk about. Because I know even
> when I started the group, it was a thought in my head "Ok, let's diversify this
> group, it can't just be only white people and only Indigenous people in this
> group" right? But my idea was "Ok let's diversity". Without understanding
> where that would take us in the group. So it's more of that real experiential
> process of having gone through and listening to everybody, that helped me to
> really, to really really understand why diversity is so important. Because I
> think it really does broaden our understandings and helps to see so many
> different viewpoints. So that for me was a really big learning.

The diversity within our group led me to reconsider my understandings of 'who is

Canadian' and what the 'Canadian' experience of building racial justice allies with

Indigenous people existed of. At the outset of recruitment, I can say that I was

envisioning an inquiry group made up of half Indigenous people, and half white

people, and that we would be discussing power and privilege, guilt and shame, and

other aspects that made up my [white] experience. What I found was this was not

the only experience, and was not held by all other members. The diversity

represented within our inquiry group leads me to conclude that the literature, and

the way allies have been imagined, only represents one experience. Assuming allies as 'white' only, therefore, is a narrowly conceived definition that does not represent the reality of many people's backgrounds, and ignores Other's potential to <u>be</u> allies. In my view, this is akin to assuming that any individual who belongs to a racialized minority group is *already* an ally—simply by virtue of the colour of their skin. This is similar to the tokenistic way in which persons of colour are often asked to speak and represent all those in their racial community.

What this study plainly shows is that racism and the processes of building racial-justice allies are not solely confined to the 'colonizer'-'colonized' binary. The reality of human experience, and the reality of hybrid identities, shows us that these constrictive categories of identity often do more damage than good. Each of the seven group members were struggling with her sense of identity, of where we fit not only in our own worlds, but also in the world of allies and alliance building. I am not proposing that the theoretical field of white privilege or white allies is misinformed. Quite the contrary, as for myself it has been through my own struggles with white power and privilege that I was introduced to the field of ally development. But I do feel that the field of scholarship needs to extend itself beyond the [white] experience, and recognize more fully the rise of hybrid identities, and the ever-shifting ways in which the relationship between *working with/being allies* changes.

Relationships amongst allies

The literature on ally development is void of a sense of the importance of the relationship between *those who work with allies* and *those who are allies*. According to the current definitions of allies, those working with allies are members of the

target (or marginalized) group, while an ally is a member of the dominant social group(s). But, as outlined in this study, it may be that an allied identity is not necessarily bound to a specific racial composition, as those identities between oppressed and oppressor are binary constructions that do not always reflect reality.

Just as the literature on social justice demands that individuals understand their role both as oppressor and oppressed, it seems as though target group members need to understand the dual nature of their role: that at times they are working with allies, and at times they themselves are the allies. This focus on *relationships* amongst allies is vitally important—that an allied identity exists on both ends of the relationship and both need to be open to working with one another. For example, take the cases of our Indigenous leaders, who are strong advocates for working with allies—allies of any colour and any cultural group. They both advocated for building relationships in and amongst Indigenous groups as well. So they see themselves not only *working with allies* on issues that affect their tribal groups, but also working *as an ally* on issues that affect other cultural groups. As our Indigenous leaders voiced, people from different Indigenous tribes need to ally to each other's causes. I would contend that by not recognizing the ways in which allies of one (target) group may support those of another (target) group, we contribute yet again to essentializing—instead of recognizing the diversity amongst Indigenous groups. Can a Coast Salish woman not be an ally with a Kwakwaka'wakw woman over particular issues? By denying the title of ally, the Eurocentric view/binary maintains that all Indigenous people are the same.

Let me provide an example from this study that highlights this integral relationship of *working with/being allies.* I presumed at the onset of our inquiry that Jo, the one member of our group with a strong Aboriginal identity, was coming into the research from the perspective of *working with allies.* But I began to see how she also envisioned herself in the role of ally. She discussed how she decided to help the government worker who did not interact with her family in a culturally responsive way, and she stated: "I became her ally." According to the definition, Jo is not an ally because she is a member of the target/marginalized group. Therefore, in this case, only the white government worker can hold the title of *ally.* But Jo supported the white woman and helped her navigate the cultural codes of her community. Although Jo is the member of the "target" group, it was through her openness to share and teach the Other, through her willingness to work together, that she began to regard herself as an ally to the white woman. Through those acts of teaching, she contributed to working towards ending oppressive practices for her family and other Indigenous groups.

This is an interesting example because you can see the traditional relationship in reverse, and power has shifted—Jo is now in a position of power, as the one holding the knowledge that the other desires. Through this act, she has not only changed our conception of the identity of an ally—*that an ally can also be a member of the target group who decides to support the growth of Other allies*—but through the act of being an ally, the power dynamic actually shifts, and the target member gains control of the situation and contributes to the outcome. Undoubtedly, we saw this strategy being embodied by the Indigenous leaders who visited our

group, in the patient ways they interacted with us and supported our growth as allies. Is it most important to clearly define the *identity* of an ally as belonging to either the dominant group(s) or from target group(s)? Does it not stand to reason that either target group members, dominant group members and everyone in-between these binaries can be involved in all of these roles and strategies? Moosa-Mitha (2005) comments on how anti-oppressive theory works to deconstruct these binaries:

> A particular contribution of anti-oppressive theorists is their analysis and conceptualization of oppression. Binary thinking about oppression that assumes the existence of an oppressed and oppressor is deconstructed to include a more complex notion of oppression that acknowledged multiple relationships in which one could be the oppressed and the oppressor at the same time (Razack, 1998). Concepts that treat the margin as being in a dichotomous relationship with the centre are also disrupted; the "margin" is also recognized for being a space of power (hooks, 1998, 1990). "Essentializing" people on the basis of their social identity that has its basis on singular social locations such as race is also challenged by complicating the multiple identity locations of people (Hill Collins, 1998) and by decentring notions of a "norm", such as is assumed within the White or male-stream analysis. (p. 63)

Her analyses seems to represent perfectly how identity and power shift in reality, and are more fluid than previously thought in the allied-based literature.

The identity characteristics of what makes an ally may not be important—what is important most is building that relationship. Kay told us, "unless we build these relationships with our non-Aboriginal people, unless we build these relationships with our tribal brothers and sisters, we're not going to go anywhere."

The Indigenous leaders who visited us brought us this message loud and clear*: it is all about building relationships*. They were open to sharing their backgrounds and their experiences. Their role was to help and support us in navigating the uncertain ground of ally development and alliance building—that is, as allies themselves, in their role of educating Others. It is this fluidity in the relationship where allies can learn and grow from one another. Members of target groups need allies to support them; and allies need members from target groups to support their development. An ally may begin their journey on their own, but at some point must begin building those respectful relationships; and members of target groups cannot expect membership beyond the target group if they are not open to educating and supporting Other allies.

Throughout the literature, there were no studies encountered by this author that examined the ally identity from the perspective of target groups and this may be responsible for the absence of the understanding of the relationship. In the literature, relationships with target members are of course recognized as being instrumental to allied identities, but the relationship is not central in the discussion. The role of an "allied" identity is primarily viewed as, given certain prescribed experiences, internal to the individual, rather than being explicitly dependent on social relationships. The majority of the literature on ally identity development (Reason, Scales & Roosa Millar, 2005; Reason, Roosa Millar & Scales, 2005; Broido, 2000; Edwards, 2006) has looked at the development of racial justice or social justice [white] allies for college and undergraduate students. They were primarily concerned with how a social justice consciousness begins to be fostered through

university experiences. As such, building relationships is reduced to one of several "steps" to ally development, and is usually relegated to the status of 'making contact' or 'being friends' with members of target groups. For example, Reason, Roosa Millar, and Scales' (2005) study, looked specifically at racial justice ally development. They found these four factors to be common amongst college students who build racial justice alliances: (1) pre-college experiences of race issues; (2) participating in racially related coursework; (3) experiences being a "minority"; and, (4) encountering high-quality interracial social interactions. Void from this literature is an understanding of the integral—and shifting—relationship between target group members and allied members. While this research did not intend specifically to study this relationship, it is clear that strengthening allied identities is dependent upon developing and supporting relationships. It is also clear that target group members not only see themselves as *working with allies*, but also hold the identity of *being an ally* strong within them as well, as they work to build bridges and relationships across and amongst groups of people. Clearly, the definitions and concepts of *who allies are* needs to be re-conceptualized.

Allied identity as an ontological way of being

Through this inquiry process, we learned that an allied identity goes far beyond your race or your cultural background. What seems to matter most is not the way you *look*, but the way you *are*. Donna explained this to us quite succinctly in the story of Simone, where she said:

> [It] end[s] up coming down to what is in your heart. Because people will know that you are sincerely interested in what it is that you want to learn, and that your spirit is there…And that's what it was. Just that personal

> connection, that part... And I say, and I've seen it, when you work with First Nations people, and your spirit and your heart are there....they will feel that...and that you're an open learner. Whether you're red, yellow, black, or white.

Although Donna may have her own way to understand this aspect, I interpret her words as belonging to the ontological—*the way of being*, the way you interact with others, in a way that is authentic and congruent to *who you are.* Throughout the allied-based literature, there is a focus on understanding allied identities as an ontological way of being and learning to be. While many of the studies are empirically grounded and seek to unearth "grand truths" about racial identity development (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992; 1997) and ally identity development, most of them do make mention of affective factors in identity development. Primarily they are concerned with the emotions that accompany recognition of power and privilege for white allies: shock, guilt, fear, anxiety, paralysis, lack of confidence (Broido & Reason, 2005). In Broido's (2000) phenomenological study, she identified self-confidence as being one of the greatest indicators of adoption of an allied identity, where she describes self-confidence as referring "to comfort with one's identity and internal loci of worth and approval" (p.12). Identity struggles and issues with confidence were voiced throughout our inquiry sessions.

Interestingly, Anne Bishop's (1994) book *Becoming an Ally*, which has been dismissed as being 'anecdotal' and not rooted in empirical research (Reason, Roosa Millar & Scales, 2005; Broido, 2000), most closely aligns to the outcomes of this study. Bishop's (1994) work, like the others, revolves around white power and privilege. In Bishop's (1994) book, she outlines a six-step framework to becoming an ally, which involve cognitive, emotional, and action-oriented outcomes

(previously outlined in Chapter 2). While her steps are not entirely the same as our discoveries for an ally's role and strategies, there is definitely some overlap.

Based on my own [white] experience, I would disagree that Bishop's (1994) analysis has 'little empirical support'. Her analysis actually seems quite true to the experiences I have had, not simply during this inquiry, but along my journey as an ally. For those of us in this study, we already had various degrees of a racial and socially just allegiance—and recognitions of power and privilege were previously accepted as 'truths'. Our role then, was not to develop an identity anew, but to strengthen and broaden our understandings of those roles. What is apparent in Bishop's (1994) work is the ontological focus she puts on emotions and affect. She concentrates her analysis on internal mental and emotional transformations that must take place for [white] allies. Possibly, it is this more ontological orientation of her 'experiential' work which allows others to view it as 'less than' other studies.

In the previous three sections of this chapter I discussed several key aspects of the research. First, I introduced the concept of *ontology* as being important while learning in this cross-cultural space, as well as its importance to understanding an allied identity. I explored the *allied space* we created together, and how this can be interpreted as a site of resistance and transformation. Then I explained how the study re-conceptualizes the field of allied-based development, through a deeper understanding of the allied identities, and the relationships amongst allies. In the final section I will discuss matters of process, and note tensions between the hybrid methodology.

PROCESS OF INQUIRY

In this section of the chapter I will discuss some of the tensions that arose between methods and methodology. As noted previously in Chapter 3, the methodology used in this study has been a hybrid, incorporating elements of action research, participatory action research, and decolonizing methods. In this section I will discuss some of the tensions that arose between these different methodological paradigms, and how they lead to the possibility of viewing this research as anti-oppressive.

Co-operative inquiry as method

Co-operative inquiry is the research method I chose to guide the focus of our inquiry. I felt comfortable initiating the group in this method as I have facilitated several co-operative inquiry research seminars in the past, and felt familiar in the use of the method. In this method, individuals begin their initiation by collaboratively deciding upon the research questions being pursued, and deciding which methods of inquiry (whether informal interviews, reading of secondary literature, watching documentaries, etc.) group members will use in each cycle. Group members are generally pursuing the same questions per session, using the same inquiry method. When members meet again at the next session, they each share their findings, and come to some conclusions on that cycle's question. Then the group tackles another part of the same question, or another question entirely. And the cycles continue. Each session involves sharing, and the facilitator's role is to help the group find clarity through consensus.

What happened in our inquiry was a very different process to what I had initially envisioned, as detailed in the previous chapters. From our very first session together, there were voices within the group who wanted the freedom to explore what was most relevant to them. There was a desire to keep things less structured. The significance of the decisions made in that initial session cannot be overstated: the decision to keep things less structured and give individuals the freedom to pursue their own questions of interest put us on a different path from the traditional approach to co-operative inquiry. While individuals still cycled through action-reflection cycles, on their own and with the group, and still pursued "research" between our sessions together, there was an inability on my part, as facilitator, to bring the group into consensual sense making. Each of us was on our own learning paths. And although we shared insights and questioning together, there is no way for me, with certainty, to know the extent of the group's learning in this process. I know what I learned, am aware of what other member's reported to learn, but the analysis I have provided in Chapter 4 remains *my interpretation* of the group process, in relation to the research questions I pursued. As facilitator and researcher, I had the choice to force "the plan" I had initially set out for us, or I had the choice to follow the group's lead. I chose the latter, and it was this act of *leading by following* that allowed me some new insights into process, into co-operative inquiry as a method, and the sometimes confusing spaces which researchers inhabit.

Leading by following was not always an easy task. Many times throughout the inquiry I was filled with panic that I wasn't "following the method correctly", or facilitating the group well enough. I consistently reminded myself of the three

principles that I had presented to the group in our first session: 1) Embrace the

chaos of inquiry; 2) Trust the process ; 3) Whoever's in the group are the right

people for the group; 4) Whatever comes out of the group is the right thing to come

out[7]. I was certainly trying to *trust the process* but I felt obligated to explicitly move

the group into sense making as we would using the co-operative inquiry method. My

anxiety was most intense during the final two sessions of our inquiry. I could feel

time slipping away, and I felt we had not formally been able to "synthesize" our

stories, and openly come to common understandings on either topic or process. All

the technological issues we had in our final session together almost brought me to

tears, as I was hoping to have such a wonderful debriefing conversation together.

After the final session I wrote the following passage in my research journal:

> Tonight was terrible! I can't believe all the Internet problems! Our time
> together just disappeared. We didn't get anywhere. This is totally anti-
> climactic. After spending almost 3 months together, meeting and discussing
> every 2 weeks, and to hardly synthesize any of our findings! This changes
> everything. How can I call this participatory research anymore? Without the
> participatory element in the data, what happens then? I set the research
> question. I will analyze the data. I will write the thesis. This is no better than
> a series of focus groups. This changes everything!

Clearly, I began to doubt the entire validity of the study and its inclusion as

participatory research. But thankfully, as time went by, I became aware that the

issues and tensions I faced were not unique to this study. The issues inherent in

member's participation are exactly the reasons why many researchers shy away

from participatory research.

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[7] *These principles were adapted from a workshop facilitation methodology called Open Space Technology.*

What I now realize, since I have had the space to reflect and digest on the outcome, is that we actually <u>were</u> making sense of the ideas as we progressed through the inquiry. Because of my previous experience in facilitating co-operative inquiry, I was expecting the group to *explicitly* set time aside for sense making and consensual agreement on ideas. I was trying to force us into a space where we would say "Ok, what conclusions have we come to?" Because of the formal expectation I held, I was blind to noticing how, session by session, we had been building an analysis together. We had been sharing ideas, and kept referring back to those ideas—to some of the strategies such as 'planting the seed', 'know thyself', 'reframe the experience', and 'heal yourself'. All of these ideas grew spontaneously out of our discussions, and while I was aware of the growth of these ideas, it was not until I listened again to our recorded sessions, that I became attuned to the *different* way in which we had made sense of the ideas together. This is not to say that each individual took away an understanding of <u>all</u> of the constraints, or <u>all</u> of the roles and strategies as outlined in Chapter Four, but I have a very strong suspicion that many members will have. So although I compiled this thesis, and provided the organizational structure to the analysis, I did not do this alone. It happened in process, as a group. Because I had come at the analysis from a very formalized, step-by-step conception of how sense making should take place, I was not attentive to it *as it happened* during the sessions. And it has only been through the reflective process of writing this thesis that I have begun to understand that *the way of being* also transcends to how we approach research. And it is an ongoing learning journey.

Through my reflection of the process, I have two additional insights to offer on this process:

1. The research has the potential to be viewed as anti-oppressive;

2. Co-operative inquiry as method is antithetical to anti-oppressive research.

I will explain both of these insights in the following section.

Anti-Oppressive Approach to Research

An *anti-oppressive approach to research* is an umbrella term for research that has a political purpose and is committed to social justice (Potts & Brown, 2005). It is a *way to do research*, and comes from an intersection of several theoretical research paradigms. The need for social justice researchers to commit to anti-oppressive approaches has arisen in response to mainstream academic researchers co-option of the principles involved in participatory research (Potts & Brown, 2005). One of the major ways anti-oppressive research differs from PAR is its emphasis on the recognition of power relations, and a commitment to shifting those power relations:

> ...AOP [Anti-Oppressive Practice, theory and research] generally starts with those who are already in positions of power—those engaged in research, for example—and challenges the practitioner or researcher to continually question his or her "location" in terms of beliefs, values, identity, and power, as well as to identify ways in which he or she perpetuates those power imbalances. As such, the "location" of the researcher is continuously examined and recognized as an integral part of the research process (Rutman, Hubberstey, Barlow & Brown, 2005, p. 157).

Potts and Brown (2005) state that all knowledge is socially constructed and involves searching for meaning and understanding—"therefore, anti-oppressive research is not a process to discover knowledge, but a political process to co-create and rediscover knowledge" (p.261). And the primary purpose of anti-oppressive research is to affect change and transformation in an emancipatory sense, for participants and researchers. I would argue that this research has the potential to be viewed as an anti-oppressive process. If I conceive of myself, as the [white] researcher, as being the primary power holder, aspects related to my "locationality" have been central to this study. Am I the researcher or a group member? Am I leading the group or following their lead? Does my white privilege come into play in choices that I make? Am I engaged in a reflexive practice that encourages me to shift some of those power imbalances? How did the design of the study, with Indigenous leaders, Indigenous group members, and group members of various racial and hybrid identities, seek to upset power relations, for myself and others? These are all questions that I ask of myself in this reflective period. Many of these are still under consideration, as the questions are complex.

There is one question of process that I have found clarity on. I would argue that if I had chosen to *force* the group to collaborate together as the co-operative inquiry method was meant to function, this would have been an entirely different research project with entirely different outcomes. I would like to remind the reader of what several of the group members shared during our mid-point check in on the process:

It's a little looser than I thought it might be. For some reason I thought it might be a little more facilitated and more structured, but it's been interesting to let it just sort of do its thing. (Lila)

I think I've enjoyed the organic process of it. I've tried actually, <u>not</u> to write too much. But just to experience… I've really appreciated the opportunity to just be myself and allow everybody else in the room to just be themselves, and express what it is we're experiencing and feeling. (Brandi)

The structure is a little less…it's more loose than what I had expected as well. But I can see sort of the benefits of that, in that it leaves me open to just focus on whatever I want to sort of…you know that pertains to <u>my</u> interest within this topic, which I kind of like. And I like just being open and allowing myself to just be receptive to the things that are happening around me, whether it's in my work life or my personal life. And just sort of being attuned to maybe this subject coming up without me necessarily probing for it. And it's really quite amazing that just what has come <u>to me</u>, versus me actively going and looking for it. (Danielle)

There was a clear sense from group members that the process has been liberating. All of these excerpts speak to me of the diversity within the group: of the experiences we brought to the group, and of the diversity of learnings and outcomes we took with us. *We created meaning around what was important for each of us.* I am reminded of the reasons I desired the group to come from such a diverse background in both our personal and professional lives: in order to have diverse viewpoints, and to encourage a diversity and cross-fertilization of ideas. Certainly a nurse educator, a counselor, a teacher, a lawyer, and three adult educators would each have different needs and different foci of the topic at hand. How stifled would our inquiry have been if we each pursued the *same* question every session? How quickly would group members have lost motivation if the emphasis on the group sessions had been primarily to share and synthesize information that may not have any meaning to particular members in their personal or professional realms?

My conclusion is that co-operative inquiry, as an action research method, is primarily focused on attaining group consensus and agreement. Group consensus implies compromise; it involves negotiating one's beliefs and understandings to match a group's preference. It involves prioritizing "one truth" over an acceptance of multiple truths. This type of method could have actually oppressed group members, rather than encouraged emancipatory learning. It certainly would have involved my voice to a greater degree, as the facilitation necessary to work on group synthesis would have placed me more often into that role, where my position of power may have been more easily abused. Through this process, I came to appreciate the epistemological distinctions between action research, participatory action research, and anti-oppressive approaches to research. Action research is clearly useful in professional workplace settings, where practical problems are being addressed. I can understand now why action research does not have an overt liberatory focus and can see that hoping for emancipatory learning using co-operative inquiry *would not work.* Co-operative inquiry as method is simply not congruent with anti-oppressive and participatory research frameworks.

The study has previously been described as a hybrid, incorporating elements of action research, participatory action research, and decolonizing research. Because of particular constraints on participant's level of participation in the planning, design, and analysis of the data, I cannot situate it firmly as participatory action research. And due to the constraints of working with a small "community" of people with mixed cultural backgrounds, instead of an existing Aboriginal community, the research is more *informed* by Indigenous research frameworks than conforming to

them. I must accept that although I have been engaged in decolonizing theory and practice, in the creation of decolonizing spaces, I still bring a Western lens to the research, which informs my interpretation and understandings of the inquiry process. It is anti-oppressive research that seeks to challenge these power relationships, and through this inquiry I was forced to trouble my location as non-Indigenous researcher within a decolonizing and Indigenous research paradigm. In my view, the study remains a hybrid, but it has the potential to be described as *anti-oppressive, participatory, decolonizing research.*

CONCLUSION

In this research study, I set out to explore how Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators have experienced working with/being allies. I have presented in this thesis my interpretations of the collaborative process of working with 6 peers and 2 Indigenous leaders. Together, we shared stories of constraints and misunderstandings, and stories of hope and inspiration. As an *exploratory* inquiry, I went into the inquiry as a learner, and willingly participated in the co-creation of knowledge and gained new understandings

The research is significant is several regards. It is the only study of its kind to look at the concept of allies and explore how allies are understood by diverse groups of individuals. It calls for a re-conceptualization of *how we view allies*, *who allies are*, and *how allies work together*. Undoubtedly, there is a need to delve deeper into the relationship between *working with* and *being allies,* as it is clear that an allied identity is not bound to specific racial characteristics—not bound to the conception that *allies* belong to dominant group(s), and those who *work with allies* are from the

target group(s). This research points to the need to shift our conception of allies beyond the binary constructions of 'colonized' and 'colonizer', and recognize the breadth and depth of Other experiences.

In this research I discussed notions of epistemology and ontology. These discussions are important, specifically because of the cross-cultural learning space that was created by working with a diverse group of individuals, including Indigenous leaders. I described how our inquiry group *learned by doing*—we learned about *working with/being allies* from the experience of *working with/being allies* together, during our group sessions. We also learned that an allied identity encompasses more than just verbal commitments, but involves a deep congruency and authenticity in *who you are* and *how you are*. These understandings are difficult to explain through a Western mind-centred conception of epistemology. Instead, it requires a paradigm shift in how we view learning and the integration of learning into our whole being. This shift in understanding has been called the *ontological turn*, where we can recognize how our entire being (mind, body, heart, and spirit) is responsible for learning, and for integrating new understandings into *who we are*. In this thesis, I have argued that an ontological lens may help to bridge the divide between Eurocentric and Indigenous ways of knowing.

I discussed how *allied space* was created, and argue that this was made possible because of the congruency between topic and method, and the relationships created within the inquiry group. In this allied space, we trusted each other's intentions as allies; we envisioned new possibilities; we unpacked the trials of everyday oppressions and ignorance. We created a space to support one another,

inspire each other, and strengthened our abilities to shed binary identities that do

not match our experiences. I maintain that this allied space was possible because of

the ways in which method and topic informed each other: we discussed

decolonization in a decolonizing way; we searched for meaning in oppressive

structures in an anti-oppressive way; we analyzed allied experiences while in the

process of building allies together. We created a space where *being* was honored

and respected, and a space where we could resist and transform together.

In this study, I was limited in my approach and scope, due to the constraints

of being a student-researcher, and needing to submit an individual research work

for institutional credit. I was also constrained by time to engage the group in a more

truly participatory process. All of these elements played major roles in how

participatory the process was, in issues of ownership, and what kinds of reciprocal

benefits the other participants in the group gained.

There remain tensions and unanswerable questions about the research—is it

participatory? Is it decolonizing? Is it anti-oppressive? It is only by viewing it as a

hybrid that some may appreciate its significance. But this hybridity should not be

seen as being 'less than' one approach or the other; instead, it should be taken up as

existing at the intersections of the margins of these approaches, and viewed as

something new. Some may have no difficulty in recognizing its worth, regardless of

which methodological camp they decide to place it in. Each reader will have to

decide for him or her self, based on his or her epistemological and ontological views

on knowledge, and the purposes of research. For me, what remains most important

was the learning that took place. It was tricky trying to categorize the learnings and

processes in this research. I want to be true to the group process and the scope of our discussions, but recognize that all I can ever give, as one individual, is my own interpretation. This work remains my interpretation of the inquiry process, although I certainly hope that upon sharing it with the group members and Indigenous leaders, they find it resonates with them as well. There is little doubt that each of us who participated in this research left the inquiry space touched by the relationships we developed, the stories we shared, and the space we created with one another. And while this thesis document stands as a testament to the experience, I would again reiterate what was most important throughout this process: the inquiry process itself. The group sessions. The space we created together. That for me has been the research: the research was the process. *The research is the doing*. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) reminds us, the research process is often more important than the research outcome. I cannot help but agree with her wholeheartedly.

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Appendix

APPENDIX A: CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL REVIEW

Human Research Ethics Board
Office of Research Services
University of Victoria
Administrative Services Building B202
Tel 250-472-4545 Fax 250-721-8960
Email ethics@uvic.ca Web www.research.uvic.ca

University of Victoria

Human Research Ethics Board
Certificate of Approval

Principal Investigator	Department/School	Supervisor
Susan Lang **Master's Student** Co-Investigator(s):	**EPLS**	**Dr. Catherine McGregor**

Project Title: Being Allies: Exploring Indigeneity and Difference in Decolonized Anti-oppressive Spaces

Protocol No.	Approval Date	Start Date	Expiry Date
10-046	22-Jan-10	22-Jan-10	21-Jan-11

Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol. Extensions and/or amendments may be approved with the submission of a "Request for Annual Renewal or Modification" form.

Dr. Afzal Suleman
Associate Vice-President, Research

10-046   Lang, Susan

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

 Invitation to participate email script (circulated via email list serves)

CALL FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION:

Investigating Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators' experiences in building racial-justice alliances

Are you committed to racial-justice for Indigenous people?

Are you interested in anti-racist education and anti-oppressive approaches?

Would you like to gain new personal and professional knowledge on how Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators can work better together, towards racial-justice?

If you are a:
- Grad student in the faculty of education at UVic
- Upper-level pre-service teacher (4th/5th year, or PDP) at UVic
- Educator (grad students) in other faculties at UVic
- Educator new to the field (1-2 years), who used to be a UVic student,

you may want to consider taking part in this collaborative inquiry project, initiated by a graduate student at UVic. This participatory project aims to open a dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators, on how to work more effectively together to support racial-justice for Indigenous people. The project will take place over four months, from February 2010 to May 2010, and involve meeting as a group to discuss the issues twice a month. Participation will involve: sharing experiences on building racial-justice allies, discussing racism and anti-racism education, and building new knowledge collaboratively with other participants in the group. This research project is under supervision of Dr. Catherine McGregor, who can be contacted by email at *(email removed),* and it has received ethical approval.

If you're interested in learning more about this inquiry project, please write to Sue Lang, MA candidate in the Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies (EPLS), at *(email removed).* I can send you further information and answer any questions you may have.

A Co-operative Inquiry

Are you committed to racial-justice for Indigenous people?

Are you interested in anti-racist education & anti-oppressive approaches?

Would you like to gain new personal and professional knowledge on how Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators can work together, towards racial-justice?

This inquiry project is looking for grad students from the faculty of education (or other faculties if working in an educative role), upper-level pre-service teachers, or recent graduates working in educational settings to take part in a 4-month participatory action research project that seeks to open a dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators, in order to engage more effectively in racial-justice alliances.

SHARE experiences of racial-justice alliance building, and useful strategies towards allied engagement	REFLECT on how Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators can work more effectively together	ACT and test out your new ideas and knowledge, in order to move forward a racial-justice agenda

For more information or to express your desire to participate, please contact Sue Lang, MA Candidate in EPLS, at *(email removed)*

APPENDIX C: FIRST SESSION MATERIALS

(these materials were discussed with group members during Session 1)
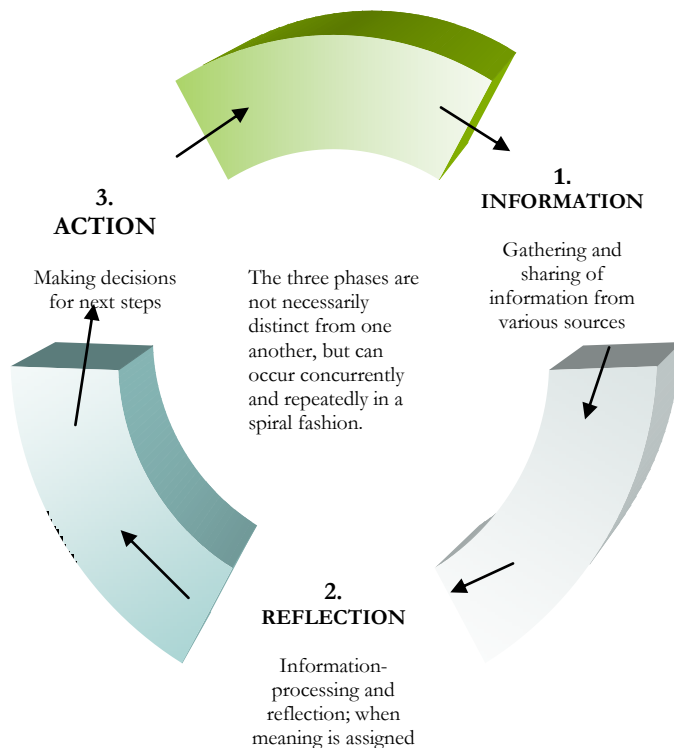
The Method

Co-operative inquiry is based on the belief that good research is research *with* people rather than *on* people. It is grounded in the belief that ordinary people are quite capable of developing their own ideas and can work together in a co-operative inquiry group to see if these ideas make sense of their world and work in practice.

In co-operative inquiry, a group of people come together to explore issues of concern and interest. All members of the group contribute both to the ideas that go into their work together, and are part of the activity that is being researched. Everyone has a say in deciding what questions are to be addressed and what ideas may be of help; everyone contributes to thinking about how to explore the questions; everyone gets involved in the activity that is being researched; and finally everybody has a say in whatever conclusions the co-operative inquiry group may reach. In co-operative inquiry the split between "researcher" and "subjects" is done away with, and all those involved act together as "co-researchers" and "co-subjects." (Heron, 1996; Heron & Reason, 2006).

- Each participant is a co-inquirer—shaping the question, designing the inquiry process and participating in the experience of exploring the inquiry question, making and communicating meaning.

- Simultaneously, each participant is a co-subject—drawing on personal experience from inside and outside of the inquiry group to provide a collective pool of experience and insight for analysis and creating meaning.

(See diagram on following page)

Action-Reflection cycle of Co-operative Inquiry

3.
ACTION

Making decisions
for next steps

The three phases are
not necessarily
distinct from one
another, but can
occur concurrently
and repeatedly in a
spiral fashion.

1.
INFORMATION

Gathering and
sharing of
information from
various sources

2.
REFLECTION

Information-
processing and
reflection; when
meaning is assigned

Threading decolonizing methodologies

- Shifts the basics purpose of research by asking: "what *is* research?" "*who* is it for?"
- Participatory and collaborative; Focus on relationships: learning *from* and *with* one another, rather than *on* people
- Respectful, and takes into account local knowledge
- Knowledge generation is meaningful to individual participants: research/knowledge generation should be *reciprocal*, not one-sided
- Takes a social and political stance against top-down, "researcher-as-expert"
- Methods may involve: storytelling (narratives), talking circles, ceremonial or spiritual aspects

> "*Stories are who we are. They are both method and meaning. Stories spring forth from a holistic epistemology and are the relational glue in a socially interdependent knowledge system. In listening to the research stories of others, it is evident that research stories reveal the deep purpose of our inquiries.*"[8]

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[8] Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies: characteristics, conversations and contexts*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Ground rules

1. Respect all members of the group
2. Don't judge, label or stereotype other members: keep an open mind
3. Model and practice active listening
4. Listen with the aim of understanding and intent of learning
5. Ask for clarification, not to judge: Sometimes it can be difficult to understand someone's meaning, especially when it is a newly formed idea. Work with that member to bring about clarification and insight, both for them and for the group
6. Encourage all members to actively take part in discussions
7. Do not dominate conversations: share "air time", and allow each person the opportunity to speak
8. Speak from *your* experience, <u>not</u> from others; don't expect others in the group to represent more than their experience
9. Try not to essentialize; beware of "Othering" other people or groups
10. What is revealed in the group stays here
11. Discomfort or tension need not be a negative experience: support group members during times of emotions, stress, tensions, or misunderstandings
12. Be flexible with the inquiry process (embrace the chaos), yet conscious of the overall objectives of the inquiry
13. Be dedicated, motivated and committed to collaborative knowledge!

Research Questions: a starting place for discussion

1. How have we each experienced racial justice or cross-cultural alliance building? What are your positive experiences (what worked; helped; supported that)? What were some challenges, issues, constraints, or detriments to those relationships?

2. What are some of the issues that Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators have when working together?

Handout on Allies

Anzaldua, G.E. (2000). Allies. In Adams, M., Blumenfeld, W.J., Castaneda, R., Hackman, H.W., Peters, M.L., & Zuniga, X. (Eds.) *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice.* NY, NY: Routledge, pp.475-477.

Here is a diagram of possible sources of "data" that co-operative inquiry groups use.

Please note: co-operative inquiries usually begin with storytelling.

My Story

Others' Stories

Inside Group

Outside Group

Informal Interviews

Secondary Sources

On-line sources

Photographs

Music

Theatre

Sensory Information

Poetry

Drawings/ Artwork

Videos

Books & Periodicals

Journal Articles

Sharing written reflections

Research journal or other written reflections
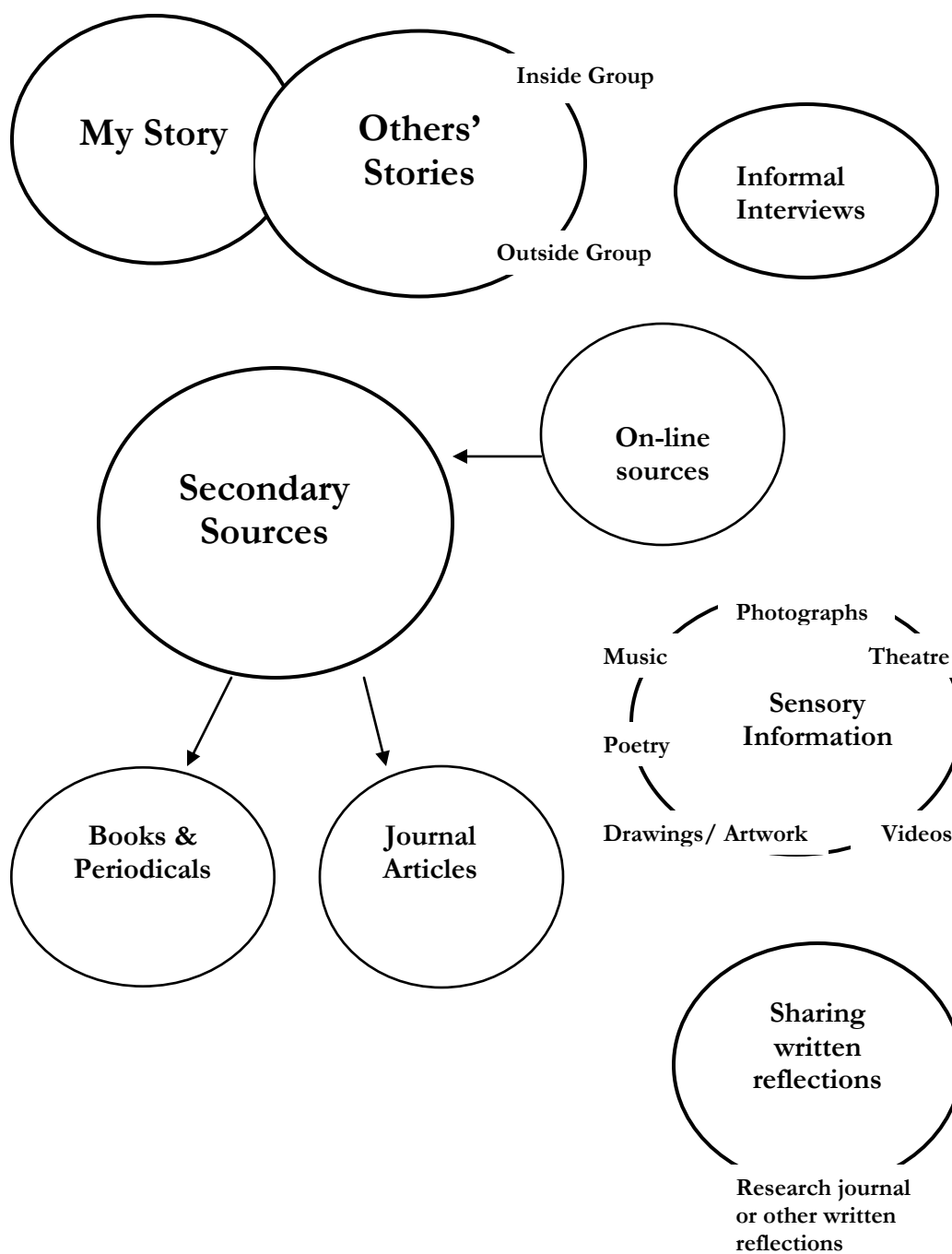
APPENDIX D: INQUIRY QUESTIONS

"What we hope to gain from this inquiry"

(Compiled list of questions/ideas from all group members during Session 1)

- Other people's ideas
- More ideas for peace pedagogy and mutual understanding
- Multi-perspectives: more holistic view; world knowledge
- Understanding
- Other people's perspectives
- Knowledge from others regarding racism
- Learn about what racial issues exist in education
- Share my story, opportunity to teach back by telling my story
- Building racial-justice alliances
- Develop, gain new relationships
- Connections
- Relationships
- How can alliances be built between women (settler, indigenous, immigrant, etc.)?
- Gain new understandings in how to engage in cross-racial alliances
- How to stay strong and committed to this work?
- Clarification re: being an ally—challenges, opportunities, experiences, connection to decolonization
- How can "success"/"professional" be detached from WASP/modernism?
- How to be seen as more than the white woman teaching?
- How to move past guilt as a white colonizer background, into positive action?
- Power dynamics: oppression, worldviews, decentering
- How do you engage with colonization while keeping it positive?
- How to be respectful to Indigenous people and culture, yet still be me?
- How to deconstruct and rebuild without offending values?
- How to change hearts and minds—promote understanding of colonization, its effects, and the role that societal racism continues to play in oppressing people?
- Clear some of the murkiness of the cultural confusion
- Who I am… Where I am… Why do I care?
- The process: how? Why? Where? Who?
- Research ethics
- Methodology: PAR (participatory action research), co-inquiry, co-participation

APPENDIX E: FINAL EVALUATION FORM

(Given to group members at the end of Session 5; discussed in Session 6)

<u>Mapping Your Journey</u>

Take some time to envision this inquiry process we have been on together as a journey, with physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional elements. Think back to our very first session together, and for your reasons for joining this group. You may want to even take a look at your initial research questions you started with. You also might want to be mindful of what you already bring with you on this journey. Try to think of some way to represent your journey on this physical piece of paper. For some of you it may be a river, or a road, or any other metaphor that helps you to envision this journey. Use whatever forms you wish to represent that journey, it may be art, it may be words, it may be symbols, or anything else you wish it to be. (There are no rules here!). Begin to map out what your original questions were, and plot out any new or altered nuggets of knowledge or emotions, ways of being and ways of thinking that you picked up along the way. Map out some of those "aha!" moments, and disheartening moments, and some of those ideas you might still be struggling with, or questioning. You might want to use your learning journal to remind you of where you've been, or other reflective pieces to help you. What questions do you still have? Where is your inquiry leading you now? (Assuming that although the structured element of <u>this</u> inquiry process might be drawing to a close, you will continue to learn and grow on your life's journey).

<u>Discussion Questions</u>

1. Has participating in this group affected you personally and/or professionally in any ways? That is, can you comment on any changes in values, beliefs, actions, or behaviours? *(Be honest please ☺).*

2. Anti-oppressive approaches are those that seek to speak out and name oppressive practices within society, in order to affect <u>real</u> change. Below is a longer summary comparing an anti-racist approach to a multicultural approach, taken from my research proposal (although here I have integrated the approach into an "educational" lens, the approach is the same whether applied to any field: counselling, healthcare, politics, etc.). What do you think and feel about the two approaches? How do you interpret the approaches in relation to what we've been doing in this group? Does this relate to you personally and/or professionally in any ways?

In order to elucidate the distinction between the anti-oppressive theories to the liberal frameworks, I'll compare and contrast the multicultural (liberalist) approach with the anti-racism (anti-oppressive) approach…The foremost difference between the two approaches is in their end goals: multicultural approaches aims to promote

intergroup harmony and awareness of other cultures, while antiracist approaches takes a firm political stance and aims to address racism and multiple levels of oppression through institutional [educational] change (Joshee, 2004).

In terms of educational practice, MC is characterized as 'adding' multicultural content to an existing curriculum and celebrating ethnocultural lifestyles (Solomon, 1996), while AR attempts to restructure the curriculum and educational institutions as more equitable and inclusive representations of society. The two can be differentiated through the use of key concepts: multicultural education is concerned with ethnicism, culture, equality, prejudice, misunderstanding, and ignorance; antiracist education is concerned with dismantling, deconstructing, reconstructing, conflict, oppression, exploitation, racism, power, structure, and struggle (Gillborne, 2004).

AR is more concerned with involving students, teachers, parents, and educational leaders in activist roles, to increase awareness of societal inequality and barriers, racism and institutional oppression (Moodley, 2001). AR, in its methods, involve critical awareness and action oriented programs. MC can be seen as a passive approach to cultural awareness, while AR is seen as an active and collective approach to dismantling systemic oppressions (Moodley, 2001). "Within pedagogy, liberalism demands that educators present knowledges outside of a political project, where the political nature of education, curricula, knowledge production, and relations of power remain absented from the classroom." (Tagore & Herising, 2007, p. 279)

MC scholars contend that AR is too political and oppositional in nature to affect change in mainstream society (Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994; Lund, 2006). AR is often misunderstood because of its outward political stance which people sometimes interpret as propaganda (Gillborne, 2004), or worry that 'bringing up' racism will actually incite and promote racist behaviours (Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994). Teachers, school leaders, and parents are often scared off by even the language itself (naming racism 'racism') and prefer to keep the term 'multicultural education' in place. AR advocates respond that multicultural approaches simply 'sugarcoat' the issues, and do little to bring about transformation or change in society (Moodley, 2001).
(excerpt from Sue's research proposal)

3. In this group, we've been talking a lot about "working with allies", or "being an ally". Have your conceptions and/or efficacy changed at all?

4. Have our *individual stories* and our *individual identities* made a difference to your learning on the topic at hand, and/or to other realms of your life?

5. Did hearing from community leaders with experiences building relations cross-culturally add value to the experience of this research? In what ways?

6. What exactly do you see/feel we have been doing together in this group? If it's difficult to describe in words, is there a metaphor you would like to use to describe what we are doing here together?

7. The research process we have undergone together is categorized as "participatory research". Participatory research methodologies are grounded in different beliefs than traditional, Western research. How has this process felt for you? Do you have any comments on taking part in this type of "research", or on your conceptions of "participatory?"

(I presented these 6 points in our first session together. I place them here just as a reminder).

Decolonizing Methodologies
- Shifts the basics purpose of research by asking: "what *is* research?" "*who* is it for?"
- Participatory and collaborative; Focus on relationships: learning *from* and *with* one another, rather than *on* people
- Respectful, and takes into account local knowledge
- Knowledge generation is meaningful to individual participants: research/knowledge generation should be *reciprocal*, not one-sided
- Takes a social and political stance against top-down, "researcher-as-expert"
- Methods may involve: storytelling (narratives), talking circles, ceremonial or spiritual aspects
-
   "Stories are who we are. They are both method and meaning. Stories spring forth from a holistic epistemology and are the relational glue in a socially interdependent knowledge system. In listening to the research stories of others, it is evident that research stories reveal the deep purpose of our inquiries."[9]

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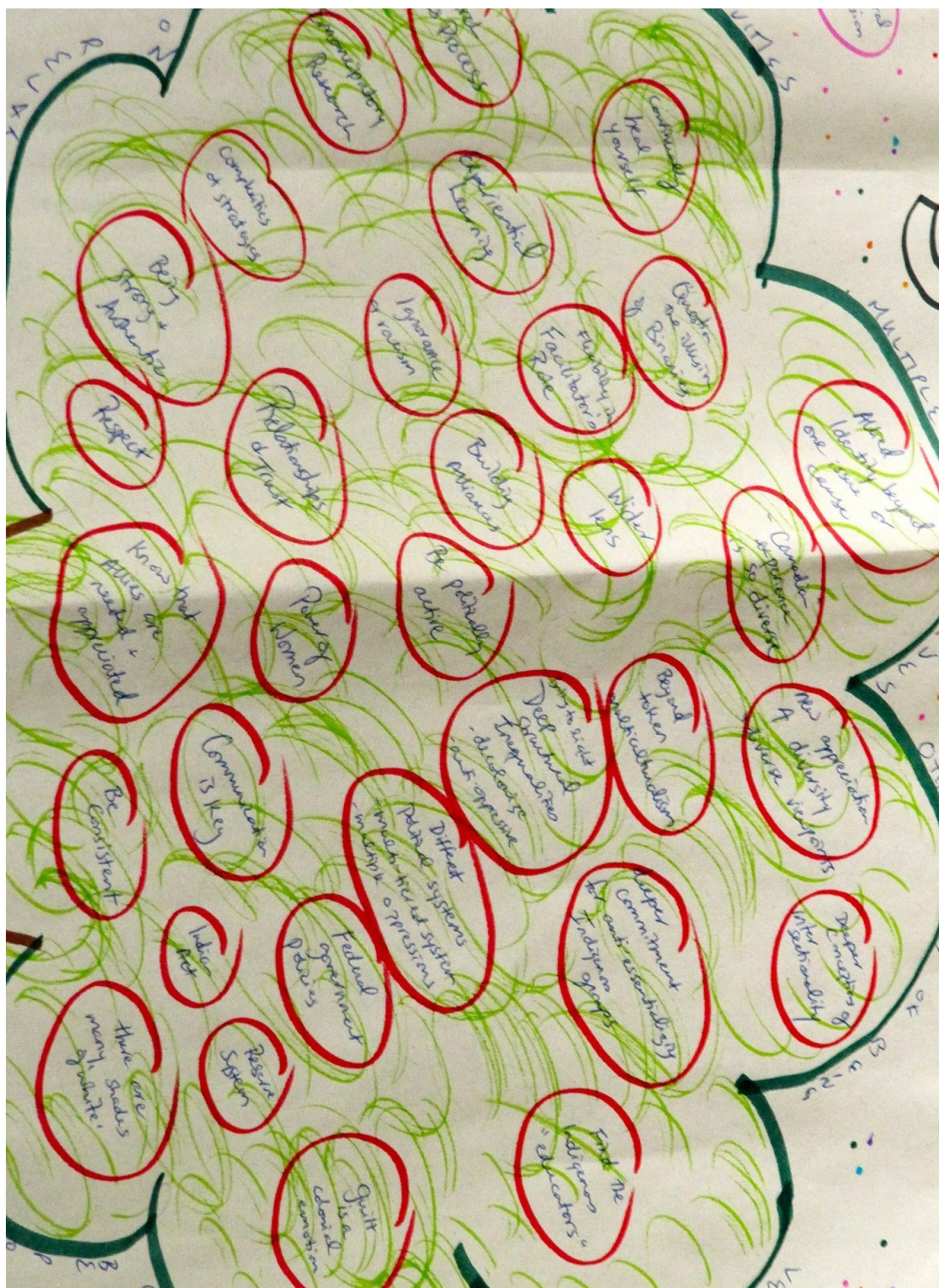
APPENDIX F: INQUIRY MAPS

(Examples of 2 inquiry maps (including subsections), shared during Session 6)

Map 1

Subsection of Map 1

Map 2

THE ADVENTURES IN CHANGE OF THE **Avalon Allies** ...

HARMONY

CONSCIOUS INCLUSION

PEACE

INDIFFERENCE

SILENCE

Don't bring my child to play... Those people are... You need to be helped. I don't think we should talk about that. Who are you... Don't spend time with this family. The bottom line... You are racist.

The Mainstream

Unquestioned Waters

cosmetic multiculturalism
colonial visions
mental segregation
cultural segregation

new/revisited destinations

seven heads (hearts, bodies, souls) are better than one!

Keep difficult company

listen deeply

question together

speak out!

be personal

be a leader

all around

new growth

be determined

know your community

let go

who am I? where do I belong? can I make a difference? how?

bring your gifts.

see the learning

the poetry of inspiration

a special place for critical thinking

shared space

take charge softly

trust the process

Mountains of Wisdom

Our guests

Healing is a constant process. Love you neighbor. Respect for self is vital. See your gifts... Everyone is valuable. We are all... We need to come together. We can't afford... Our journey is... the learning and friendships have begun...

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Subsection of Map 2