Parks In Public Parking:
Empowering Community Members to Reintegrate Nature into the City

by

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Abstract

This research explores how community leaders could use Corbett’s Spectrum of Environmental Ideologies (2006) to analyze the ideologies of communication campaigns before adopting one into a community. In this research, a mixed age class of elementary students and local artisans created two “parks” in public parking spaces and participated in an arts contest in Nelson, BC. This action research used analytic coding to reflect on participants’ relationship with nature based on their response to: international Park(ing) Day and Transition Nelson. Additionally, participant recommendations for greening Nelson’s downtown core were compared with four models of social change for generating ecocentric solutions. Ecocentric solutions stem from the belief that humans and nature are interdependent. Found to be key were nurturing participants’ nascent ecocentric values and investigating the campaign materials deeply. Additionally building motivation, exploring alternatives, problem-solving, partnerships and improved organizational communication are important elements of social change.
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Why Reintegrate Humans and Nature?

Accepting dualisms, especially the nature-culture divide, may underpin some of Western culture’s most destructive habits (Carbaugh, 1996; Latour, 2008; Scharmer, 2007). This thesis raises concerns about North Americans who divide nature and culture based on their anthropocentric environmental ideologies, and examines the role of communication campaigns in generating practices that heal the nature-culture divide based on their ecocentric environmental ideologies. In the case of environmental ideologies, one variation is that an ideology can be anthropocentric which means human-centred or the other variation is ecocentric, which means centred on the interdependence of humans and nature. Latour (2008), a French sociologist, who participated in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation radio series How to Think about Science proposes that from the 17th century onwards Western culture separated humans from nature so that they could gain a comforting sense of domination and control.

Today, global issues such as climate change, pandemics and poverty lead inevitably to an entanglement with nature that belies separation. In answering important questions like “Why are some human beings starving?”,” “Will humans survive in the long-term?” and “What makes life meaningful?” researchers, in the fields of theology, environmental psychology, and biology, are advocating for the reintegration of humans and nature (Himes, 2007; Kaplan & Kaplan, 2009; Louter, 2006; Pelletier, 2004; Wilson, 2006) as part of the solution to these large issues. The nature-culture divide raises issues at the international, national and local scales and its resolution is complicated. In national politics, what party do I vote for when I’m an environmentalist who is also successful in business? Internationally as a North American with an ecological footprint that far outstrips that of people living in developing countries, how do I justify air travel? At home, I
know I cannot separate my short-term actions from my knowledge of potentially harmful long-term effects, and yet I do.

**Research Goal and Context**

My research examines how two internationally constructed events: Park(ing) Day (ReBar, 2010) and the Transition movement (Hopkins, 2010) played out in my town in the interior of British Columbia, Canada. The goals of my research were to analyze what the participant responses to Park(ing) Day and the Transition art contest in Nelson, British Columbia demonstrate about the participants’ relationship with nature and to explore what communication processes lead to more ecocentric solution-making. I sought, with the help of my research participants, to present a defensible perspective (Deetz, 2008) as well as a proposal for further developing ecocentric ideologies within North American culture. Park(ing) Day was initiated by Mathew Passmore in San Francisco four years ago, and in the same year, Rob Hopkins initiated The Transition Town Network (Hopkins, 2010) in his hometown of Totnes, United Kingdom. Park(ing) Day annually brings nature for one day to the downtown core by transforming public parking spaces into parks. The Transition Network introduces concepts like “resilience,” “peak oil,” and “climate change adaptation” through, amongst other methods, art contests. Both initiatives spread quickly: as of 2010, there are 275 communities recognized as official Transition Towns and Park(ing) Day was enacted in 100 cities on four continents. Carbaugh (1995) and Deetz (2008) propose that introducing new practices and concepts are key to social change. Park(ing) Day and the Transition Network are examples of what Hawken (2007) refers to as the “great underground” (p. 5)—the rapid spread of knowledge and action he believes will give many humans what they need to cope with global issues like peak oil, climate change, and loss of diversity.
I was interested in the environmental ideologies of these international campaigns and how the campaigns may or may not influence the environmental ideologies of participants and thus, their behaviours. Cormack (1992) describes ideology not as an individualistic condition but as a structure imposed by the dominant and powerful, based on the culture’s socio-economic origins. Ideological structures have many variations depending on the foci. North Americans who adhere to ecocentrism are a minority and when seeking social change may feel overwhelmed by the anthropocentric ideologies that dominate in Western culture. Cormack allows for resistance, proposing that ideology is “a structure of variable strength which, when interacting with individuals, can result in a variety of positions” (1992, p. 16). Ideologies of a culture are always in motion, sometimes weakening and sometimes strengthening. I propose community organizers might challenge a dominant ideology by encouraging behaviours that represent a minority ideology. For this reason, community organizers should carefully consider the ideologies behind the campaigns they choose to facilitate and carefully observe the responses of their participants.

I utilized reflective action research, analytic coding and models of social change to explore what communication processes lead to more ecocentric solution-making, constantly referring to Corbett’s (2006) Spectrum of Environmental Ideologies. This research reflects on the merit of Park(ing) Day and the Transition Nelson arts contest by asking:

1. What kind of relationship exists between Corbett’s ideologies, the campaigns, and participant responses?
2. How do the goals of each campaign relate to healing the nature-culture divide?
3. What communication processes and models of social change would support residents to integrate nature and culture in Nelson’s downtown?
Examining Environmental Ideologies

Corbett’s (2006) Spectrum of Environmental Ideologies, especially the rich descriptions at the ecocentric end of its scale, are central to this thesis. To Corbett, ecocentric ideologies are non-hierarchical and within these ideologies, all living and non-living are “intrinsically valuable and important” (2006, p. 27).

The nature-culture dualism is most pronounced at the anthropocentric end of Corbett’s scale where humans act as if they are separate from nature, choosing parts of nature that serve them, eliminating what is not valued and all the while reducing the resilience of the earth ecosystem and humanity’s chance of survival (Wilson, 2006). Since the 17th century, the perspective of independence from nature has clearly dominated Western culture (Merchant, 1989). Lyons (1988) characterizes interdependency as a female perspective that is resolved through the activity of care. Care can be implemented in environmental communication through action research (Endres, Sprain & Peterson, 2007; Senge & Scharmer, 2006).
In the category of *Unrestrained Instrumentalism*, free enterprise, private property rights and the economy rule over all other considerations. In the past century, to make more profit, humans have paved over wetlands because they are considered useless swamps, removed the tops of mountains to extract minerals and turned forests into plantations.

In the next category, *Conservationism*, humans endeavour to balance the economy with social and environmental considerations. Still, human needs preside. A developer will build a wetland in a housing development because it can treat sewage, a mountain is spared from mining because people like to climb it and a forest is replanted for future generations of people. For the middle category, *Preservationism*, human acts are guided by less concrete needs such as religious, aesthetic and scientific ideals. A mountain is preserved because it is beautiful, it might contain plants of medicinal value and it is a wonderful place for contemplation. The final category before reaching the most ecocentric end of the scale is *Ethics and Value-Driven*, and contains the notion of duty and responsibility. Corbett (2006) uses an example related to the Endangered Species Act in the United States where a snail darter is saved not because it has any medicinal or food value for humans but because humans have the moral obligation to allow all species to continue to live.

The ideology at the most ecocentric side of the scale, *Transformative*, is huge in its range—from non-interference with nature, to cohabitation with a separate nature, to treating nature as an equal partner with human-like agency—even if very few humans yet act from it. These views lead eventually to a call for extensive social change because they fly in the face of North American culture. Deep ecology, social ecology, and ecofeminism as well as First Nations and Traditional Eastern beliefs fall within the *Transformative* category. Humans with ecocentric ideologies are part of an ecological paradigm (Beck, 2008) where “self is contextualized,
relational and changing” (Corbett, 2006, p. 48) and where humans acknowledge their part in creating global problems and assume agency for creating solutions.

Contemporary cultures including Eastern (e.g. Asian countries) and First Nations cultures contain ecocentric concepts such as connectedness, continuity and interdependence (Corbett, 2006) although it is difficult to discern these today amongst the rampant development that goes on worldwide. Still, ecocentrism does challenge current lifestyles and practices. For example, the inseparability of humans and nature are an integral part of traditional First Nations beliefs in Canada. I have lived in several indigenous communities and marvelled at the lack of conversion of natural areas surrounding their homes. Whereas most North Americans would plant lawns, most First Nations leave the area wild out of respect for the creatures living around them. When the Osoyoos (BC) First Nations built their cultural centre and discovered a rattlesnake migration route they did not eradicate the snakes but reoriented their entire program around the biology of rattlesnakes, maintaining the snake dens. Working in First Nations communities has helped me reorient my values. Now, I try to act as if nature and I were one by allowing wildness to reign in my yard. I respect other creatures by leaving brush, rock piles and other types of shelter for them.

Our culture’s ideologies are maintained by the dominant members of society and remain relatively static due to the deep roots ideologies have in socioeconomic history, however Cormack (1992) allows for evolution of the dominant ideologies based on challenges from minority ideologies. Therefore, this thesis uses Corbett’s Spectrum to determine the merit of introducing communication campaigns for introducing ecocentric ideologies and then explored how these campaigns based on participant recommendations and models of social change.
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Literature Review

North American beliefs, based on the nature-culture dualism, may be leading to behaviours that are threatening our long-term survival. Spending time in nature improves our ability to solve some serious problems such as climate change and poverty because nature immersion improves our cognition, creativity, and well-being. Ecocentric ideologies, based on the belief that nature and humans are interdependent, imply that only human behaviours that result in the ability of both nature and humans to prosper should be encouraged. Communication processes can help humans adopt more ecocentric ideologies and thus act as if nature mattered.

Healing the Nature-Culture Divide by Reintegrating with Nature

“Conserve energy,” “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle,” and “Bike to Work” are just a few of the slogans aimed at changing North American behaviours and “saving” the environment. Yet, will behaviours change if we do not believe, really, that we need nature? Researchers (e.g. Carbaugh, 1996; Corbett, 2006; Cox, 2007; Gray, 2007; Himes, 2007; Knecht, 2004) attribute contemporary problems such as climate change, discontented humans, unsustainable development, and reductions in ecological and cultural diversity to the false conception that nature and culture are separate. We have benefited “from the intricate and all too invisible networks with which [nature] shelters us, all the while pretending that these things are not an essential part of who we are" (Cronon, 1996, p. 81 ). For many North Americans, days can go by with no direct experience of nature, leaving us unhealthy, both physically and psychologically. It is common for North Americans to travel by vehicle to school or work and back again and then spend the evening inside without spending any significant amount of time outdoors experiencing the restorative benefits of nature (Louv, 2005; Weinstein, Przybylski, & Ryan, 2009). Current
research seems to propose that human health as well as the long-term survival of our planet depends on a reintegration of nature into human lives.

In their *Reasonable Person Model*, Kaplan and Kaplan (2009) propose that human-environment interactions can provide opportunity and inspiration for solution-making and meaningful action. Spending time in nature might allow humans to solve serious problems such as whether to harm each other or the environment based on personal gain and whether to consider future generations in short-term decisions. Weinstein et al. (2009) propose that our problem-solving abilities increase after nature immersions. When humans spend more time interacting with nature they optimize their cognition, creativity, action, and well-being (Goode, 1989; Hermann, 2007; Kaplan, 1995; Kaplan & Kaplan, 2009; Knecht, 2004; Knight, 1992; Weinstein, et al., 2009). Everyday experiences of nature such as in city parks or community gardens “reduce physiological stress levels, restore mental abilities and foster neighbourhood ties” (Knecht, 2004, p. 82). Some research participants refer to being in nature as the absence of demands that are artificially generated or human imposed which helps them solve conflicts regarding what they may want to do and what should be done (Knecht, 2004).

So, for instance, if I know my relationship with my children is full of tension, a weekend in nature could result in my choosing to abandon some of our scheduled activities in exchange for some simple activities we both enjoy. Witnessing the interdependency within and amongst species and the environment may lead us to rediscover our shared family values and have more of an orientation towards each other. Since many of our problems relate to the inability to appreciate the needs of others, including non-human others, one can see how problem solving abilities might increase when behaviours such as relational emotions (e.g. love and care), perspective-taking, and less selfish decision-making increase. Hermann (2007) adds that coupled
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with comprehensive learning processes, human-environment interactions can be transformative. He argues that this is because nature provides the inspiration for us to make complex mental associations, not the least of which includes the interdependence of humans and ecological systems.

Nature also provides an opportunity for physical wellness (Goode, 1989). Activities such as walking, climbing trees and just exploring also reduce time available for overconsumption and other harmful habits. Reintegrating nature into our cityscapes and livelihoods will help us act more responsibly and solve some enormous problems that stem from the nature-culture divide.

Ecocentric Ideologies Result in Acting within Nature’s Limits

Just spending more time in nature might result in North Americans able to think clearly, prioritize and thus, make better decisions (Carbaugh, 2007; Cronin-Jones, 2005; Sweeney, 2001). But will we act within the limits of natural cycles? Many authors (Bopp & Bopp, 2001; Inoguchi, Newman, & Paoletto, 1999; Nattrass & Altomare, 1999; Wackernagel & Rees, 1996; Wilson, 2006) are proposing that we should act within nature’s limits. They propose, among other projects, building sustainable communities, forming eco-societies and reducing our ecological footprint. One reason for acting within nature’s limits is that ignoring those limits may mean the demise of one of its species—humans. Wackernagel and Rees (1996) have demonstrated that if everyone on earth lived like North Americans, it would take the land-based resources of two or three planets for them to survive. By setting limits on the substances we extract and produce as well as creating a more globally equitable sharing of resources, we might survive as a species (Nattrass & Altomare, 1999). If we adopt an ecocentric ideology than we act as if both humans and nature are equally important.
Evidence of the evolution from a purely anthropocentric motivation to a more ecocentric motivation is the recent introduction of more ecocentric sustainability planning (Bopp & Bopp, 2001; Roseland, 1998). Implemented for the most part at the regional and municipal scale, sustainability planning attempts to balance human needs in the economic, environmental and social realms. Most sustainability planning falls squarely in the conservation ideology on Corbett’s scale, but there are more ecocentric versions of sustainability planning (Inoguchi, et al., 1999; Nattrass & Altomare, 1999) that fall closer to the ecocentric end of Corbett’s scale because working within nature’s limits, and not solely human needs, is the basis of more ecocentric sustainability planning processes. For instance, in Altomare and Nattrass’s sustainability planning process, the ability of nature to provide vital services is pivotal when companies envision the future. With the interdependence of nature and humans in the forefront of planning, companies consider how they can reduce waste, reuse product components and recycle after consumer are finished with a product. In a recent talk delivered online from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Scharmer (personal communications, May 6, 2010) spoke about working with the coffee shop chain Starbucks to eliminate disposable cups by 2012. As Starbucks considers how to work with nature, they must eliminate extracting new materials from nature and instead recycle or reuse what they have already extracted (Nattrass & Altomare, 1999). Believing in the interdependence of nature and humans, leads humans away from solutions that optimize their consumption to solutions that acknowledge a sense of responsibility and thanks giving to nature.

There may be a point beyond ecocentrism on Corbett’s Spectrum where nature is given superior consideration. In envisioning the future Wilson says “(n)ature … has no need of us and can stand alone” (Wilson, 2006, p. 15). Wilson would have us not only adopt nature’s limits as
our own but be humbled by nature’s majesty. In this way, he gives nature an almost God-like
pre-eminence over human action. Like anthropocentrism I believe this extreme view may be less
helpful then ecocentrism. However, in the interim, as North Americans adopt more ecocentric
ideologies, awe of nature may lead some people from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism.

How Communication Processes Can Heal the Nature-Culture Divide

Social change is a process of juxtapositions, coincidences and processes that challenge
dominant ideologies, making a search for “comprehensive solutions” futile (Russil, 2008, p.
149). The campaigns in this thesis will, hopefully, be part of a large set of challenges to the
dominant ideology—that we are separate from nature—and will result in a more ecocentric
ideology dominating North America in the future. Transforming towards a more ecocentric
ideology requires repeated and long-term exposure to new ideas, attitudes and ways of being
(Kool, 1997). Communication models can play a part in helping citizens resist dominant
ideologies. Two more-anthropocentric models: Laverack’s (2001) Domains of Community
Empowerment and Ryan and Deci’s (2004) Self-Determination Theory as well as two more-
ecocentric processes: Gorobet’s (2006) Ecocentric Strategies for Change and Baudrillard’s
(1999) Fatal Strategies were selected for their relevance for healing the nature-culture divide.

Laverack’s (2001) Domains of Community Empowerment framework concentrates on
societal processes generated by elected officials and civil society that lead to a more engaged
citizenry. He developed his empowerment domains from an in-depth literature review,
crosschecked it with two other researchers and then checked against the historic literature on
community development. Self-Determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2004) concentrates on each
individual as a unique contributor to social change. It relies on the notion of individual agency,
marrying this with solutions for mitigating situations where the external environment
surrounding an individual is not supportive of the desired social change. Self-Determination theory has been refined by scholars from many countries in many disciplines including environmental sustainability (Brown & Kasser, 2005; Osbaldiston & Sheldon, 2003), and has been applied to a broad range of environmental social change process topics including how to promote individual acts of caring (Weinstein, et al., 2009) and environmental activism (Seguin, Pelletier, & Hunsley, 1998). Change at both the societal and individual level will be important for evolving to more ecocentric ideologies.

While Laverack’s *Domains of Community Empowerment* framework can lead to a reshaping of the ideologies that represent the “complex process by which our experience of the world is structured “(Cormack, 1992, p. 16) the framework is not specific to ecocentrism, while Gorobets (2006) focuses on ecocentrism as a specific goal. Gorobets proposes leadership from champions to elevate what he admits is a minority view - integrating human activity and natural cycles. According to Gorobets model, a group working on integrating nature into the downtown core could resist the idea that they were doing this for residents only, and instead look to a nearby wilderness ecosystem for inspiration. Then imagining themselves as part of that ecosystem they could begin to plan restorations to the downtown core. Instead of grass, park benches and non-native flowering trees and bushes the group could imagine native plants, systems that recycled water and waste and so on. The latter approach reflects an ecocentric ideology where we are not “attempting to transform the world, but we are allowing ourselves to be transformed” (Nodding, 1984, p. 34). According to Gorobets (2006) “the main solution lies in changing people’s minds, values and behaviour…from the domination of nature to a harmonic cooperation with nature” (p. 106). Rather than separating ourselves from nature and trying to control it, we become vulnerable and receptive to it, appreciating our interdependence.
Cramer and Foss (2009) recommend a “fundamental shift in the human-nature relationship” towards ecocentrism (p. 298) and recently proposed three processes for influencing environmental ideologies: *intersubjectivity, seduction, and sorcery*. The processes are based on Baudrillard’s *Fatal Strategies* and so named because they rely on fate, destiny and chance. Cramer and Foss’s (2009) proposal can be distinguished from other processes because the relationship between humans and nature is at the centre of their theory of social change. In fact, relationships between humans and nature and within nature are central to their first process of social change—intersubjectivity. In this process, humans practice *receptivity to nature* (Cramer & Foss, 2009; Nodding, 1984), not in the sense of empathy, but as a way of transforming both nature and humans. Instead of trying to control nature, we conceive of it as a partner. Biomimicry is an example of a contemporary social movement that is based on intersubjectivity. In biomimicry, people learn from and then emulate “natural forms, processes, and ecosystems to create more sustainable and healthier human technologies and designs” (Biomimicry Institute, 2010, p. 1). Examples of biomimicry are harnessing energy like a leaf, growing food like a prairie, building ceramics like an abalone, or running a business like a hickory forest. All of these strategies involved listening to and learning from nature. Carbaugh (2007) promotes *intersubjectivity* too and asks “why else do we walk beautiful beaches, or oil-soaked beaches, if not, partly at least, to hear what each says?” (p. 68).

Baudriallard’s second Fatal Strategy is *seduction*, wherein humans act as if we only have this moment, pursuing solutions avidly and not waiting for the future. In the practice of seduction, humans avoid pulling things into parts and are excited about interrelationships contained in the whole. So, in the case of integrating nature in to the downtown core, one avoids dividing tasks into parts. Instead of creating various human and wildlife benefits, the planners could consider...
the city an ecosystem of which humans are just one part and make changes based on this belief. The ecosystem would need places for shelter, travel corridors for humans and other species, sources of water and food and space. The ecosystem would also need ways to collect, reuse and recycle water and waste.

The final Fatal Strategy, *sorcery*, refuses to “make rational and instrumental the standard of worthwhile knowledge” (Cramer & Foss, 2009, p. 309). Instead, humour, discovery and art are encouraged as ways of understanding what is implicitly known. In the practice of sorcery, we reach down in to the subconscious by playing with language, telling stories and enhancing the potential for understanding and change.

While Cramer and Foss (2009), in exploring the ideas of Baudrillard, agree that one solution to healing the culture-nature divide is having humans be more receptive to nature, they go further by suggesting nature has its own strategies and is not just a passive recipient of human actions. Latour (2008) explains the idea that nature has agency when referring to Pasteur’s discovery of microbes. Humans can think about the discovery of microbes as a means of controlling human disease, but with the recent resistance to antibiotics, Latour says, the picture looks more like a mixed history of microbes discovering scientists and scientists discovering the microbes (Latour, 2008, minute 41). In effect, nature is demonstrating its agency when creativity emerges through antibiotic resistance. According to Cramer and Foss, accepting that nature talks back is an essential element of ecocentrism and requires that we take away some dearly held views, both guilt-ridden and full of doom and gloom. Nature is not a passive recipient of our actions and can in fact be resilient and responsive to our actions. Cramer and Foss recount Rachel Carson, known by many as a founder of the environmental movement from her seminal book *Silent Spring*, saying even though Carson was terrified about the effects pesticides might have all the way up
the food chain she found hope in the grasslands’ ability to come back to life after industrial farming. Believing that nature has agency probably fits Corbett’s most ecocentric ideology – *Transformative*.

Researchers in the fields of environmental psychology, planning, ethics and ecology are raising concerns about how the nature-culture dualism is threatening our long-term survival. They recommend integrating with nature so that both nature and humans prosper. Researchers from the fields of community development and psychology are recommending communication processes that can help humans adopt more ecocentric ideologies and thus heal the nature-culture divide.

**Methods**

This thesis was a qualitative exploration of the environmental ideologies of two communication campaigns using Corbett’s (2006) *Spectrum of Environmental Ideologies* as well as a synthesis of research participant recommendations and relevant communication models that could lead Nelson residents to ecocentric solution-making. Reflection action research, the method utilized in this research, has roots in social change (Reason & Bradbury, 2006), which is part of the research goal of this thesis, and enables people to find effective solutions to the problems in their everyday lives (Stringer, 2007), the other part of this thesis’s research goal.

**Research Paradigm – Why Reflective Action Research?**

In conducting this qualitative research, I am not searching for universal human truths (Baptiste, 2001) because I believe the nature-culture dualism may not be prevalent in many other cultures. I acknowledge that both my most sympathetic research participants and I are probably a minority in the degree to which we would like to see nature integrated in the urban landscape. Indeed, Corbett argues that her most ecocentric ideology *Transformative*, probably exists in only
a small minority of North Americans. Ideologies are rooted in cultures (Baptiste, 2001; Cormack, 1992) and individuals show acquiescence or resistance to the ideology by acting or not acting in the world. These acts form part of my data (e.g. park installations, film script, media coverage, organizer’s web site, posters and t-shirts). Utilizing Corbett’s scale to determine the degree of acquiescence or resistance of a communication campaign and a set of participants to environmental ideologies may be replicable in other communities.

I went on in the second part of my research to seek concrete solutions and practices because I agree with Endres, Peterson and Sprain (2008) that environmental communication is a crisis discipline. Cox says that we must “enhance the ability of society to respond appropriately to environmental signals relevant to the well-being of both human civilization and natural biological systems” (Cox, 2007, p. 15). Action research is thought to be an opportunity to “poke holes in the community’s borders, contributing to a porous and potentially broader community that grows increasingly robust and resilient” (Endres, et al., 2008, p. 244). The concept of porosity also supports Cormack’s (1992) notion of the viability of resistance to dominant ideology and thus the possibilities for strengthening alternate ideologies like ecocentric ideologies.

In this research I have tried to practice what Deetz (2008) refers to as Co-Generative Theorizing and Enriching the Natural Language of my community. He bases this approach to community engagement on what he calls three interactive moments: understanding, reflection and invention. Understanding is something that Deetz (2008) says is called out of a researcher “out of respect for that which is other and different” (p. 295). So when a child makes a proposal, I must not consider it naïve, but instead, be open to the creativity and vision it might contain. When selecting interview participants, I must include business owners even if I might hold the
stereotype that business owners will reject the idea of a park replacing a parking space because they might lose business. Deetz’s (2008) second interactive moment is *reflection* and mirrors to a great extent the whole tenet of this research that is imagining and exploring extraordinary ecocentric alternatives while acknowledging the anthropocentric society and society of the majority. This means reflecting on how my research participants and I perceive, conceive and act with an appropriate scepticism about any solution that claims to be the only truth. There may be an anthropocentric solution out there too! Deetz’s (2008) final interactive moment is *invention* and is very much in line with *Transformative* ideology because like the invention of more ecocentric solutions to living it involves trial and error, suggestions and counter suggestions (p. 296). Deetz recommends jamming and improvisational comedy, but taken lightheartedly, the film and installations in this research are also opportunities with which to play at new realities and language. I took seriously Deetz’s question “Whose community and to what ends?” (p. 290) and so when in semi-structured interviews during Park(ing) Day participants invented practices to increase green space in the downtown core, I reflected on them and endeavoured to understand the solutions they were proposing. To be reflective the researcher must constantly reflect on ambiguities (Ladkin, 2004). Ambiguities drew my attention for reasons that I wasn’t quite sure at first, like the father who wanted to place a fishing rod in the park (a representation of a Conservationist ideology) and met resistance from the Wildflower Too students, perhaps because they weren’t inviting fish in to the park to be caught!

I moved on from my initial interest in ideologies when participants emphasized continuous social change and began searching for relevant models. The models may be instructive in other communities, but the best choice of social change methods will be contextual. This means, the
size, make-up and resources of the community must play a part in the selection of appropriate models.

**The Physical Context of the Research**

In the 1880s, the residents of Nelson, British Columbia, an interior town that has maintained its population of about 9,000 throughout the last century, integrated the town more with nature. Creeks flowed freely down the steep hills, pedestrians used boardwalks and roads had bridges so that streams could continue to flow. But by the 1950s, most of the creeks had been culverted and paved over, the extensive wetlands in front of the town had been filled and the lakeshore denuded of vegetation. Like many towns in the middle of the century, nature fell to development and was for the most part paved over. In the 1980s, there is evidence of reintegration of nature into the town’s design: the local fish and wildlife club began doing in-stream restoration in some unpaved portions of Cottonwood Creek and the city restored part of the lakeshore, building on a development permitting process. Some steep gullies feeding into downtown remain undeveloped even though land is at a premium. Recently, a zoning bylaw has been rewritten to restrict the percentage of concrete and other non-permeable surfaces. In 2009, the municipality received government funding to develop guiding principles for practicing sustainability in Nelson as well as funding to explore alternative energy sources and further enhance the lakeshore and link it with pathways to the historic downtown. “Natural Areas, Recreation and Leisure” is one of ten topic areas resulting from public consultation, discussions of Council and meetings with City staff that are part of the sustainability planning process.

**The Research Participants**

In 1997, I became involved in planning and public education related to restoring Cottonwood Creek, one of the only creeks not mostly paved over in Nelson. My understanding that Nelson
was not integrating nature in its urban settings probably began with helping to restore Cottonwood Creek. I noticed Park(ing) Day in the journal *Alternatives* and liked the campaign because it was a light-hearted approach to the topic of integrating nature. My daughter attends Wildflower Too, the second of four multi-age classes in the school district devoted to social justice and empathy, both human-to-human and humans to other living and non-living things. Over the past few years, the students and parents in her class have removed about half of the asphalt that completely surrounded their school and built extensive gardens and a grassy field. When I asked my daughter’s teacher whether she would consider adopting Park(ing) Day as a class project in early September 2009, she agreed and became, with her class, my first research participants. In this research, I refer to participants by role, i.e. the Wildflower Too Teacher, Wildflower Too Student #2, Artisan #3, etc.

At the same time, I consulted Nelson’s museum Director who recommended a number of artists as well as a social entrepreneur in town. A Director of the Kootenay Craft Cooperative expressed a lot of enthusiasm and she and four other board members became my other group of research participants. With two groups of research participants in place, I made a presentation to City Council and completed a formal event application receiving support and free parking from the City at two locations. I also consulted the local social entrepreneur who advises residents on green building. It was the social entrepreneur who told me Nelson had received its designation as a Transition town, and that Transition Nelson’s upcoming contests might be a good fit for this new initiative. In the winter of 2010, I encouraged both the Wildflower class and the Kootenay Craft Artisan Cooperative directors to enter Transition Nelson’s arts-based contest so they could ask “What will Nelson be like in 2030?” as a way of following up on what they had learned on
Park(ing) Day. The artisans turned down the suggestion due to other commitments, but the Wildflower Too class entered the contest and won second place.

**Data Type and Collection**

The first part of my research investigated how the campaigns and campaign participants relate to Corbett’s ideologies (2006). My data includes art and visual communication (Knowles & Promislow, 2006; Philipsen, 2010) as well as written content. The data for the Park(ing) Day campaign ideology assessment is the web site, Park(ing) Day Manual, posters and t-shirts. The primary data for the Transition Network campaign is the arts contest description as well as discussions in the contest thread on the Transition Nelson web site and the guiding principles of the international movement. The primary data for the Wildflower Too student ideologies and the artisans were their installations.

I met daily with the Wildflower Too students for two weeks in advance of the Park(ing) Day installation. The teacher facilitated circle discussions and I listened. Although I did not formally document or analyze the daily discussions they deepened my understanding of the student perspectives. I also acted as a resource person and brought in an architect and visual designer four times as requested by the teacher. The students spent the remainder of each day in the first two weeks of school independently researching their installation and preassembling it in the school hallway. The adult artisans worked more independently and only requested assistance from me for obtaining permits, acquiring materials and setting-up the installation. The installations were videotaped and photographed during the preplanning and on Park(ing) Day. The scripts and film produced by the students for the Transition Nelson contest also served as data for my analysis of their ideologies.
The second part of my research investigated communication processes that will support continued change towards a more ecocentric ideology in Nelson. The data for this part of the research are 12 semi-structured (Leech, 2002) video-taped interviews as well as four communication models. Grassroots advice from the people who stand to be most affected by social change is a vital part of action research (Munford & Sanders, 2003). In action research all members have expertise and important knowledge to contribute to the project. Table 1 describes the role of each interviewee in the research project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Description</th>
<th>Roles in campaigns</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kootenay Craft Artisans: Artisan #1 – Visual and Theatre</td>
<td>Produced a park for relaxation and socializing.</td>
<td>all adults</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisan #2 – Clay Artisan Family Member (young adult)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wildflower Too Student #1</td>
<td>Produced a park for plants and animals.</td>
<td>#1 = Age 10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildflower Too Student #2</td>
<td>#2 = Age 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildflower Too Parent</td>
<td>Supported Wildflower Too students.</td>
<td>adult</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Business Owner #1 – Grocery</td>
<td>Onlooker and participated in interview.</td>
<td>adults</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Business Owner #2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Supported Wildflower Too students.</td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildflower Too Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildflower Too Administrator/Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Architect Visual Artist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Interviews Transcribed</td>
<td>Majority worked with Wildflower Too class</td>
<td>majority adults</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I conducted the interviews on the day of Park(ing) Day so that participants would have the park installations nearby for easy reference, feel inspired by their work and thus to make hopeful suggestions for social change. I hired a professional videographer to tape the interviews. Cycling between action and reflection can be exhausting (Kidd & Kral, 2005) and not having to deal with technology provided more time for both reflection and action. In addition to interviewing I helped with set-up and take-down of the park installations. The videographer was also a part of the research project. It was difficult to see outside my own biases and, on more than one occasion, the videographer helped me see that disagreement is like a flashing opportunity signal. She suggested that I interview a storeowner who I thought might be opposed to the taking of a parking spot across from his business and that I interview onlookers as they passed by the “parks”.

Since the goals of my research were to analyze what the participant responses to Park(ing) Day and the Transition art contest demonstrate about the participants’ relationship with nature and to explore what communication processes lead to more ecocentric solution-making I
focused these 10-15 minute interviews on bridges and barriers to further integrating nature into the urban setting in Nelson as well as solutions. For example I asked, “How can Park(ing) Day help people appreciate nature?” and “What might onlookers want to do as a result of seeing Park(ing) Day?” See Appendices A and B for more details on the interview protocol and questions.

**Data Analysis**

I used an arts-based inquiry (Knowles & Promislow, 2006) approach and combed the data (e.g. materials from each campaign, park installations and film script) for themes, ideas and categories that related to Corbett’s (2006) five environmental ideologies using a coding technique (Gibbs & Taylor, 2005). As I went through the data I noted visual or written evidence of relevant ideologies (see Appendix C for analysis of the campaigns and the campaign responses). I created full definitions of each ideology as well as examples of when to use and when not to apply the ideologies, summarizing these in a codebook. I had the codebook reviewed by my thesis advisor and then utilizing Corbett’s labels and my own short definitions created spreadsheets with the labels and short definitions running along the top of the pages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary of Spreadsheets Showing Participant Responses Categorized in Relationship to Corbett’s Spectrum of Environmental Ideologies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbett’s Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestrained instrumentalism</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conservationism</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Preservationism</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ethics and Values-Driven</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Acts based on non-interference with natural processes, cohabitation, less hierarchy in society, reciprocal and equal relationships, the circle representing interdependence and connectedness | • making craft out of recycled material  
• getting more out of life but consuming less  
• smaller house  
• new sources of power  
• walk and bike more using less fuel to move around  
• make healthy food/watch less television  
• clean air  
• mayors of watersheds  
• invite animals in to town that you don’t usually see  
• invite and say thank-you to the plants and animals |

I also coded the 12 semi-structured interviews where research participants reflected on communication processes that in the long-term will lead to greening the downtown in Nelson. First, I transcribed each interview and then I read through the interview highlighting suggestions for healing the nature-culture divide. I labelled communication processes that were supported by one or more participant on the top row of a spreadsheet and placed supporting quotes in the corresponding column as evidence of that proposal until I had about twenty types of communications processes with supporting quotes from participants. I grouped columns where
there was sufficient overlap. If a theme was identified from the data that did not quite fit the already existing codes then a new code was created. After this process was complete, I searched for models of social change that were relevant to strengthening ecocentric ideologies. I found four relevant models. Coding the data (Gibbs & Taylor, 2005) made it easier to make comparisons with the four models which I had already summarized in a separate table. I then returned to the communication processes suggested by research participants and began grouping similar processes, keeping what I knew from the models in mind. I placed about fifteen communication processes in the first column and then giving each model a column I tried placing the key elements of each model next to communications processes that were similar. Appendix D contains a comprehensive summary of the communication process work and Table 3 is an excerpt from this summary.

| Table 3 |
|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| *Excerpt from Communication Processes that Support Social Change and Strengthen Ecocentric Ideologies* |
| Label for Communication Process | Suggestions for Greening Nelson’s Downtown Core Originating from Participants | Laverack’s Domains of Community Empower-ment | Ryan and Deci’s – Self Determination Model: External Motivation | Gorobet’s Eco-centric Strategy for Change | Baudrillard’s Three Fatal Strategies Applied to Environmental Communication |

<p>| Laverack’s Domains of Community Empower-ment | Ryan and Deci’s Self Determination Model: External Motivation | Gorobet’s Eco-centric Strategy for Change | Baudrillard’s Three Fatal Strategies Applied to Environmental Communication |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Build on Self-motivated Participation</th>
<th>• invite people to get involved and not just the converted.</th>
<th>• improve participation.</th>
<th>• communicate the message in a style that is related to community values and goals.</th>
<th>• support champions for sustainable development.</th>
<th>• what gets manifest depends on what observers of the world choose to bring in to focus.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• walk the talk, take action.</td>
<td>• develop local leadership elected, appointed and reputational.</td>
<td>• approval from self or others (introjection).</td>
<td>• use the mass media.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• once someone initiates changes people get used to it.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• self identify with the activity (integration).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• some people already have the ethical standpoint you are striving for but</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Delimitations and Limitations

Challenging the idea that nature and culture are separate is like choosing conventional medicine over preventative medicine. Conventional medicine, to a large degree, treats symptoms. So, a person with gallstones who relies on conventional medicine might have their gall bladder removed or comparably a person who doesn’t believe in the interdependence of nature and culture might believe that sooner or later humans will figure out how to address climate change with technological solutions. In both cases, humans might continue with behaviours that exacerbate the problem by eating greasy foods or continuing to consume fossil fuels. Preventative medicine attempts to eradicate root causes, thus eliminating many symptoms. So the person with the gallstones would change their diet, reduce stress in their lives and seek less invasive treatments like acupuncture. In the case of climate change, the solution might be accepting that nature and humans are interdependent, that nature has limits and many things to teach us, and that the solution to climate change lies not in controlling or dominating nature but in respecting it. I chose to research environmental ideologies and find solutions to strengthening the more ecocentric ideologies because I believe that, like preventative medicine, by tackling the
root cause, this approach will relieve many “symptoms” we are seeing today. Short-term solutions for specific environmental problems are not included in the research because they would be antithetical to the notion of addressing the root issue—the beliefs of Nelson residents.

In this research, I also chose to avoid participation that might “cultivate serious competition, divisive identities, social stratification and strained social relations” (Carbaugh, 1996, p. 194). Especially in environmental communication, there is an appetite for divisive identities. For a classic example, consider labelling citizens as either aligned with the developers or the environmentalists. In fact, the idea that there are no “sides” was my philosophy. So if the Wildflower Too students asked questions that were obviously leading to labelling industry as “the problem,” I would ask the students to reflect on their own daily activities that might also be contributing to the issue or if the artisans complained about a lack of creativity in City officials because they worked in a bureaucracy, I would reflect on the nature of our agency as voters. Avoiding dualisms is tricky business and I found it difficult to escape this pervasive habit in North American discourse.

I was aware that sponsors could contribute to divisiveness. This project did have support from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) and providing the CPAWS logo on handouts or promoting their involvement could have resulted in this project being labelled as a project of the “environmentalists.” However, CPAWS was not interested in promotion or in controlling the research, only in the findings, so they agreed to take a low profile. I could have involved municipal staff and politicians as leads by asking for financial support from Council or by requesting the City officially adopt Park(ing) Day. I decided not to do either because being too inclusive of authorities might relegate ownership of the project to the City, leaving participants free from the need to lead. I also steered away from canvassing local environmental
Empowering Community Members to Reintegrate Nature

groups to lead as they can be interpreted as “fringe groups.” By doing these things I hoped to make the project about the culture of Nelson citizens avoiding having the Park(ing) day campaign labelled as either “fringe” or “City.”

To allay any fears that the park installations were illegal and thus scaring some residents away, I obtained free parking for the day through an event application, at the same time alerting City staff and politicians to the goals of the event. This worked because, for instance, several elderly couples stopped at the Wildflower Too park, saw the official City hood on the meter, which they found comforting, and talked with students about their early days in Nelson when nature was more integrated in the downtown core. The permitting process put some restrictions on the design of the parks. Safety was a real concern for the City and so, for instance, schemes for climbing structures were quickly scrapped.

Transition Nelson has not engendered close coordination with the City even though the international Transition Network encourages cooperation with municipal authorities. For instance, while the City is currently engaged in a sustainability planning process through consultants, Transition Nelson did not submit a proposal or even participate as a sub-consultant of a proposal for Nelson’s sustainability plan. The City process has involved hundreds of residents representing a broad range of views and Transition Nelson has reached fewer people most of whom are already committed to environmental conservation.

Addressing Threats to Reliability and Validity within the Qualitative Domain—Validation and Self-Reflection

I provided my research findings (Appendices C and D) at a meeting with research participants and people who advised on the project. Six people attended the meeting: three research participants, two advisors to the project and the videographer. I asked meeting
participants to validate their responses, as captured by me in the tables, and whether they concurred with my analysis and theming.

To reflect on my own relationship to Corbett’s ideologies, I analyzed my interview questions and some literature I created to announce the event, placing myself on Corbett’s scale. This analysis allowed me to reflect on my own level of ecocentricity. I also analyzed my interview questions to determine where I was suggesting independent ideas and where I was supporting strategies for social change, so that I would be aware of how many of the strategies originated with participants and how many with me.

**Results**

The goals of my research were to utilize reflective action research to analyze what the participant responses to Park(ing) Day and the Transition art contest demonstrate about the participants’ relationship with nature so that I could present a defensible perspective as well as a proposal for further developing ecocentric ideologies within North American culture. I found that the campaign materials and responses represent the dominant anthropocentric ideologies of North American culture. However, all of the campaign responses do not necessarily match the dominant ideology of the campaigns, indicating there was some resistance to the campaign ideologies. In this section I identify three ways to resist dominant ideologies: facilitate the emergence of participant values that support *Transformative* ideology, investigate campaign materials deeply, and involve community leaders with facilitation skills and *Transformative* ideology solutions. I also elaborate on communication approaches that support social change towards ecocentric solutions.
Analysis of Campaigns and Campaign Responses

The majority of the campaign materials and the responses to the two campaigns represented the dominant anthropocentric ideologies of North American culture—Conservationism. Table 4 provides an excerpt from Appendix C that shows several examples of Conservationism from the campaign websites and Park(ing) Day manual.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corbett’s Ideology</th>
<th>Idealogy Description</th>
<th>Campaigns (e.g. Park(ing) Day and Transition Nelson web-site, Park(ing) Day manual)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Conservation-ism   | Acts driven by concepts of: sustainable development stewardship greatest good for the greatest number of humans utilitarian notions human chauvism | Park(ing) Day Web-site and Manual:  
• people use green space to relax, spend time with family, wedding ceremony,  
• a chess tournament, an open poetry reading, a lemonade stand,  
• a barbecue and a lawn bowling course  
• people do nothing  
• traffic calming, not moving so fast, streets for people too  
• community gardens and composting  
• services for the homeless  
• town square – more community-building, e.g. elders and youth |
Empowering Community Members to Reintegrate Nature

- balancing green space with economic development
- a productive landscape/ an urban farming display/ a chicken coop
- glass recycling center
- a public kiddie pool
- a free bicycle repair shop
- a memorial glen
- a croquet tournament a public dog park
- a PARKcycle
- a public beach
- art gallery

Transition Nelson Web-site:

- life with dramatically lower energy consumption is inevitable, and that it’s best to be prepared.
- our community lacks the resilience to weather the effects of peak oil and the necessary reduction in use of fossil fuels required to limit climate change.
- dealing with housing density by exchanging needed skills for live-in housing, for example cooking or gardening? This could save everyone money, and be a better use of space
The Kootenay Craft Artisan “park”, like most of the other “parks” featured on the Park(ing) Day website (ReBar, 2010), also represented a Conservationist ideology where there is “some restraints on humans’ use of natural resources” (Corbett, 2006, p. 32), but only so that humans can continue to access these resources (see Table 3).

There was a difference in the delivery of the campaigns. There was no direct contact between Park(ing) Day campaign organizers (internationally) and Park(ing) Day participants in Nelson whereas the Transition Network (internationally) has a local board—Transition Nelson that sent representatives to the Wildflower Too classroom at the teacher’s request. In a subsequent discussion between the Transition Nelson representative and the Wildflower Too class, Transformative ideologies, not apparent on the Transition Nelson website, were espoused. The Transition Nelson representative encouraged the students to consider living within nature’s limits (personal correspondence, February 12, 2010). However, the fact that Wildflower Too students produced Transformative environmental ideology responses to both campaigns, even though Conservationism dominates, demonstrates that a campaign’s ideology does not necessarily match the ideologies of its participants. Table 5 summarizes how the campaigns were dominantly representative of a Conservationism ideology and yet the participant responses varied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence of Ideology of Campaign Responses Differing from Campaigns</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campaign</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park(ing) Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park(ing) Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|              | Wildflower Too Students—Conservationism to Transformative
The open invitation to plants, animals and insects demonstrates *Values and Ethics Driven and Transformative* ideology. However, some, especially parents, saw this place as an oasis for people too, to relax, eat apples from the trees, fish in the pond demonstrating *Preservationism* and *Conservationism* ideologies. |
| Transition Nelson | *Conservationism*: The campaign challenged residents to meet the challenge of peak oil implying a *Conservationism* ideology in the sense that solutions are needed for humans. | Wildflower Too – *Conservationism* to *Transformative*
The six vignettes in the one-minute video represented |
However, in a classroom visit, a Transition representative led a discussion that raised solutions representative of Conservationism, Preservationism, Values and Ethics Driven and Transformative ideologies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservationism ideology (e.g. clean air, places to exercise), Preservationism ideology (e.g. feeding animals), Values and Ethics Driven ideology (e.g. remove dams to allow salmon to migrate) and Transformative ideology (e.g. Mayor of our Watershed).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**How to Encourage Minority Environmental Ideologies**

Since part of my research goal was to develop a proposal for further developing ecocentric ideologies within North American culture I was attentive to ways in which ecocentric ideologies emerged. I found three ways in which this occurred. First, values that support Transformative ideology can exist in participants and given the proper facilitation, that is not dictating the interpretation of the campaign goal, these values can emerge resulting in an expression of Transformative ideology. Second, since Transformative ideology is a minority ideology in North America community leaders may have to probe the campaign materials deeply for evidence of Transformative ideology; highlighting these examples for participants. Finally, when I analyzed the ideologies I expressed during the campaign they were not always ecocentric and certainly not often Transformative. So, a researcher who has a goal of promoting a minority ideology much be vigilant about his or her own presentations.
Figure 2. Wildflower Too students pose in their super hero costumes with their teacher in front of the Nelson courthouse. This figure illustrates how the students may have sent themselves as challenging the dominant values of today with a more appropriate vision for Nelson’s future (McNally, 2010, p. 1).

Provide opportunities for participants’ Transformative ideology to emerge.

Wildflower Too students were given only the campaign goal (e.g. “Turn a parking spot into a park” or “Envision Nelson in 2030.”) and yet values that support Transformative ideology emerged. There were examples of Transformative ideology in the Wildflower Too parking installation and a lot of examples in their film submission to the Transition Nelson IMAGINE arts contest (see Figures 3 and 4, Appendix C). In the following conversation during Park(ing) Day Wildflower Too children demonstrate Transformative ideology by framing their park as an opportunity to build a relationship between themselves and nature:
Wildflower Too Parent: So, tell me what you’re doing here, besides sitting on a really nice park bench?
Wildflower Too Student #2: Well, what we’re basically doing is we’re making a parking lot into a park… a forest. We’re trying to bring animals in to the world (motions with her arms welcoming).
Wildflower Too Student #1: Back in and say thank-you to them.
Wildflower Too Student #2: Thank you for giving us all of these wonderful plants and animals.
(September 18, 2009)

Figures 3 and 4. In photograph to the left note sign from Wildflower Too Class park “Welcome to our Garden Birds, Insects and Animals”. In photograph to the right: students with guestbook wait to greet visitors.

These Transformative values do not appear to be influenced, much, by the campaigns; except possibly by one discussion students had with the Transition Nelson representative. The Transition Nelson representative, explained campaign materials in her own words and Transformative ideology did emerge during the discussion, for example, one boy said in envisioning the political make-up of Nelson in 2030, there “should be a mayor of our watershed, not of our town” (February 1, 2010).

The Wildflower Too teacher was careful to avoid interpreting or influencing either exercise for the students. As one of the Kootenay Craft artisans proposed, the children’s invitations to
nature might have to do with children’s propensity for open-mindedness generally: “children are not bitter or twisted yet. Children live in the moment” (June 2, 2010). As a result of these observations, my first recommendation would be to provide opportunities for Transformative ideologies, already held by participants, to emerge.

**Probe campaign materials deeply for evidence of Transformative ideology.**

If participants looked deeply into the campaign materials or interpreted illustrations using a Transformative ideology, they might be inspired to adopt or deepen existing ecocentric ideologies. The promotional poster (Figure 4) of the upturned car could be interpreted as ecocentric if you view plants as the integration of wild nature with human spaces. As well, instructions from the Park(ing) Day instruction manual demonstrated Transformative ideologies such as reducing the amount of waste.

*From the Park(ing) Day Manual:*

A word on using live sod: Don’t!

Please don’t use living sod grass or turf. Sod is a very petrochemically-intensive monocrop, and it tends to die quickly, thus becoming a waste product. There are numerous other options for providing comfortable groundcover for your PARK visitors. If you insist on using live sod, please have a plan to re-use it after PARK(ing) Day!
I purchased the Park(ing) Day manual (in case cost was a barrier to the artisans) and passed it on to the Kootenay Craft Artisans who reviewed it. The artisans appeared to be very careful about recapturing the materials from their installation demonstrating a *Transformative* ideology in their actions.

Examples of ecocentric ideologies, although they were a minority, could also be found in the over 40 examples of park installations given in the Park(ing) Day instruction manual. For example, a National Park would fall in Corbett’s (2006) *Preservationism* ideology. A solutions-

Recycle Materials!
Find a place to donate any unwanted or extra materials when the project is over. Living plants, turf and/or groundcover can be permanently planted in yards—or better yet donated to schools or neighbors who need them. Use Craigslist of Freecycle to keep materials from entering the waste stream.

Symbolic Groundcover
Although Rebar’s original PARK used living sod, we do not recommend using real grass. Instead, try something more creative and symbolic—a groundcover that will transform the hard concrete or asphalt into a more comfortable and visually impressive space. Bits of nature other than living sod that may work are moss, potted plants, sand, or anything that feels good to bare feet. Other PARK(ing) Day participants have used quilts, pools, sand, gravel, carpets and astroturf.

(rebargroup.org & parkingday.org, 2009)
based ecology centre and an outdoor classroom could facilitate responses that represent

*Transformative Ideology*. There was also one example of a *Preservationist* ideology in the media where the event was portrayed as a way to create small wildlife reserves (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Radio One, 2009).

**Researcher should consistently reflect on his or her own ideology.**

In reflective action research, the researcher helps shape the outcomes of the project. In this case, as part of analyzing the ideologies of the campaigns, I analyzed my own interview questions in relation to Corbett’s environmental ideologies. In my questions, I found a duality in my own presentations, since I espoused both *Conservationism* and *Transformative* ideologies. In the case of *Conservationism*, I explained the concept of a town square to a downtown business owner while sitting in the Kootenay Craft Artisans park:

> It would be a big crossroads like this (motions to Baker and Stanley a major crossroads in Nelson) and then there would be no cars and people of all generations would come, there would be kids and the older people would play poker and (just open my hands gesturing that the evening unfolded).
> (September 18, 2009)

In espousing *Transformative* ideologies, I asked, “How could Nelson residents appreciate nature more?” Early in the campaign, in e-mail correspondence, and later in a pamphlet, I displayed an *Ethics and Values* ideology by saying:

> Nelson has been voted one of Canada's best little art towns. It is located on a lake in the mountains. We might be the first in Canada to have a Park(ing) Day? I'm wondering if an event like this can be a bridge to more wilderness appreciation?
> August 8, 2009

**Communication Processes that Strengthen Ecocentric Ideologies**

One of the research questions was “What communication processes and models of social change would support residents to integrate nature and culture in Nelson’s downtown?” I
compared research participant reflections on communication processes that would lead to
greening the downtown in Nelson with relevant models from the literature. The result was a list
of six communication processes where there was a high degree of agreement between participant
recommendations and the models and a handful of other communication processes that were
supported by only a few of the models or the participants but remained relevant:

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<td><strong>Where There Was a High Degree of Agreement Between Models and Research Participants</strong></td>
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**Build on motivation.**

All four models of social change highlighted in this research (Cramer & Foss, 2009; Gorobets, 2006; Laverack, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2004) as well as participant reflections agreed
that building on motivation is an important component of social change: passionate people can
influence those around them. I was passionate about the idea of integrating nature in Nelson’s
downtown core and then influenced others during the research. A downtown business owner said
early in his interview: “if you want to do a prototype and just try one street, do it in front of my
store” (September 18, 2009). Later he extended his conceptualization to include all six blocks of the downtown: “Well as a store owner… I thought why don’t we just shut Baker St. completely, completely (with emphasis of silence), and see what that’s like” (September 18, 2009). This downtown business owner went from considering a prototype to converting all of downtown to a pedestrian-only zone. If the timeline of this project had been longer and included planning or implementation, clearly the project organizers could have built on the motivation of people like the business owner.

Motivation can be quietly communicated as well. I remember praising a visual artist on her quiet but powerful motivation of the Wildflower Too students:

> What I noticed about you, you were really encouraging. I was finding myself when (the students) were coming up with ideas, thinking, oh, but how could (they) possibly do that, putting the breaks on a little bit, but you were always really encouraging and saying “that sounds like a good idea” and “how are you going to do that?” (September 18, 2009)

This visual artist motivated the students to express their values, even if they seemed impossible or different. As it turned out many of these ideas were expressions of minority ideologies such as Transformative ideology. If the visual artist had not been encouraging some students may have lost their motivation.

Artisan #1 explained how her motivation towards the topic of integrating nature into the downtown core drove her to become involved in Park(ing) Day:

> (Nature appreciation) is my life, my goodness. I’m a visual person being an artist of course. So now I always look around me and I have to be in (nature) constantly and coming to town is quite difficult. So transforming a town space just seemed like, to me, a perfect thing to do. Yah, nature is my life, really, for sure. I’ve spent many, many years protecting local spaces that I’m involved in and (Park[ing] Day) seemed like a natural fit for me. (September 18, 2009)
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If Artisan #1 hadn’t been invited to participate in Park(ing) Day she might have left nature immersion to her home setting. However, given the opportunity, she brought nature to the city so that others could enjoy it.

Finally, the Wildflower Too participants, motivated towards integrating nature in the downtown, worked hard to in turn motivate elected officials because they have municipal decision-making powers. Their teacher invited the City of Nelson Mayor so he could come and comment. The Wildflower Too students tried to inspire him to incorporate more greenery and fewer buildings in the downtown. Again if the timeline of the project was longer then a natural progression would have been a student presentation to Mayor and Council.

**Explore alternatives.**

A second communication process that was emphasized (Cramer & Foss, 2009; Gorobets, 2006; Laverack, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2004) relates to exploring alternatives. Laverack (2001) characterizes this communication process as providing opportunities to ask “why.” Gorobets (2006) proposes that as an alternative to anthropocentrism, ecocentrism results in more fulfilled humans, and Cramer and Foss (2009) propose that by believing that something other than ourselves resides in the centre of story, we begin to act in different ways. Although I do not believe Ryan and Deci (2004) would disagree that opportunities to see things in new ways are important, they do recommend promoting the concept of active citizenship first so that individuals begin to understand the values of their community before being asked to consider alternatives. Ryan and Deci (2004) would likely argue that as part of the responsibility of active citizenship, individuals would have open-mindedness to minority views.

The participants provided a few approaches to seeing the everyday in new ways: encouraging emotional responses, addressing a culture’s big worries, and caring for other species.
Encourage Emotional Responses – Pleasant – Artisan #2
(This park installation) challenges people to look at space differently. Taking things out of context is great. It just gets people talking, thinking and feeling. It is just a very subtle (windmilling his hands and arms) wow. It is like suddenly smelling coffee. Its like wow, wow. It just takes you away from that (gestures all around him like he is referring to the world) and softens the day a bit. Something as small as this can change what they’re thinking, what they’re feeling. Oh there’s a tree, isn’t that lovely, oh I never thought about something like this. It would be great if one side of the street was like this and it was just parking on the other side. (September 18, 2009)

Address a Culture’s Big Worries – Business Owner #1
…we need more green for health, for global warming, for life. So that’s a good decision to give people a different option or idea. (September 18, 2009)

Care for Other Species – Wildflower Too Student #2
Well in my shift I showed them insects, big animals, small animals (is looking all around the installation) you name it, animals and we’re trying to bring more plants in to the world and more animals.

As part of a proposal for further developing ecocentric ideologies within North American culture community leaders could consider some of these approaches. Environmental communication campaigns that challenge what residents take for granted, or address an environmental issue in a positive and hopeful way, or tells stories that are refreshingly not all about humans, but instead about humans and nature, merit consideration.

For me, the power of exploring alternatives became apparent when, during an interview across the road and after the Wildflower Too park was “cleaned up,” I looked over and saw only asphalt and oily spills. Shock provided a lasting impression felt in my body. Where there was once a cool oasis (it had been a hot day and the park provided shade) there was now nothing but hard, oil-splattered asphalt:

Encourage Emotional Responses – Not Pleasant - Researcher
I’m still in shock about the fact that it is just gone. Like it is just gone in a minute, you know? It was there. There was all this green. And… (September 18, 2009)
Perhaps Park(ing) Day organizers could lengthen the event. If onlookers got used to an alternative, like a park, over a few days, they would perhaps get attached to the alternative park because it became the desirable alternative.

By transforming a public parking space the Wildflower Too students and the Artisans were able to get people passing by to question permanence and consider alternatives. I heard many onlookers stop and talk to park hosts about what might replace a parking space. An older couple said Baker Street should be closed to traffic so that people could walk more and that there should be more greenery (September 18, 2009) and a woman who saw the event in the media and came to see the Wildflower Too installation said:

I like the idea that its an opportunity to begin seeing spaces that are concrete and pavement to see what an alternative could be. So shifting out of the box. And look at the sound that is coming out (pointing to the tape player, playing bird sounds). This is what is really remarkable (pointing to the installation). I just really love when we can look at, wow, we could do different things and not have to be tied in to the existing environment. Who created it (pointing to the road), who did they consult with anyway? Why does it have to be that way? (Nodding her head as if in agreement with the installation) So here it is. (September 18, 2009)

Considering replacing a parking spot with a park not only inspired the woman who saw the event in the media but it caused her to reflect on decision-making. She appeared to doubt the results of democracy when municipal staff under the direction of elected councillors zone the downtown for so much parking. She later said that she would write a letter to Council asking them to consider replacing parking spots with parks.

Exploring alternatives can cause people to interpret space in a totally different way. During the creation of the parks both the Wildflower Too students and the artisans were struck by the amount of square metres one parking spot occupies:
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Researcher: I know both you and I, working on the project, were a little shocked a couple of days ago when we had the space mapped out on the floor (at the school) and it seemed pretty darn big (holds her arms out wide) and..

Architect: And like there were 5 plants (laughs and demonstrates how they were dispersed throughout this relatively huge space).

Researcher: There were 5 items in the middle and maybe 10% of the space was filled and so?

Architect: And then we came in … two days later and we could smell (demonstrates smells wafting up with hand gesture) the forest in the school and it was a lush jungle. It was beautiful. (September 18, 2009)

Perhaps until the park installations the participants had not even thought about the value a space of that size might have for plants, animals and insects. Participants began to think about what could be done for many people, as well as for nature, instead of just a few automobile drivers:

Wildflower Too Student #1: If everyone did this in the whole city, brought plants from home and everything and we got a big bulldozer (getting really excited) and dug up the whole downtown and just put plants that would be really cool.
(September 18, 2009)

Exploring alternatives resulted in Wildflower Student #1 considering the possibility of putting nature at the centre of the story.

Support problem assessment.

A third group of formal communications processes, those that facilitate problem assessment (Gorobets, 2006; Laverack, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2004), were missing from the Park(ing) Day and Transition Nelson campaigns. Ryan and Deci (2004) include problem assessment as an integral part of community engagement, but their ultimate goals are having individuals internalize the values associated with the social change and then integrating with others towards a shared goal (p. 5). Gorobets (2006) focuses less on the process of problem-solving (although he does recommend innovative learning opportunities about the world’s ecological problems) and more on the frameworks for problem-solving. For example, he believes that a precautionary approach,
whereas humans do not pursue any courses of action if there is an absence of scientific consensus on the long-term potential for harm, provides the framework for any problem solving. For Laverack (2001), problem assessment is one of the key operational domains for community empowerment and is most effective when the community is authentically involved from the beginning in shaping a project, implementing it, and maintaining the project in to the future (p. 139).

Baudrillard (1999) de-emphasizes rational scientific problem-solving and instead encourages us to listen to our intuition and the signs around us, be more spontaneous and guided by emotion. Scharmer (2007) refers to the open mind, the open heart and the open will. Communication approaches that include a full range of human responses could result in more holistic solutions. Open mind involves deep observation not just of what one observes out of habitual patterns, but noticing and understanding the new and previously unknown. Open heart is acknowledging that the perceptions of others might have validity and applicability. Open will is joining with others to act on something new and co-created. These three basic elements of Scharmer’s Theory U rely on expressing emotion, revealing intuition and acting spontaneously. Balancing traditional rational scientific problem assessment with processes like Theory U will help us become more ecocentric by, for example, considering nature’s signals in our problem-solving processes.

A few participants made suggestions for greening Nelson’s downtown core as a form of problem assessment. Surveying downtown business owners was proposed:

My suggestion would be to actually start a survey, easy, nothing heavy. Actually just something on paper and then you can get that and present it to council and staff, which they’re usually the ones that are reluctant to make any change. If we could go to them and say, “Hey, you know 85% of the store owners are in favour of this.” You know, how could they say they are working for the people and then not go ahead and make those changes? (September 18, 2009)
However, participants did not raise the need to be more involved in any broad-based community problem-solving process.

**Build community through partnerships and linkages.**

A fourth process had a strong emphasis on partnerships and linkages. The research participants gave great examples of how sustainability starts with community. The Wildflower Too teacher and the school principal talked about the way the Park(ing) Day campaign helped Wildflower Too students, parents, teacher and administration become a community so that they were able, in turn, to have a united voice in Nelson:

Teacher: It brought the kids together to work on something big right away. It is just the whole classroom has built this park, including parents.

Researcher: I’m thinking about relevance too and how we were able to bring that to the classroom. So Mayor Dooley was on the front page of the Express this morning and he was saying that Nelson cannot rest on its laurels, it needs a more friendly downtown that is more inviting and so you brought that to the kids and what did they say?

Teacher: Well, I read them snippets from that article and then one of the kids said “Well then we need to invite him because he needs to see our park because it will give him great ideas for Nelson.” (Principal and teacher laugh and then teacher says) They were certain of it and so they should be. (September 18, 2009)

I was struck by the surety of the teacher in her belief that each of students had ideas that would be of interest to the mayor. If she believes that much in her students that it is not surprising that she is able to build partnerships with administration and other community organizations on their behalf to accomplish their dreams.

The school principal goes on to explain how another project, the greening of their schoolyard, helped the kids make stronger community connections:

Certainly Wildflower is about community and this (greening the schoolyard) is one way in which the class acts a community, is present as part of the greater community and as far as I can tell is making a difference in the world—an edible garden and a wildflower garden, of course, and native plants and shrubs. The place is really well used by the whole neighbourhood and well respected. A lot of people thought we would suffer
vandalism and that sort of thing and it just hasn’t happened. It has worked out really well. So (Park(ing) Day) fits really well with what we’ve been doing. I don’t know if it makes this project any easier or not (chuckles). (September 18, 2009)

Some schools might have “gated” their garden, but Wildflower school has chosen not to keep the community out. In fact they encourage the community to use their garden area and playing field. In doing so they extend they build partnerships and linkages that undoubtedly increase their success with future projects.

The models (Gorobets, 2006; Laverack, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2004) provide more ideas for strengthening partnerships such as ensuring your project addresses social, environmental and economic concerns, accessing outside agents to model and share power and ensuring partnerships are equitable. If the research had included a problem assessment phase, there would have been time to consider the social, environmental and economic aspects of greening the downtown core. The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, BC Chapter (CPAWS-BC), a project sponsor that provided liability insurance and funded the production of posters and t-shirts, could be considered an outside agent. CPAWS-BC could have had a larger profile and, thus, people would have learned about their national campaign to save wilderness. In terms of equitable relationships, more could have been done to concretely link the students to municipal processes like bringing the City Planner in to the classroom to hear their ideas about greening the downtown.

**Engage the majority.**

Although the most common communication process presented in the literature seems to be motivation (Cramer & Foss, 2009; Gorobets, 2006; Laverack, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2004), some research (Watts & Dodds, 2007) suggests that social change happens more quickly when communication flows not through strong leaders but through the mass media to the majority of
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people in a way that they can embrace. One of the downtown business owners enthusiastically made a link between mitigating climate change and more parks in the downtown core. Like this business owner, others business owners and residents might embrace the ‘greening’ of downtown, if it was presented in a way they could support and understand, such as a way to mitigate climate change. A downtown business owner agreed with presenting the project in a way that the majority can understand and accept:

Like you might think that [business owners] are not going to want to do an idea, but when you present it in a way that makes sense, cause its got to make sense for business owners too right? And the fear is that closing down Baker St or green space will result in losing a parking spot. That’s the fear. When you talk to [business owners] about it you say, OK, so people will have to park somewhere else but look at all of the foot traffic we’re going to get in front of your place, right. And whatever needs to be set-up or whatever gets set-up it needs to take in to consideration [business owner concerns]. You know [business owners] pay a lot of money for rent, so you need to take-in [our] thoughts, which it sounds like you’re trying to do, and feelings … But there’s ways it could work for sure. (September 18, 2009)

In this case Business Owner #1 counsels that to engage the majority you must address their fears and present its benefits for the majority.

Within this theme of having the majority of people accept an idea was the concept of slow and steady change within the masses leading to local improvement. In this quote Artisan #1 talks about how some areas of Nelson have recently been restored:

There is lot of awareness: community gardens in Nelson (I’ve seen a few) and there’s Cottonwood Park, of course, which is a public garden now... So over the years things change and the lovely waterfront space is relatively new and that’s all reclaimed land. That was quite an exciting project. [A park] right in the centre [of town]? I don’t know. I certainly think that we can keep doing [Park(ing) Day], whether we go for ten years or not, or maybe it is 20 or 30 years, by which time let’s hope that we have a town square and maybe a whole block or two or even the entire street more green, more pleasant to walk, more quiet, more tranquil. (September 18, 2009)
Her point is that the creation of the Cottonwood Park may have seemed a huge challenge for its proponents as does the goal of this research to integrate nature in the downtown core. Artisan #1 is encouraging community leaders to be patient with engaging the majority.

**Improve organizational communication.**

Another point from the models (Cramer & Foss, 2009; Gorobets, 2006; Laverack, 2001) is that when introducing ideas of the minority, like integrating human activity with nature’s limits, it is important to create organizational structures such as community policy, new institutions and indicators of positive change. However, Cramer and Foss (2009) remind us that the relaxation of structure is important too. Working within nature’s limits will rely on our ability to be vulnerable and receptive—one aspect of interdependence.

The architect who helped the Wildflower Too students design their park installation praised collaboration:

Collaboration. I’ve been collaborating on big projects for a long time and I want to see more people working together. So it sounded good to me right off the bat…. Totally impressed. Kids around here are a blessing and I’m really happy to be part of the community.

(September 18, 2009)

The architect went on to say that community groups could be solicited for maintaining sections of the downtown once nature was more integrated. Interesting this idea is like groups “adopting” sections of a highway, except that nature is controlled through mowing and pesticide use on highway right-of-ways, not encouraged to flourish!

**Other communication processes for social change.**

There were also some communication processes that were mentioned only by a few models or participants:
Table 6:

*Communication Approaches that Support Social Change - Only a Few Models and/or Research Participant Recommendations*

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<th>Approach</th>
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<tr>
<td>Utilize Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acknowledge Your Minority Ideology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilize Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to Nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use Top-Down Regulatory Approaches</td>
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Although researchers (Laverack, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2004) would probably not deny the importance of education and creativity, they did not emphasize it. Cramer and Foss (2009), on the other hand, interpreting the work of Baudrillard, place great importance on the use of creativity to facilitate social change. Humour, irony, myth and other artful expression are promoted as a means of exploring possibilities. When the aim is to promote a minority view, Ryan and Deci (2004) first understand and then take in to consideration the views of the majority. They recommend promoting the benefits of community engagement generally before any particular position or topic is raised. Once in dialogue, the minority view may at least have a chance to be heard. Ryan and Deci (2004) join Gorobets (2006) in promoting external regulation through rewards and punishment as part of a social change process.

Research participants emphasized the importance of both education and creative approaches. The Wildflower Too teacher said: “You might think on Monday that nothing did come of this
and then in the middle of winter something may and then off you go again. That’s what education is like” (September 18, 2009) and Artisan #2 said:

I hope that [park onlookers] take [Park(ing) Day] home and think about it and enjoy it for the day and perhaps neighbours or people across the street or whomever might become involved next year and certainly it is an awareness raising thing. That’s the important part. Whether it is in the back of the mind or the forefront of the mind is up to the individual. (September 18, 2009)

Artisan #2 is actually supporting Ryan and Deci (2004) here in saying that community engagement is an important first step and that you can’t expect the support of the majority right away. Through creativity and education, Artisan #2’s hope seems to be that support for integrating nature in Nelson’s downtown core will grow over time.

Validation Results

At a meeting with research participants and people who advised on the project: three research participants, two advisors to the project and the videographer, I asked for validation of their responses, as captured by me in the tables, and whether they concurred with my analysis and theming. The group did not find any inaccuracies in their responses but did have a few suggestions in terms of analysis. One participant and one project advisor suggested that I reinforce the potential for nascent Transformative ideologies in children. They also recommended that children’s potential to act from Transformative ideology be brought in to long-term actualization of integration of nature and culture in Nelson. The teacher participant, the city planner project advisor and Artisan #2 all wanted to discuss the creation of a town square as a recommendation and next step. The city planner was interested in seeing the research participants become further involved in official municipal processes like the downtown waterfront master plan and the Official Community Plan (OCP). Artisan #2 and the videographer reminded me that I had drawn from North American participants and then models from Western
culture, reducing the possibility of understanding other environmental ideologies that might have been more *Transformative*.

**Discussions**

In this section, I discuss the representativeness of my research; conducted in a relatively small city where residents are in close proximity to nature. I summarize and reinforce proposals made in the results section of this thesis that will further develop ecocentric ideologies within North American culture. In *Change Focus to Ecocentric End of Corbett’s Spectrum* I encourage future researchers who utilize Corbett’s (2006) *Spectrum of Environmental Ideologies* to focus on defining and further elaborating on *Transformative* ideology as opposed to examining the whole *Spectrum*. I also summarize the strategies that were highlighted by the research participants and the relevant models.

**Representativeness and Proximity to Nature**

My research is representative of only one community in British Columbia, Canada, and thus lacks the subtleties of North American environmental ideologies. Due to the small number of research participants the research is also not representative of the entire Nelson population. Corbett (2006) proposes that the majority of North Americans have anthropocentric environmental ideologies but I suspect there may be differences regionally and nationally. Nelson is located near the American border, so if I could have tried the two campaigns in the nearby urban centre of Spokane it would have been interesting to note any differences that might be due to nationality or regional social movements.

By working with a small group of students and artisans I did miss many aspects of the Nelson demographic, including working class people, the elderly, lifetime residents. Increasing the number of research participants though would have increased the amount of time required for
interviews and transcribing. Working with the two groups was within the time I had available for the project.

Park(ing) Day and Transition Network have been adopted in much larger centres where nature might not be as apparent. For instance, downtown Nelson is only two blocks from Kootenay Lake and forested hills surround us. Many residents of the town live on the edge of forested land owned by the government. With more time, I would have liked to conduct my research with similar participants, students and artisans, in an urban area as well, noting any differences that might be related to the proximity to nature.

**Strengthening Ecocentric Environmental Ideologies**

The amount of impact the relatively small act of transforming a parking spot into a park or creating and showing a film can have on the anthropocentric environmental ideologies that dominate North American (and thus Nelson) culture is impossible to measure. This research does not show any relationship between the participant and the campaign ideologies, but it does demonstrate if *Transformative* ideology exists in participants, it can emerge in campaigns, given the proper facilitation, and that community leaders can be instrumental in strengthening *Transformative* ideology, if they probe the campaign materials deeply, and educate themselves about *Transformative* solutions.

Once expressed by research participants, minority ideologies can also affect onlookers, including media. In an article in the community newspaper, a Nelson reporter characterized Park(ing) Day as an opportunity to “shift our emphasis off the car and … onto nature” (Sheperd, 2009, p. 3). This research shows how community leaders such as teachers, artists and business owners, can facilitate the emergence of participants’ ecocentric values thus challenging dominant ideologies.
Community leaders who are considering the use of communication campaigns could benefit from a critical assessment of their own ideologies as well as the ideologies of possible campaign materials when they are envisioning a more ecocentric future for themselves and their community. As a person who is motivated towards ecocentrism, intellectually, but not raised or living in a culture that integrates nature and culture, I don’t have a whole lot of practice with Transformative ideology. It makes sense that I would fall back on encouraging research participants to adopt more ecocentric beliefs by implying “we should”—an Ethics and Values-Driven ideology. I don’t have enough concrete ideas about what a Transformative ideology would produce to always supply a Transformative solution. I learned a lot from the children. Children are less influenced by the commercial world and corporate culture. Researchers who want to promote an ecocentric, especially Transformative, ideology should probably spend time envisioning the outcomes concretely. They could ask themselves, among other questions, what concretely, would the culture and the physical surroundings of Nelson look like if Transformative ideology dominated in Nelson. The serpent character in George Bernard Shaw’s play Back to Methuselah has some advice for community leaders when it says:

If I can do that, what can I not do? I tell you I am very subtle. When you and Adam talk, I hear you say ‘Why?’ Always ‘Why?’ ‘Why?’ You see things; and you say ‘Why?’ But I dream things that never were; and I say ‘Why not?’ I made the word dead to describe my old skin that I cast when I am renewed. I call that renewal being born (Shaw, 1921, middle of Act 1).

The concept of possibility may inspire community leaders to envision a renewed Nelson and thus a clearer idea of the potential impact of their campaign and their own ability to support it.

Change Focus to Ecocentric End of Corbett’s Spectrum

Who benefits from an act is the most defining feature between Corbett’s Conservationism ideology and Transformative ideology. I ran into confusion when trying to determine whether an
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act was for humans or nature. It was not always simple; for example, the promotion of organic food is good for people’s health because they avoid harmful chemicals and gain more nutrients, but organic farming is also good for insects, birds and all the way up the food chain. Watching less television helps people escape the demands of consumerism, but when humans consume less, nature benefits. So how do you label an act that is good for people, but also for nature? How do you determine whether they were thinking of themselves or nature more? Does it matter? Understanding the intent of the action is vital and thus future applications of Corbett’s spectrum should include probing: “Have you (created this campaign/participated in this campaign) for residents?” or “If you did this for nature, do you think humans will benefit too?” The latter question would indicate interdependence.

Additionally, the campaigns and the responses to the campaigns were all representative of not just one but, several environmental ideologies. John Muir said that “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe” (1901). Also the majority of campaigns and campaign responses represented the dominant anthropocentric ideologies. So rather than placing a campaign or a campaign response in one category or another, I propose that researchers set as a goal further definition of ecocentric ideologies. Figure 4 shows some dominant themes from Corbett’s description of Transformative ideology.
Strategies for Strengthening Ecocentric Values

I was originally attracted to Park(ing) Day by the same communication processes that were highlighted by the research participants, such as creativity and fun. I also recognized the long-term impacts of education, another element of social change highlighted by the research participants, when I chose to work with my daughter’s class. However, models from the literature (Cramer & Foss, 2009; Gorobets, 2006; Laverack, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2004) have provided further insight and clarification such as the power of building on motivation and exploring alternatives. In future projects, I will build in time for assessing the problems the campaign seeks to address and asking “Why not?” One of the criteria for evaluating the success of campaigns should be changes in organizational structures that facilitate more ecocentric solutions, including creation of new institutions with ecocentric mandates, adaptations in existing
institutions to include ecocentric mandates, and addition of communication processes that include intuition and listening to nature.

**Conclusions and Recommendations for Community Leaders**

In this final section I reemphasize my recommendation that future researchers and community leaders focus on analyzing evidence or lack of evidence of Corbett’s *Transformative* ideology in relation to the environmental communication. I also recommend that researchers and community leaders bolster themselves because they are treading on new ground, what Shaw’s serpent would call the realm of miracles, not with the connotation of impossible but with the connotation of imaginable and thus feasible. I close with examples of my own attempts at asking “Why not?” and with major themes from Corbett’s (2006) *Transformative* ideology.

**Nurture Transformative Ideology in Environmental Communication Campaigns**

I recommend that community leaders who want to challenge dominant ideologies with more ecocentric strategies consider the potential for an external campaign to produce *Transformative* responses. If the majority of the campaign is found to represent anthropocentric ideologies, then the community leaders should delve more deeply into the materials searching for ecocentric ideologies and involve community leaders who can facilitate the emergence of ecocentric ideologies in participants. Finding partners and resources that might help generate ecocentric solutions is key, as is self-examination of the leader’s ideologies and being transparent about goals in discussions with research participants.

However, community leaders must acknowledge the current ideologies, values and goals of the community in which they are working (Ryan & Deci, 2004) and start with those, progressing to a more ecocentric ideology over time. Community leaders may want to choose a campaign
that is aligned with the dominant ideology and then use the strategies in this research to promote
the emergence of ecocentric ideologies.

Ideally, environmental communication campaigns should begin to strengthen ecocentric
ideologies to such an extent that the shared concepts that constitute Corbett’s *Transformative*
ideology (see Figure 4) will be further examined and refined as campaigns are developed.

**Find Partners and Ask “Why Not” Together**

Investigating whether there are organizations, already in the community, that integrate
human activity with natural cycles (Gorobets, 2006) that may endorse and support a campaign is
important. These organizations are potential partners. Leaders need to look for opportunities not
only for exposure to new ideas but for problem-solving and solution-making (Laverack, 2001).

Both campaigns clearly explained why the issues they raise are important, but were not set-up to
facilitate solution-making and the asking of “why not”. The Park(ing) Day campaign could move
from the “why not” stage by providing discussion forums related to next steps on their home
pages labelled: “Your Park is Gone – What Now?,” “Town Squares,” “Greening Downtown,” or
“Involving Municipalities.” Shaw’s serpent said new things will happen if we “will” them to:

> When Lilith told me what she had imagined in our silent language (for there were
no words then) I bade her desire it and will it; and then, to our great wonder, the
thing she had desired and willed created itself in her under the urging of her will.
Then I too willed to renew myself as two instead of one; and after many days the
miracle happened, and I burst from my skin another snake interlaced with me; and
now there are two imaginations, two desires, two wills to create with (Shaw,
1921, near end of Act 1).

Community leaders should make time to discuss with their participants not just whether they
“should” adopt the campaign, but the miracles that can occur as a result of the campaign. In the
case of Park(ing) Day, the event clearly has increased awareness of the absence of a town square
in Nelson as a first step towards more nature integration. The absence of a town square was
brought up in initial discussions about the research project with the Director of the Museum and a local social entrepreneur and then subsequently raised with participants and by participants, many of whom supported the idea. A town square is a reasonable step towards a more ecocentric ideology for the culture of Nelson if the central square is envisioned as a part of the surrounding ecosystem, not separate from it.

Put Nature at the Centre of Your Story

Accepting that each of us can make a difference through our ability to resist dominant ideologies, especially the nature-culture dualism, may be central to our survival as a species, and yet envisioning from an ecocentric ideology is not easy. My initial attempts to understand ecocentric ideology in relation to healing the nature-culture divide in downtown Nelson felt clumsy at first. However, I have persevered, and put the idea forward at a recent public sustainability forum in Nelson. A participant gave me this feedback: “I see what you are saying now, and along with green roofs, living walls and other natural ecosystem biomimicry, [Nelson] could turn into nature in our back yards, which is so cool to think of! Thanks for planting that seed. I look forward to watching it grow” (June 30, 2010). At least, as Einstein (in Calaprice, 2005) sagely points out, acknowledging our interdependence with nature releases us from delusion and allows us to think clearly:

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us "Universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest … a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving … is in itself a part of the liberation. (p. 206)

Eventually more Nelson residents may view their town as a part of nature putting attributes of Transformative ideology consistently in to play. Corbett (2006) and others (Carbaugh, 2007;
Cramer & Foss, 2009; Gorobets, 2006) have begun to paint a picture of what the world would like if the majority of North Americans adopted ecocentric ideologies but there is much work to be done to correct some of Western culture’s most destructive habits. Adopting behaviours based on emotional engagement, interdependence, spiritual revelation, contextualized understanding of self, connectedness and continuity (Corbett, 2006) will not only heal the nature-culture divide but potentially ensure the survival of the human species and the planet on which we live.
References


Appendix A - Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Park(ing) Day

Nature Appreciation in the City

September 18, 2009

Nelson, British Columbia

My name is Theresa Southam and this research project is part of the requirement for a Masters of Professional Communication at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by telephoning Phillip Vannini, XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX.

I am hosting the one-day event “Free Park(ing) Day” in Nelson, British Columbia so that the planning, implementation and results can be incorporated in to my study on “The role of social media, social activism and mediated experiences as bridges to nature appreciation.”

The sponsoring organization is the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, BC Chapter.

The research will consist of interviews with campaign manages, focus groups with the planning committee and interviews with participants like you and videotaping of the event installations.
This interview will take no longer than 30 minutes. The foreseen questions are listed below. In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a Degree in Professional Communications, I will also be sharing my research findings with Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and may be shared internally with that organization and with other non-government organizations working on wilderness campaigns. The research may also be published in academic and nonacademic journals such as the Canadian Journal of Environmental Education or the Canadian magazine Alternatives as well as to academic conferences concerned with public engagement and communication.

You are a participant in the event so I am interested in your motivations and what you see as the challenges and successes of events like these in fostering nature appreciation and creating more public spaces in urban centres like Nelson.

I will take notes and where appropriate, summarize, in anonymous format, your replies in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any participant unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential.

A copy of the final report will be published. A copy will be housed at Royal Roads University, available online through UMI/Proquest and the Theses Canada portal and will be publicly accessible. Access and distribution will be unrestricted.

I am a consultant working in the field of environmental communications and this research will inform my work but always be clearly accredited to my academic pursuits and not the company.
You are not compelled to participate in this research project. If you choose not to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. Similarly, if you choose not to participate in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence.

Would you be interested in participating in the project?

Yes  No (circle one)

________________________________________________________________________
Name of Participant

________________________________________________________________________
Signature of Participant
Appendix B - Question Guide

I used the following questions as a guide, while I conducted semi-structured interviews of Park(ing) Day participants and onlookers. These interviews were video-taped and then later transcribed.

1. Why did you get involved in Park(ing) Day?
2. Can you explain what it nature appreciation means to you?
3. How can Park(ing) Day help people appreciate nature?
4. If people relied less on cars and we needed less parking, what do you think we could do with all of the parking spaces?
5. If we used some of the parking spaces for people to rest, play and visit, e.g. a town square or park, what would that space look like and where might it be in Nelson?
6. What do you think people walking by your Park(ing) Day installation are thinking?
7. What might onlookers want to do as a result of seeing Park(ing) Day?
8. What would be the barriers to their acting on their ideas?
9. What would be the next step after this event to engage people more in nature appreciation and community gathering places?
10. Will you play a role in these next steps?