

BRIDGING THE GAP: A COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE EXPERIENCE
OF CROSS-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

By

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We accept this thesis as conforming
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ABSTRACT

The history of colonial settlement and the resulting inequality between First Nations and Euro-Canadian populations in British Columbia, Canada, has cultivated an “us” and “them” mentality that fosters and perpetuates mistrust, misunderstandings, and deeply rooted stereotypes. However, currently there is a desire and necessity for collaboration between these two populations in environmental initiatives. This is a collaborative study that uses an ethnographic lens and decolonizing methodologies to engage individuals with a First Nations background and those with a Euro-Canadian background as co-researchers and explores their ecological identities and personal experiences working on cross-cultural environmental initiatives in British Columbia. Findings focus on views of the current political systems, and cultural literacy in terms of relationships and respect. Based on the findings, recommendations were co-created in an online forum and offer guidelines for future environmental cross-cultural collaborative processes including both personal and systemic level suggestions.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my ten co-researchers.

Art Napoleon, Briony Penn, Judith Sayers, Fern Wager, Mark Gauti, Brenda
Kuecks, Greg Charleson, Catherine Stewart, Russell Collier, Reg Whiten

Through seriousness, laughter and tears these individuals have shown me another way to
be in this work and in this world.

Gratitude.

*“I offer you peace. I offer you love. I offer you friendship. I see your beauty. I
hear your need. I feel your feelings. My wisdom flows from the Highest Source. I salute
that Source in you. Let us work together for unity and love.” Mahatma Gandhi*

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INTRODUCTION

For at least 9,600 years, First Nations lived in what is now known as British Columbia (BC), on the Canadian West Coast (Helin, 2006). Indigenous author Helin (2006) wrote that in those years Indigenous peoples were “self-reliant, socially-coherent, healthy, and had a clear direction” (p. 66). However, European settlement and colonization introduced a way of life that clashed with the Indigenous worldview, causing a rift between Indigenous and European cultures. Some literature states that traditionally the majority of First Nations people approached life holistically, believing that everything is interconnected (Atleo, 2004; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Helin, 2006), alongside strong beliefs in collectivism and land sharing (Calliou & Voyageur, 1998). These beliefs can be contrasted with the introduced individualistic colonial attitudes still prevalent today with beliefs that humans can control nature, that land and resources are commodities, and with the idea of private ownership of property (Calliou & Voyageur, 1998; Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992). At the centre of this now-dominant worldview is a cultural perception rooted in a Cartesian dualism where there is a dissonance between humans and nature, mind and body, spirit and matter (Atleo, 2004; Capra, 1996; Lertzman, 1999).

Along with these tensions and the fundamental differences that exist the planet is in a complex and multi-faceted ecological crisis (Capra, 1996; Suzuki, 2003) and while this research is not directly focusing on this crisis, social and environmental issues are interconnected, and I find it challenging to consider one without the other. The ecological crisis has been considered not only from a scientific perspective but also from a social perspective (Capra, 1996; Suzuki, 2003) with a prime example being the conflict between

an Indigenous worldview and the Western mainstream worldview. Cross-cultural environmental work is occurring both in BC and around the globe, yet much of this work is happening in an “ethical vacuum” (Crawley & Sinclair, 2003, p. 372), where there is public expectation of engagement yet antagonistic interactions (Lertzman & Vredenburg, 2005) result in collaborations complex with challenges.

In 2008 and 2009, I was employed by First Power, a project aimed to reduce diesel dependency in remote First Nations communities through the installation of renewable energy technologies, coupled with culturally based conservation programs and economic development opportunities. I am a Euro-Canadian who was working with First Nations communities, and every day I observed and existed within tensions between friends, strangers, and co-workers from these two cultures. In this age which many refer to as being in an environmental crisis I believe there is a necessity for collaborative projects like First Power; yet my experience offered me the harsh reality of the deeply rooted tears in the social fabric of British Columbia.

Thus, my journey began in both a space of discomfort yet inspiration, where I acknowledged the social issues deeply embedded in Canada’s identity but also recognized the ecosystem as a connective tissue, “the common ground shared by the two models, philosophically, materially and ideologically” (Lertzman, 1999, p. 249). As such, this research explored some of the cross-cultural environmental work currently or previously under way in BC with First Nations and Euro-Canadian individuals, referred to as co-researchers, in an attempt to deepen understanding of the cross-cultural experience in environmental initiatives as offered by a variety of perspectives. I believe this thesis tells a story of potential and possibility; it is a story about humans, about

nature, and about hope. It is a story about working together without judgment. It is a story of healing. To this end, I sought to answer three key research questions:

1. What are some of the components of individual co-researchers' ecological identity?
2. What factors contribute to greater understanding and agreement in cross-cultural collaboration in environmental initiatives, and what factors exist as barriers to these processes?
3. How can cross-cultural collaborative processes be more effective and respectful?

~ ~ ~

Following the suggestion of one of my co-researchers in this research, Reg Whiten, I have chosen to use the symbol of the *Sacred Tree* and the medicine wheel to frame my work. The tree is an ideal symbol for this work as it is an image from the natural world representing a gathering place for people and ideas and also representing a place to gather with nature. The *Sacred Tree* is “a place of protection in the world, a place of peace, contemplation, and centering” (Bopp, Bopp, Brown, & Lane, 1984, p. 22). I believe this work offers a similar space: it is a meeting place for different cultures and a meeting place for individual life experiences. It is a space where 10 individuals, from two differing cultural backgrounds, five First Nations and five Euro-Canadian, have shared what has and has not been possible and effective in their work. I have found the topic of cross-cultural work between First Nations and Euro-Canadians to be loaded with emotion and frustration and my vision has been to use this work to offer a safe space where issues are discussed and reflected on in a constructive and respectful way. I also

believe this work to be a place of healing as a new path for cross-cultural environmental work is revealed to inform future process.

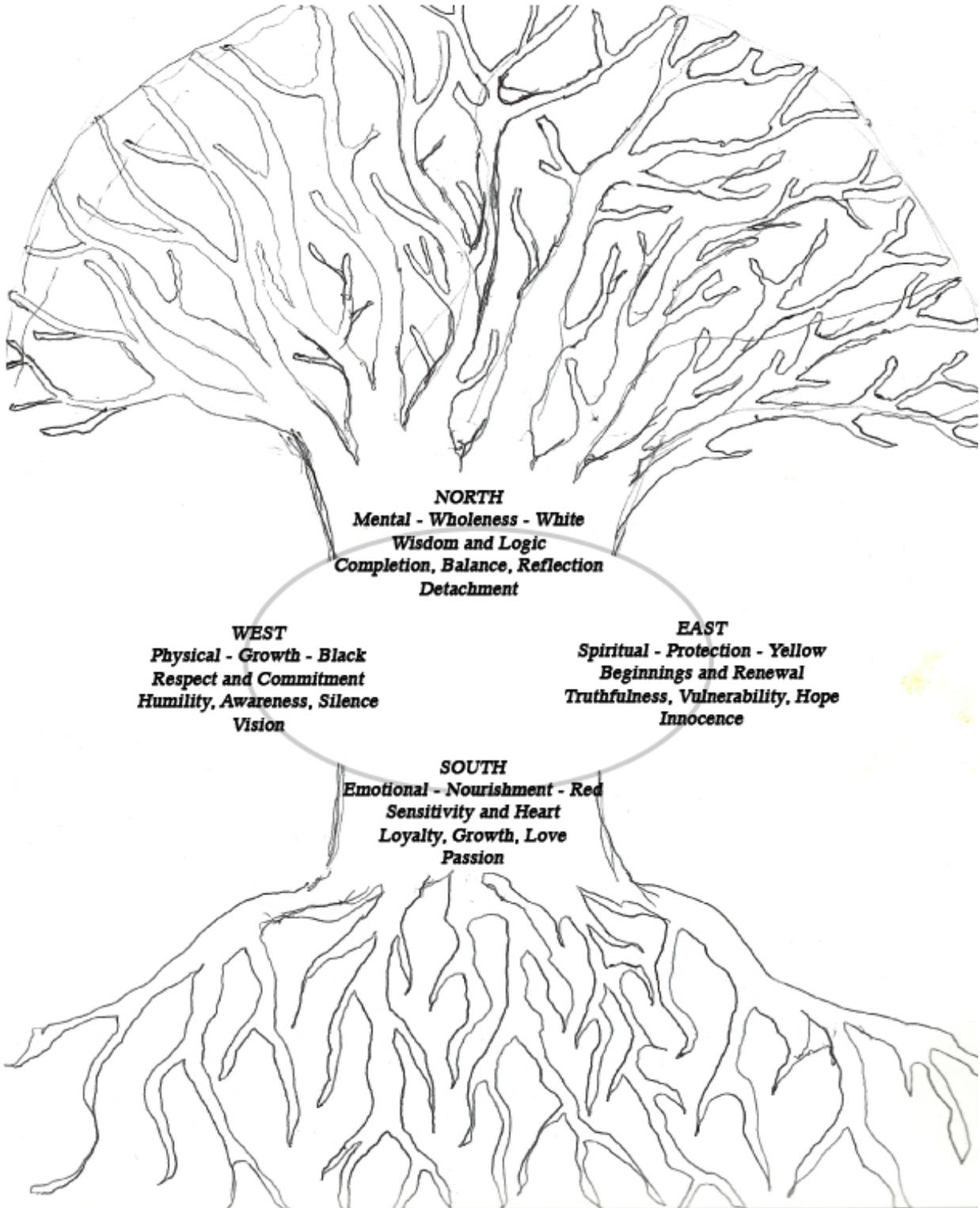
The *Sacred Tree* reflects the teachings of the medicine wheel (see figure 1) “an ancient symbol used by almost all the Native people of North and South America” (Bopp, et al., 1984, p. 9). The medicine wheel incorporates four dimensions: our identity and values; the cycle of development, growth and change; and the aspects of the physical world (Bopp, et al., 1984). The medicine wheel is expressed in a variety of ways such as: the four directions, the four elements, the four grandfathers, or the four winds; however, each of the four parts of the circle represent the same gift regardless of expression. I have chosen to represent the wheel in the four cardinal directions.

The following pages weave a story that is multifaceted and interconnected and using the medicine wheel as a frame respects this complexity. The power of this work is in relationships: regardless of which direction you are situated, it is important to recognize how we arrived in that place, along with the connection between the other directions and that space. In the following pages I will walk through my journey in this context as I travel through a day, appreciating the interconnected nature of the work. I have used the symbol of the *Sacred Tree* to discuss the ethnographic theoretical frame of this research. I then share the literature that my work is grounded within as the sun rises in the East. With the sun at its highest point in the South I offer my methodology and the methods for this work. I use the voices of my co-researchers in my findings in the West as the sun sets, and recommendations and final discussions in the night sky of the North.

For all the people of the earth, the Creator has planted a Sacred Tree under which they may gather, and there find healing, power, wisdom and security. The roots of

this tree spread deep into the body of Mother Earth. Its branches reach upward like hands praying to Father Sky. The fruits of this tree are the good things the Creator has given to the people: teachings that show the path to love, compassion, generosity, patience wisdom, justice, courage, respect, humility and many other wonderful gifts. (Bopp, et al., 1984, p. 7)

Figure 1: The Sacred Tree and Medicine Wheel Teachings



THE SACRED TREE: A GATHERING PLACE

Ethnography offers the theoretical framework for this research. The heart of the work is the cultural differences and tensions between two different knowledge systems: Euro-Canadian and First Nations, specifically within British Columbia. The *Sacred Tree* can be considered the theoretical container in which the journey and teachings can be understood.

Ethnography

Ethnography can broadly be defined as “a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system” (Creswell, 1998, p. 58). A traditional ethnography is one in which the research “describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group” (Creswell, 1998, p. 68). In this work I studied a group of individuals who come from a First Nations or Euro-Canadian cultural background and whose life work is working cross-culturally on environmental issues.

However, rather than studying them from the outside, I invited multiple voices into the research. A traditional ethnographic frame originates from a historical anthropological tradition rooted in Western dualistic thinking that includes delineating the observer and the observed (Lertzman, 1999, p. 182), where the observer, or researcher, interprets his or her findings and paints one overarching cultural portrait. In contrast, my inquiry was situated in the postmodern philosophical approach to ethnography, which has moved away from positivism and objectivity in an attempt to make space for multiple perspectives. This type of framing takes a more holistic approach and offers a bridge between different discourses (Lertzman, 1999, p. 342) and also tends

to highlight the “importance of marginalized people and groups (the ‘other’)” (Creswell, 1998, p. 79). The research framing can also be called a feminist communitarian ethical model of ethnography (Denzin, 1997), where I focused on shared emotional experiences, but did not seek consensus: each personal voice was appreciated and respected for what it had to offer.

Although a holistic approach was taken in this research the core of the work is still based on these two different cultures and through an ethnographic lens it is important to explain what is meant when I discuss “First Nations” and “Euro-Canadian” in the context of my thesis. “First Nations” can be defined as the Indigenous population in Canada who

[s]hare experiences as peoples who have been subjected to the colonization of their lands and cultures, and the denial of their sovereignty, by a colonizing society that has come to dominate and determine the shape and quality of their lives. (Smith, 1999, p. 7)

The Euro-Canadian population refers to British Columbians who have European heritage and have not shared the experiences of colonization described above. I chose to only focus on “Euro” Canadians because the five co-researchers that were chosen, along with myself, all have European heritage.

This research often refers to these groups on a larger scale, in terms of their worldviews. When I consider the “non-First Nations” worldview, I refer to it as the “Western”, “dominant”, or “mainstream” worldview. Similarly, I label my five First Nations co-researchers as “First Nations” yet consider the larger worldview an “Indigenous worldview”. When considering Indigenous populations on a larger scale than

my co-researchers I use the term First Nations, Indigenous, and Aboriginal interchangeably.

In order to understand the space that this research is situated in, it is valuable to look at previous analysis of Indigenous culture and worldviews, and of Western mainstream culture in Canada, to highlight some of the fundamental differences. These are complex categories, and while it is dangerous to over-generalize; Lertzman (1999) noted there has been enough analysis to allow a broad sense of each complex system to be portrayed.

Both knowledge systems are prevalent in BC and both are valid, important, and valuable in their individual way (Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992): neither is right or wrong. Knudtson and Suzuki (1992) pointed out that the predominant difference between these two cultures lies in the way each asks questions about the universe, and most notably the type of knowledge and beliefs each hold about the natural world (p. 10). Also, while these are two parallel knowledge systems, it is important to recognize that historical circumstances prevent them from holding equal weight in Canada. Although the dominant paradigm in Western society has been challenged, it is still the foundational knowledge system operating in mainstream society (Battiste & Henderson, 2000).

Worldview, Culture and Knowledge Systems

As a system, culture enables individuals to share meaningful interactions with others, yet also binds individuals within certain contexts of understanding; ultimately, reality is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Hall, 2002; Hames, 2007; Laverty, 2003; Lertzman, 1999; Moules, 2002). Culture is a knowledge system (du Plessis & Raza, 2004) that is historically shared (Hall, 2002, p. 4), and inherently

dynamic with indistinct boundaries (Hall, 2002). Culture informs what we deem as meaningful, and what we “choose to see” to help us make sense of the world around us, as informed by our worldview (Hames, 2007). Worldviews are cognitive structures (Lertzman, 1999) that “do not change the way things are. Rather, they project particular versions of reality onto the minds of those predisposed to accept them” (Hames, 2007, p. 49).

Dominant Western Knowledge System

Many argue that the predominant influence on Western society was the Industrial Revolution, which resulted in a Cartesian-Newtonian, reductionist and mechanistic system where understanding the world occurs through the observation and study of individual parts and fragments (Atleo, 2004; Capra, 1996). One of the central features of this modern worldview is its fragmented dualistic nature where there is a separation of “humanity from nature, nature from culture, mind from body, thought from feeling, and the individual from the world” (Lertzman, 1999, p. 341). Further, it is a linear system that focuses on cause and effect, and the prediction, design, and control of the world (Hames, 2007). Western beliefs are embedded within theoretical frameworks of how the world works in order to understand the “truth” of something (Battiste & Henderson, 2000). Orr (1992) points out that Cartesian science rejects passion and “science without passion and love can give us no good reason to appreciate the sunset, nor can it give us any purely objective reason to value life. These must come from deeper sources” (para. 21).

The environment is external to the mechanistic system of Western culture described above (Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992; Suzuki, 2003); natural processes are at the core of what sustains us as humans yet I believe Western culture disconnects individuals

from these processes. When dealing with the environment, individuals from a Western worldview relate through constructed boundaries and categories (Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992) that place a filter of perception between oneself and the natural world (Battiste & Henderson, 2000), and that does not take into account the larger ecological community and the interconnections and relationships that exist. Further, the primary way that individuals from a Western culture connect with the natural world is as a way to meet their own ends (Battiste & Henderson, 2000). The natural world is seen as resources and commodities, yet the economic system does not have space for ecological principles (Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992). As such, the capitalist system in place has created an inherent gap between material production and the production of meaning (Lertzman, 1999) creating a lack of a holistic understanding of the world. I believe that this paradigm is problematic and the primary cause of the ecological crisis; however, as Knudtson and Suzuki (1992) point out this worldview is valuable, but possibly incomplete.

Indigenous Knowledge System

An Indigenous worldview on the other hand differs from a Western worldview in its core beliefs and values. Within a Western framework (and sometimes an Indigenous framework) Indigenous knowledge systems are often described as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and it is important to recognize this system, or worldview, in and of itself, as opposed to framing it within the Western paradigm. To do this, in this section I include the Indigenous voices of Atleo (2004), and Battiste and Henderson (2000).

The essence of Indigenous knowledge is informed by “the complementary modes of knowing and caring about the sensory and the spiritual realms” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 49). Indigenous culture acknowledges human thought and feeling as a part of the

universe, not separate from it. Indigenous knowledge is diverse, local and social: “Its focus is the web of relationships between humans, animals, plants, natural forces, spirits and land forms in a particular locality, as opposed to the discovery of universal ‘laws’” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 44). Living in family and community is one of the purposes of life for individuals from an Indigenous worldview (Atleo, 2004) and as addressed above, community extends to kinship with all other forms of life (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992). Individuals are parts of a whole with a responsibility to the whole because everything is interconnected and interdependent (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 55).

Indigenous culture views the universe as a living dynamic cycle that embraces nature’s designs as opposed to fragmenting them and viewing them as linear series of static, individual parts of “human progress” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992; Lertzman, 1999). Indigenous knowledge of an ecosystem is not based on “rigorous Western science” but instead on an awareness and familiarity of an ecosystem passed on through generations where relationships are built through “accumulating experiences, conducting non-formal experiments, and developing intimate understandings of the given consciousness and language, at a specific location and during a specific period of time” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 48).

One other key part of an Indigenous worldview is the concept of respect. Atleo (2004) talks about respect as *isaak*, in the language of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth people. He points out that in the Webster’s dictionary, respect implies a special esteem for something or someone, making the word exclusive. However, in an Indigenous worldview, he says that *isaak* is not exclusive; it is something that is offered to all life forms. Everything is

important and worthy of a special esteem because all of creation comes from the same origin (Atleo, 2004, pp. 15-16).

Participants

For the purposes of this research, my co-researchers were selected for reasons of shared experience and shared interests in this topic along with their cultural background. The ten co-researchers in this project have all been involved in cross-cultural environmental work in a variety of capacities and in a variety of sectors. The First Nations individuals have had experience both working for their community and outside of their community, as Chiefs and on Council. They have all been working on environmental issues specifically affecting their traditional territories. The Euro-Canadians have had collective experience working for government, non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, as consultants, and working for First Nations bands. However, it is relevant to note that these individuals represent much more than their experience and more than “the label” I placed on them. Co-researcher, Reg Whiten, eloquently described who he believes these individuals are. He wrote:

Just as the definition of “Canadians” is evolving to all who take up citizenship from varying global ethnicities, our group also reflects this reality. The co-researchers come from very different life backgrounds; some were born and raised on First Nations reserves, and others were born and raised in mainstream Canadian society be it rural or urban. Some have family history rooted solely in the aboriginal community; some are of mixed multi-generational aboriginal and/or Euro-Canadian and immigrant ancestry. To create this division is not to accede to any desire for distinction as can be found from the common views and

perspectives borne out in our interviews. What should be obvious is actually an important cross-cultural lesson from this work that seems to come naturally to most Canadians... sharing from the heart is what unites us all, and some might call that to have an Indian-heart.

Both the literature and my co-researchers acknowledge that there are inherent differences between these two groups; however, I would also like to acknowledge that they are not as distinct as this implies. I believe that there are First Nations individuals who hold a dominant Western worldview and similarly non-First Nations who hold an Indigenous worldview. Thus, while I have chosen the terms “First Nations” and “Euro-Canadian” to refer to my 10 co-researchers I do not intend to categorize them as prescribing to the Western mainstream or Indigenous worldviews outlined above. I recognize that “First Nations” and “Euro Canadians” are very large categories that I established for the purposes of this research, and it is important to acknowledge that although these categories themselves are layered and multicultural, their complexity is outside the scope of my thesis.

I conclude this section with a brief biography of each participant, in order to understand who gathered under the *Sacred Tree*. I will first present the First Nations co-researchers, followed by the Euro-Canadian co-researchers, and myself, introducing us through our personal stories.

First Nations Co-Researchers

A former chief of his community, Art Napoleon, “Travelling Sun”, has worked cross-culturally for many years in East Moberly Lake in Treaty 8 Territory. He is a storyteller, a musician, a conservationist, and a “language and culture revitalizer”. Art

grew up traditionally, living off the land, and although he left the reserve when he was still in high school, he still calls it home. He returns every summer with his wife and children and sets up a smoke house, hunts, picks berries, and ships the food back down south. Art makes sure he eats something from home every week, teaching his children about where their food comes from.

Greg Charleson, Quiatsuputh (“carries the wolf on his shoulders”), is from the Head House (kaaeth Tlaan ish takuumth) of the Hesquiaht Nation. Currently, Greg is a member of Council holding the youth, culture, and forestry portfolio. Greg has had experience working in his community in both fisheries and forestry but can currently be found in Port Alberni, working in a treatment centre for First Nations along with focusing on revitalizing culture in younger generations.

Mark Gauti is from T’Sou-ke Nation: he is an environmental scientist, an artist, and the former Environmental Coordinator for his Band. Mark grew up in Vancouver, away from his community because his grandparents chose to move off of the reserve after being taken away to residential school. Until eight years ago Mark only knew First Nations through stereotypes but has now returned to T’Sou-ke Nation and has been learning and celebrating his culture ever since. Mark is currently working on an environmental children’s book, using traditional stories and art.

Judith Sayers’ traditional name is “Kekinusuqs” which means “with Thunder”. She is a Hupacasath woman from the larger Nuu-chah-nulth Nation on Vancouver Island. Judith has been working cross culturally for the past 30 years in a series of roles including lawyer, Chief, and her current role as Executive in Residence in Business and as an Adjunct Professor of Law at the University of Victoria.

Russell Collier is a member of the Gitksan Nation and is one of Canada's foremost aboriginal land use planners and GIS mappers. Russell currently lives in a small town in Northern British Columbia focusing on permaculture and aboriginal land use planning and mapping. Russell is passionate about language and understanding cross-cultural communications and he believes that in order to understand our world we must understand the language we speak.

Euro-Canadian Co-Researchers

Currently based in Vancouver, Brenda Kuecks is the new President of Ecotrust Canada. Brenda comes from a social work and community development background and is interested in how to intervene in a social system to create change. Following 15 years in international development, Brenda returned to British Columbia, working to support economic development in communities impacted by the collapse of the salmon fishery. For the past seven years Brenda has worked in a senior management capacity with Ecotrust in their Tofino office.

Reg Whiten is a community and land-use planner, and educator who runs a consulting practice called InterraPlan Inc. based at Moberly Lake in Northeast British Columbia. He has extensive experience working cross culturally with aboriginal people across Canada's north and overseas focusing on rural livelihood and watershed sustainability initiatives. Ten years ago, he established the Boreal Centre for Conservation-Based Enterprise, and the Peace River Watershed Council. Reg sits as BC and Yukon representative for the Canadian Institute of Planner's Indigenous People's Planning Committee, as well as Director of the BC Agroforestry Committee. At present,

he is working to establish the Niwatame Learning Centre to foster new forms of interactive learning about practice for eco-conscious living.

Fern Wager, born and raised in Victoria, British Columbia, is inspired by nature and enriched by community. Fern spends her days working for the Provincial Government in the Environmental Assessment Office, representing the government to form working groups with First Nations, other Government Agencies, and consulting with the public and other stakeholders in order to identify major issues of large projects and assess mitigation of potential effects.

Catherine Stewart has always felt a spiritual connection to the natural world; particularly to the ocean since the first time she saw it at the age of six. Catherine spent her early days in media and advertising, traveling abroad, living in England, and in a seven-year back-to-the-land experience in Ontario. Next, she worked for Greenpeace on the Fisheries and Oceans campaign, climate change, and with forestry issues. Catherine was the Lead Negotiator for Greenpeace in the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement. Today, she can be found in Vancouver, working with the NGO Living Oceans on their Aquaculture Campaign.

Briony Penn is passionate about connecting people to place and making the conservation message accessible. Her career path has included academia, journalism, broadcasting, interpretation, ecotourism, and community mapping. A founding director of The Land Conservancy of British Columbia, she has worked in the land trust movement in various capacities for 25 years. In 2008, she ran as a federal candidate in Saanich and the Gulf Islands. She currently resides on Saltspring Island and is a writer, artist, and consultant in environmental education, communication, and environmental design.

I am Jennifer Williams and I am currently completing my graduate studies in Environmental Education and Communications at Royal Roads University in Victoria, British Columbia. Over the past few years I have been exposed to a variety of experiences and diverse worldviews within the field of environmental education including the education sector, business sector, as well as the food and energy sector. The most valuable lesson impressed upon me from all of these experiences is the power and importance of collaboration and inclusion of multi-stakeholders in dealing with complex environmental issues. My most recent position as Program Manager with First Power allowed me the opportunity to cultivate relationships with a variety of groups including government, business, non-governmental organizations and most importantly First Nations communities. The approach First Power takes in working with First Nations groups is approaching projects based on individual community visioning exercises and thus working closely with communities. While overall my First Power experiences have been positive they are undeniably complex and ultimately what led me to this research.

THE EAST: BEGINNINGS AND RENEWAL

“The East is the direction from which the new day comes into the world. It is the direction of renewal. It is the place of innocence, guilelessness, spontaneity, joy and the capacity to believe in the unseen” (Bopp, et al., 1984, p. 42). It is in the East where my journey truly begins. The previous section contextualized this research in a theoretical framework and outlined the parallel worldviews, cultures and knowledge systems at play. This section offers the historical circumstances between these cultures in Canada. It also explores the literature relevant to cross-cultural work in environmental initiatives and considers components of cross-cultural communication and the importance and value of collaboration, cultural literacy, and ecological identity. Finally, it is in the East where I reflect on all of these concepts in terms of an example of cross-cultural collaboration on Vancouver Island’s West Coast and conclude with the consideration of a systems perspective and the larger ecological community.

Historical Circumstances

The Canadian government has made many attempts to assimilate First Nations, with the intent of creating a homogenous country through numerous policies including residential schools, the appropriation of lands, the creation of reservations, and the banning of traditional languages and cultural activities. The government put these policies in place because they believed they were helping First Nations, where, in fact, the policies were grounded in a Western paradigm with no space for another way of life or another way of being. These policies are a result of the Canadian government assuming that Indigenous peoples are inferior to members of the dominant Western worldview (Helin, 2006). The subsequent assertion of control and power over Indigenous

peoples has resulted in a dependency by Indigenous peoples on the Canadian government (Cardinal, 1969; Helin, 2006). It is not surprising that these historical circumstances have greatly strained relations between First Nations and Euro-Canadian populations, and have led to the marginalization of many First Nations people from “mainstream society.” The physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering that has resulted from these historical policies and events, along with the cultural isolation in First Nations communities, could potentially take generations to heal (Lertzman, 1999).

The situation in Canada between First Nations and Euro-Canadians is exemplified by relations between First Nations and the federal governing body of Aboriginals in Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). INAC’s (2009) vision for Indigenous communities is to “improve social well-being and economic prosperity; develop healthier, more sustainable communities; and participate more fully in Canada’s political, social and economic development – to the benefit of all Canadians” (para. 3). On the other hand, many Aboriginals believe that INAC is “possibly one of the most incompetent bureaucracies in Western history, as well as one that has a track record for being outright malicious to the true welfare of Aboriginal people” (Helin, 2006, p. 119). The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is the organization that represents First Nations people in Canada and its goals are stated to promote the “restoration and enhancement” of the relationship with the Crown “and to ensure that it is mutually beneficial to the First Nations people” (AFN, n.d., para. 1). The relationship is referred to by the AFN as “one of (negotiated agreement with a view toward) peaceful coexistence based on equitable sharing of lands and resources, and ultimately on respect, recognition, and enforcement of our respective right to govern ourselves” (AFN, n.d., para. 1).

Thus, Aboriginal Canadians and the Canadian government have differing goals and objectives. First, there are different perceptions of the INAC mandate (Cairns, 2003). There is also a tension between INAC striving for the participation of First Nations in the politics of Canada and the AFN striving for the right to govern themselves. This discrepancy results in a power struggle (Marker, 2000) that epitomizes the larger conflict: Canada's political system, including resource management and land use policy, is based on colonial attitudes and practices and represents the Canadian mainstream worldview. However, regardless of this fact, many First Nations communities have retained their languages, cultural traditions, ceremonies, and deep cultural teachings about environmental management in their territories. In fact, research has shown that in many communities rather than fading, Indigenous social norms and practices are evolving (Lertzman, 1999, p. 120).

Of specific interest to this research is how this power struggle correlates to environmental management issues. Environmental issues often involve land and resource management concerns, and the question of who should be doing what and who has the right to do what on different pieces of land is a common debate between First Nations and Euro-Canadians. There is a fundamental disagreement between them concerning land and resources: "Many Aboriginal peoples believe, to this day, that they own their lands, yet the [Canadian government] continues to assert and enforce its unilateral claims to sovereignty over Aboriginal lands" (Turner, 2008, p. 5). Beyond ownership, what "land" means in an Indigenous worldview is foreign to a Western colonial worldview (Lertzman, 1999). In First Nations culture, land is not considered in terms of money and status as it is commonly in the dominant worldview. Instead, land is considered in terms of

responsibility and stewardship; land has Spirit in an Indigenous worldview (Lertzman, 1999, p. 202). This potential disagreement is of the utmost importance in environmental work, as one of the primary issues becomes about property, a common concern in resource management and thus in environmental initiatives.

Cross-Cultural Communication

In order to consider effective cross-cultural collaboration we must examine factors in communication between cultures. Hoffman (2005) refers to the context of understanding as one's *lifeworld*, their total personal and social identity, enabling one to understand those in their own lifeworld while creating a lack of understanding across lifeworlds (i.e. across cultures). These constraints make cross-cultural communication and understanding challenging.

Beer, as referenced by Lertzman (1999), builds on Hoffman's ideas through the application of ecosystem theory to understand worldviews as systems of knowledge. By taking a systems approach Beer concludes that worldviews are self-referencing, with the property of autopoiesis, "the relationships established among components are essential for the production of the components themselves. There is a circularity: components make relationships make components" (Lertzman, 1999, p. 17). Further, these systems are complex and subject to positive and negative feedback. Positive feedback is when the system accepts something that enhances the structure, but negative feedback is when something is disregarded because it does not fit within our understanding of reality (Lertzman, 1999, pp. 17-18). Negative feedback specifically creates huge ramifications for cross-cultural work as it prevents us from seeing things that we do not already believe.

Thus, to move beyond inter-cultural communication provides a challenge of establishing a necessary common understanding, along with the creation of a space that recognizes and honours differences. Parekh (as cited in Taylor, 2001) states, “‘we’ cannot integrate ‘them’ so long as ‘we’ remain ‘we’; ‘we’ must be loosened up to create a new common space in which ‘they’ can be accommodated and become part of a newly reconstituted ‘we’” (p. 4). It is crucial in cross-cultural collaborative contexts that everyone works together to balance multiple and often competing interests (Atleo, 2004). Marker (2000) suggests that to do this, we must re-learn the way we see and understand the world and teach others to do the same. Lertzman (1999) says that we “have to get beyond our superstitions, myths, and narrowly conceived agendas to recognize the cultures in which TEK is embedded and respect those who live them. We will have to go beyond our social constructions of Indigenous peoples” (p. 124). Lertzman (1999) refers to this as cultural literacy.

When dealing with competing interests and conflict, there are several factors that often affect successful understanding: stereotypes, expectations of identity, and framing. *Stereotypes* are shared amongst a group, about another group, and allow a fast interpretation of individuals (Hoffman, 2005; LeBaron, 2003). *Expectations of identity* is a deeper function of culture than stereotypes, again used to make sense of an individual (Hall, 2002). *Framing* is the way in which we perceive, interpret and make sense of complex situations (Hoffman, 2005) based on our previous experiences and pre-understanding (Lavery, 2003; Moules, 2002). Collectively, these processes result in the categorization of individuals and even communities and may allow us to ignore differences that occur between individuals or situations that can lead to

misunderstandings (Hall, 2002). Hames (2007) says that “we unconsciously reinforce our beliefs about reality to create a history that is highly personal and extremely difficult to unlearn... real transformation begins when we become conscious of our inner prejudices and beliefs formed from past experiences and learning” (p. 63).

Collaboration

Suzuki (1992) tells a story about his childhood experience of emigrating to Canada from Japan as a child. He remembers his parents leaving behind the connection they held to the land in Japan to embrace the opportunity of owning land in Canada. This transition resulted in his parents viewing land as a commodity and a resource. He further reminisces about his choice to follow a scientific academic path, fully accepting the dominant Cartesian worldview of reductionism. However, he juxtaposes these experiences growing up, with his initial contact with First Nations people and being exposed to another way of being in the world. He described this experience as opening to new ideas such as interconnectedness, respect, and appreciation (Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992). I recount this story because I find it interesting that one of Canada’s most popular environmental activists in the 21st century was also caught up in the Western dominant paradigm prior to being exposed to another way of knowing. He describes his experience of opening to a holistic way of looking at the world as a result of his exposure to Indigenous cultures. To me this story offers encouragement and inspiration for cross-cultural engagement.

There has been a lot of research that looks at reconciling these two ways of knowing, however the majority of it focuses on bringing Traditional Ecological

Knowledge (TEK) into Western thought which simply frames TEK in a Western paradigm.

The existing colonial bilingual language policy in Canada is not based on helping or persuading Canadians and Indigenous people to understand the value of Indigenous languages and worldviews. Instead it is aimed at assimilating Indigenous thought into English or French thought. It thus represents an unacceptable continuation of the Eurocentric interpretive monopoly over reality.

(Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 84)

Lertzman (1999) agrees, and says that it is dangerous to reduce TEK to “data”. TEK is part of Indigenous culture, and thus part of the knowledge system. It is socially rooted and cannot be considered apart from the place and the community it originates from. If it is considered as data or in isolation, it is another contributor to the colonial attitude and will undoubtedly aggravate the already deep-rooted social issues.

I believe that there are reasons for these two cultures to work together. As Knudtson and Suzuki (1992) say: “Despite this gulf between Native and scientific ways of knowing about nature, each tradition has much to learn from the other” (p. 17). We need to find creative solutions that lead us to sustainability respectfully, while acknowledging that the dominant society is failing (Orr, 2009). It is of a “national interest” for governments to not only listen to and respect Indigenous communities, but also to work with them (Jull, 2003, p. 38). Beyond that, I also believe that it is just as important to disregard the cultural categories and embrace collaboration for collaborations sake. As Lertzman (1999) points out, collaboration can lead to “new perspectives on what ‘research’ is and ‘how’ it can be done” (p. 179). Ultimately, it is an

exercise in respect and “recognizing people as people and accepting others on their own terms” (Lertzman, 1999, p. 173).

Research has shown that collaboration is key for solving complex issues, requiring both cooperation and active participation at an individual and organizational level (Cullen, et al., 1999). Further, “the linking of intercultural and intracultural planning is a necessary component of the transition to ecological sustainability” (Lertzman, 1999, p. 344). Working together levels the playing field, bringing everyone to equal ground, and brings people together from different backgrounds. This, in turn can lead to creative solutions that could not have been identified alone.

Cultural Literacy

Lertzman (1999) believes that cultural literacy is the primary way for individuals from a Western and Indigenous worldview to effectively and respectfully collaborate. He believes that without this cultural knowledge and understanding, colonial cycles will continue giving “rise to cultural repression and misappropriation” (p. 153). To be culturally literate one must be open to learning about another culture beyond books and workshops, through direct experience with that culture. It necessitates relationships, one of the core components of Indigenous culture. To truly achieve cultural literacy will take time, respect, sincerity, and curiosity (Lertzman, 1999).

In my work with First Nations, I have learned there are ways to approach knowledge other than those found in the academic community. These methods are no less rigorous than those required in an academic context. In some circumstances they can be even more demanding and less so in others. It takes as much time and effort to become literate and conversant in this cultural context as

it does within the academic culture. In both, learning is ongoing. This kind of cultural education, however, is experiential, and is generally not learned in books. The schoolhouse is life itself. Learning takes place in community and in interpersonal relationship. Tuition fees are of a different order. Mistakes can be costly with lingering effects. Benefits can prevail through generations. (Lertzman, 1999, p. 13)

When someone is culturally literate they can function multi-culturally and are able to communicate in two different cultures effectively, comfortably, and respectfully. Being culturally literate does not mean giving up your own beliefs and adopting another culture, but instead recognizing yourself as part of a larger system (Lertzman, 1999).

Although he does not use the same language as Lertzman, Hames (2007) also refers to the importance of opening to other ways of knowing: “becoming alert to particular *ways of knowing* and the unseen perceptions informing a certain worldview opens cracks through which we can peek, grasping the inner workings of the knowledge system in play” (p. 51). He also points out that science and spirituality are two contemporary worldviews that together “create a sense of *wholeness* experienced as enlightenment or wisdom” (p. 52).

An Example from Clayoquot Sound

One specific example of cross-cultural collaboration is the *Scientific Panel for Sustainable Forest Practices in Clayoquot Sound (1995)*. This Panel was the first time in BC that First Nations and Western science worked together and wrote a bi-cultural, multi-disciplinary, government policy that made recommendations for forest practice standards in Canada (Lertzman, 1999, p. 200). Lertzman (1999) explored the interface

between TEK and Western science in this case study in terms of social and cultural capital. This Panel included scientists, elders and a hereditary Chief to discuss land-use planning in Clayoquot Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island. He described it as:

A meeting of some very fine minds and brave hearts from two totally different worlds. It is an icon of the meeting between those two worlds – an interface whose articulation has helped to establish new terrains of knowledge, methods and planning between cultural paradigms. (Lertzman, 1999, pp. 199-200)

The Panel incorporated a First Nations perspective through: underlining Nuu-Chah-Nulth concepts, incorporating TEK, and acknowledging the cultural importance of place to First Nations. They explored then-current practices in the Clayoquot region and offered recommendations inclusive of First Nations perspectives. According to Lertzman (1999), some of the key components to this successful work included: the recognition of cultural capital, involvement of individuals with high levels of “cultural literacy,” clear protocols developed at the outset on how to work together, space offered for oral history, an embodiment of a holistic worldview and an ecosystem management approach, and the valuing of TEK. Lertzman (1999) argues that this is an example of a meta-epistemological perspective where individuals did not give up their own beliefs, but opened to learning, acknowledging, and respecting other ways of knowing.

The work that has been done in Clayoquot Sound proves that respectful and inclusive work is possible between First Nations and Euro-Canadians in BC. Further, his example of the Scientific Panel may be well-known and documented but it is not the only success story; many co-researchers in this study also share encouraging tales. I consider this example a reminder that it is easy to get caught up in conflict and negativity but it is

also important to acknowledge the positive work that is happening cross-culturally in BC and learn from those experiences also.

A Systems Perspective: The Larger Ecological Community

In this chapter, I have looked at specific knowledge systems, collaboration, cultural literacy, and a specific example that incorporates these but I also think it is important to take a step back and observe the larger system in place and consider an ecological identity. According to an Indigenous worldview, everything is connected, and thus it is helpful to consider this research in those terms.

Above, Lertzman (1999) referred to a “meta-epistemology” as required in cross-cultural work. He stated that a meta-epistemology acts as a container for multiple knowledge systems, in this case in terms of Indigenous and Euro-Canadian knowledge systems. He points out that a meta-epistemology requires respect, tolerance, and open-mindedness as occurred with the *Scientific Panel for Sustainable Forest Practices in Clayoquot Sound*. He says: “There is a holistic quality that needs to be conveyed: thinking in systems, thinking in wholes, seeing connectivity and places of separation, respecting differences and exploring the interface, touching each other and knowing the whole” (p. 161).

Capra (1996) states that the ecological crisis is ultimately a crisis of perception (p. 4) and in order to contemplate the societal shift that is required to counteract our ecological crisis, we need to take a more holistic, systemic approach. Thus, we can consider knowledge systems as living systems. Capra (1996) points out, in order to understand a living system we must understand its pattern of organization and its structure (p. 158) and individuals must understand how natural systems function.

Literature suggests that mimicking some of these attributes can help foster sustainability, as natural systems are inherently sustainable. Thinking in terms of ecological systems includes two qualities: “a high level of ecological understanding and awareness and the sense of self as part of a larger system” (Thomashow, 1995, p. 19).

Ecological Identity

Furthering a discussion of taking a systems perspective, it is relevant to consider what this means on an individual level. Ecological identity is a concept that refers to ones connection to and identification with the natural world (Thomashow, 1995). Specifically, ecological identity is concerned with the “ways people construe themselves in relationship to the earth as manifested in personality, values, actions, and sense of self” (Thomashow, 1995, p. 3). To me, ecological identity is a way of actively engaging with the world considering both the parts and the whole. Orr (2005) refers to the smaller pieces of ecological identity and states that a key component of ecological identity is ecological literacy, where one has “at least a basic comprehension of ecology, human ecology, and the concepts of sustainability” (p. xi). Beyond these individual parts, ecological identity is also about seeing ecosystems and the natural world as part of oneself; the ability to “internalize the interconnections and interdependence of all living things” (Thomashow, 1995, pp. 12-13). Thus, the purpose of ecological identity work is to link an ecological worldview to personal life choices and to assist individuals in transitioning to a new way of seeing themselves; a new way of identifying meaning in their lives (Thomashow, 1995).

One path identified by Thomashow (1995) to explore ecological identity with an individual is through the reminiscing of childhood memories of special places where the

individual emotionally bonded with nature. Thomashow (1995, p. 9) states that “the purpose of revisiting the special places of childhood is to gain awareness of the connections we make with the earth, awakening and holding those memories in our consciousness of the present”.

Parallels can be drawn between ecological identity work and healing, as the heart of the ecological self focuses on “reweaving humanity’s inherent interconnectedness with all of the universe through a revitalization of each person’s direct, lived, and sensual experience with the complex whole of nature” (Besthorn, 2010, p. 59). Therefore, through having a strong ecological identity you consider yourself as part of something more and something bigger than yourself. An ecological identity is not a focus on the individual but a focus on all that is, a focus on the connections with everything.

Therefore, through a strong sense of ecological identity there would be no separation between humans and nature or separation between cultures. An ecological identity is a connection to the Earth itself and all that that encompasses. Macy (1990) states that one’s openness and acceptance with their connection to the Earth allows one to consider their actions on a level where hurting the planet, including hurting fellow humankind, also becomes hurting themselves.

The literature presented in this chapter has shown that while Indigenous and Western mainstream cultures are very different, it is crucial that these two cultures work together to achieve sustainability. In order to work together, the literature has advised that individuals need to become culturally literate, and approach situations openly and holistically. Society, as a whole, needs to expand worldviews to acknowledge more than ourselves and acknowledge the larger world within which we live.

THE SOUTH: SENSITIVITY AND HEART

The South is the direction of the sun at its highest point. It is the place of summer, of fullness, of youth, of physical strength and vigor. It is also the time that people work to prepare for the fall and winter months. Hence, symbolically, it is a time of preparing for the future, of getting ready for days ahead. The South is also the place of heart, of generosity, of sensitivity to the feelings of others, of loyalty, of noble passions and of love. (Bopp, et al., 1984, p. 48)

The South offers a place of growth for my work that makes room for multiple voices to come together in a new type of collaborative research. In this section I carve out the methodological and procedural space for this research in the field of cross-cultural environmental work between First Nations and Euro-Canadians. Situated theoretically in postmodern ethnography. I pioneer a qualitative collaborative research design using a “decolonizing methodology” (Smith, 1999), bringing in multiple voices and perspectives to the research.

Collaborative Methodology

The heart of this work is based on relationship and collaboration, both in the topic of study and the methodology chosen. Although this research is rooted in ethnography it is not a traditional ethnographical study, but instead a form of collaborative ethnography; reading alongside co-researchers, as opposed to reading over their shoulders (Lassiter, 2005). Lassiter (2005) points out that ethnography is collaborative in its very nature through the relationship between ethnographer and interlocutors; however, collaborative ethnography “moves collaboration from its taken-for-granted background and positions it on center stage” (p. 16). This research is about more than verifying quotes but also using

those conversations to develop an “evolving, ongoing conversation” (Lassiter, 2005, p. 7). In this collaborative approach both First Nations and Euro-Canadian co-researchers speak, giving an equal voice to everyone. I built trustworthy relationships, respected confidentiality when requested, and invited co-researchers to be actively involved at each stage of the research (Denzin, 1997).

Another element of collaboration in this research is my involvement as the researcher in the process. I acknowledge that this ethnographic fieldwork is “personal, emotional, and identity work” (Coffey, 1999, p. 1). I come to this with my own background working cross-culturally on environmental issues and thus, I am more than an observer and more than a narrator and will write myself into the process where appropriate. My experiences will be shared in the findings as an example of one of the “ways in which the self and the field are interwoven”, ultimately an example of how, in ethnography, along with “collecting and writing the biographies of others, we are engaged in biographical work of our own” (Coffey, 1999, p. 123). In hopes of establishing deeper authenticity, I will also explore my personal account of the research process in the concluding section.

Decolonizing Methodology

The methodological approach for this work is a decolonizing methodology. Smith (1999) writes that the very term *research* “is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (p. 1). Historically, academic research around the globe with Indigenous communities has created a lack of trust as a result of the way knowledge is collected, classified, and represented “through the eyes of the west” (Smith, 1999, p. 1). Even basic conceptions of gender, individual, society, space, and time may be defined and described

very differently by an Indigenous culture than a Euro-Canadian culture. Thus, to meet the stated objective of this study, to deepen understanding of cross-cultural differences in environmental initiatives to inform future collaborative processes, this research also uses a decolonizing methodology, emphasizing “indigenous concerns, indigenous practices and indigenous participation” (Smith, 1999, p. 107) through the engagement of Indigenous and Euro-Canadian participants as co-researchers to examine ecological identity and experience.

Decolonizing methodology emerged from a place of mistrust towards academic Western research; however, just as this research pushes past the burden of history to create recommendations, a decolonizing methodology also attempts to provide new models, and new ways forward for research. Decolonizing methodology does not reject Western knowledge or academic research but critically contemplates the processes used and considers it from alternative perspectives, giving a voice to Indigenous communities who have not commonly been a part of the dominant philosophy. Western ideas tend to suggest superiority, privileging one way to know and interpret the world, and decolonization makes room for other voices. Smith (1999) specifically talks about the Cartesian dualisms in social science research where everything is based on fragmentation, classification, and representation. Further, Western ideas tend to consider the individual of central importance and concern, “distanced, or separated, from the physical environment, the community” (Smith, 1999, p. 55). Creating the space for people from these two differing backgrounds opens up the research to potentially different ways of seeing the world. “Indigenous peoples have philosophies which connect humans to the

environment and to each other and which generate principles for living a life which is sustainable, respectful, and possible” (Smith, 1999, p. 105).

Application of Decolonizing Methodologies

I grounded this research within a decolonizing discourse to give voice to individuals from both First Nations and Euro-Canadian backgrounds, in order to understand and honour how each of these individuals experience and relate to the world. Smith (1999) introduces 25 “decolonizing” methods that she deems appropriate for engaging participants in Indigenous research; four of these approaches were exercised in this study: storytelling, envisioning, creativity, and sharing.

I used ‘storytelling’ as it offers a natural space for dialogue and inclusivity (Hoffman, 2005) with the opportunity to explore experiences in cross-cultural work through the eyes, hearts, and minds of the co-researchers, “Storytelling is a useful and culturally appropriate way of representing the ‘diversities of truth’ within which the story teller rather than the researcher retains control” (Smith, 1999, p. 145). Storytelling may be particularly powerful in First Nations communities as there are strong oral traditions. Denning (2001) describes storytelling as natural, easy, entertaining, and energizing, along with helping to understand complexity, enhance or change perceptions and engage feelings (p. xv). In the context of this research storytelling can help identify historical patterns of conflict in cultural contexts, and provide a more nuanced context for First Nations and Euro-Canadian relations (Marker, 2000). Ultimately, in a collaborative approach storytelling goes beyond individual experience to weave a collective story (Smith, 1999) and enables us “to imagine new perspectives and new worlds” (Denning, 2001, p. xvii).

Smith's (1999) methods of 'envisioning' and 'creating' were also used as ways of looking ahead and co-creating recommendations for future cross-cultural work. In the one-on-one interviews, co-researchers were asked to consider the future of this work and describe to me their vision for positive future process. This enabled individuals to think through the problems and talk about a positive future. The final stage of this research was working collaboratively online on a recommendations document which is what Smith (1999) refers to as "channeling collective creativity in order to produce solutions to indigenous problems" (p. 158). Ultimately, this research is channeling creativity to tackle more than just Indigenous, but also societal and ecological problems.

Finally, 'sharing' is a core part of this research as all of my co-researchers work in this field and will be able to take the co-created findings into their daily work life immediately. My hope is also to share the findings with other concerned parties engaged in cross-cultural environmental initiatives. Smith (1999) points out the importance of sharing both between Indigenous peoples and sharing with the world:

The strategies that work for one community may well work for another. The gains made in one context may well be applied usefully in another. The sharing of resources and information may assist groups and communities to collaborate with each other and to protect each other... To create something new through that process of sharing is to recreate the old, to reconnect relationships and to recreate our humanness. (Smith, 1999, p. 105)

Methods: Research Design

A snowball sampling strategy was utilized to choose my 10 participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008, p. 116). Based on my work with the company First Power

and on relationships I have built through those experiences, I approached three individuals to assess their interest in this project. These three First Nations individuals along with some Euro-Canadian colleagues then passed along the names and contact information of approximately 15 other individuals. I sent out an introductory email to all of these individuals and followed up with a phone call for those who responded with interest and seven more committed, confirming a total of 10 co-researchers. Prior to the one-on-one interview, each participant signed a letter of consent, committing to this research (see Appendix A).

Due to the collaborative nature of the research, participants were invited to become co-researchers ensuring a vested interest in the topic and research focus, along with the prerequisite that they participate in the interview, back and forth verification correspondence, and the process of building the recommendations. The primary requirement for project participants was that they must have worked in cross-cultural environmental projects in British Columbia. I also limited my sample by location, choosing the majority of participants from the Vancouver or Southern Vancouver Island area. Two co-researchers currently live in southwestern BC but come from remote communities, thus bringing a rural perspective to the investigation. I also intentionally included two co-researchers that currently reside in northern BC, inviting a different perspective.

I chose to limit my sample by location because my initial intention was to host a focus group following the one-on-one interviews to formulate recommendations as a group. Thus, by inviting a northern perspective I accepted that I would most likely have less than full participation at the focus group but I believed that the benefit of including

alternative perspectives to the predominantly urban perspective would outweigh full attendance. However, in the end this was not a factor as the focus group did not take place due to challenges in scheduling. In the place of the face-to-face focus group I created an online space that allowed for similar collaboration on a recommendations document described in detail below.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a multiple step process consisting of one-on-one interviews, a series of emails back and forth verifying, editing, and adding to transcripts and findings and finally online collaboration of a recommendations document. In this section I will provide a detailed description of each stage of the process.

Interviews

Interviews were semi-structured lasting between one to two hours each. Guiding questions (see Appendix B) were divided into two sections, exploring individual ecological identity and looking at experience working cross-culturally on environmental initiatives. The majority of questions were open ended to invoke stories from the co-researchers. The first set of questions was intended to learn more about who these co-researchers were in terms of their ecological identity; their early influences, and their connection to place and the natural world. The second set of questions explored personal experiences working cross culturally, looking at both positive and challenging experiences and exploring both why they continue to do the work they do and what they see their future role as. Finally, after reminiscing about good and bad experiences, we discussed their vision for future positive process. All interviews followed this format but there was space for flexibility to veer off course at times should the co-researchers want

to share any specific stories that came to mind, thus allowing for an added richness to the data.

Interview questions were piloted with two different people, over the telephone, in order to help confirm wording to ensure rich answers. Although the data from these practice interviews was not included in the research I feel that both were very useful in practicing to build rapport and relationship through an interview process. One test interview was with a woman I did not know, and another was conducted with a close colleague.

The 10 interviews that made up the bulk of this research took place in a variety of forms. Seven of the interviews were done face-to-face in various locations including co-researchers homes and offices, a public library, and a garden. All spaces were private and quiet enabling an intimacy and level of comfort for the conversation. However, due to location and/or schedules three of the interviews took place over *Skype*, an online communication software program. Fortunately, two of these co-researchers were able to utilize the video tool allowing a bit more intimacy, but one co-researcher was only able to use voice.

Transcript and Findings Verification

Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed and a full transcript was sent to each co-researcher to verify accuracy, and provide the opportunity to add or delete anything. After reading the transcript, co-researchers decided if they felt comfortable being named in the research and if they were okay with being quoted. All co-researchers approved of me using their name, biography, and specific identified quotes in this research.

Following completion of a first draft of the findings chapter I sent it to co-researchers to ensure my interpretations were correct and to give everyone another opportunity to edit their quotes or stories. They also had the opportunity to add to the recommendations document. As each interview ultimately took its own course I encouraged co-researchers to build on the ideas of others for things that they perhaps had not discussed in their interview. This process allowed an iterative nature and resulting depth to the research where co-researchers played off each other's ideas and thoughts. Seven co-researchers provided feedback on the draft version of my findings: three built on each other's ideas and four edited, added, or simply approved their own thoughts. Using a participatory and collaborative process ensured everybody had the opportunity to read my interpretation of his or her words to ensure satisfaction.

Online Collaboration

Finally, based on the data analysis of the 10 interviews I created an initial list of recommendations using a medicine wheel framework again at the suggestion of participant Reg Whiten. I then posted this initial draft as a document using *Google Docs*, an online *Google* software program providing a private space on the World Wide Web where participants are invited via email to log into a site and view and edit documents. Utilizing this software allowed multiple authors to collaborate on recommendations for future cross-cultural environmental work. I invited all 10 co-researchers and gave each of them the opportunity to directly edit the document. I did request that nobody delete anything, but if they do not agree with something that has been added, to write a note beside it. This happened only once and is discussed in the West, in the findings section. Out of the 10 co-researchers four were able to access the *Google Doc* with no issue, two

had technical problems, and four did not participate. In order to enable participation from the co-researchers who could not access the *Google Doc* I sent them a replica of what was online using the text editing software, *Microsoft Word*, and then added their contributions back onto the online document.

Data Analysis

Data analysis commenced with the transcription process. I immersed myself in the interviews, listening to the co-researchers, and allowing their stories, thoughts, and words to flow through me. I read the transcripts many times in order to further familiarize myself with the stories and responses and separated my data analysis into the two sections explored in the interviews: ecological identity and cross-cultural work experience. With the ecological identity data, I identified common themes and ideas that surfaced in the interviews, searching for recurring themes and ideas that emerged as being relevant. I mapped each emergent theme on a large sheet of paper and from each of these I identified all the smaller relevant contextual pieces discussed in each interview, creating branches from the central themes. This process allowed for an identification of linkages and patterns between interviews. These findings were then utilized to paint a picture of who is working in the field of cross-cultural environmental initiatives, identifying some of their key attributes and skills in relation to their ecological identity.

I followed the same analysis steps with the experience data, identifying common themes and mapping ideas to recognize patterns; however, these findings looked at what is happening in the work being done and mapped both positive and negative experiences to consider the larger landscape of what elements work and what elements seem to

consistently fail. Again I identified all of the ideas associated with each predominant theme creating sub-themes.

Following interpretation of these experiences I culled data that was not a strong finding or relevant to the ultimate goal of identifying recommendations. The writing of these findings is separated into the two categories outlined above and organized by theme, weaving in the voices of the co-researchers to keep the data contextualized. The final stage of this analysis consisted of the compilation of recommendations for future process based on the findings of what has been effective in the past and what has failed, coupled with results from the visioning exercise. This rough draft of recommendations became an online collaborative document allowing co-researchers to add and build on ideas offered in the interviews, creating the final recommendations document found below.

Validity Considerations

Ultimately, because “reality is socially constructed and it is what participants perceive it to be” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125), the participants were the primary source in establishing credibility in this research. Member checking, the most important practice in generating credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127), did occur multiple times throughout the research process. As discussed above, co-researchers had the opportunity to revisit our conversations in the transcript and could edit if necessary or add or delete if they felt it appropriate. It also allowed them to consider anonymity after they felt comfortable knowing the direction and content of the conversations. A similar process was followed in using the collaborative *Google Doc* as described above. A decolonizing approach made my process more than member checking, but collaborative

where the “intent of the process is to respect and support participants in the study, not further marginalize them” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 128).

Study Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

The primary delimitation in this study was the creation of cultural categories to choose my co-researchers. I considered that in order to examine cross-cultural work, the participants whom I invited to the study needed to represent the two cultures I was investigating, offering different perspectives both from each other and from my own. I recognize that these categories are not as distinct as the literature may suggest, as I discuss later in my findings, yet I refer to the co-researchers throughout my thesis as First Nations or Euro-Canadians. Regardless of cultural categories I took a postmodern, participatory, decolonizing approach to this research to invite diversity as mentioned above.

Another delimitation was the snowball sampling method chosen for this study; I began with my personal contacts and reached out from there. In the end, many of the co-researchers have only few degrees of separation between them; some of them have even worked together on the same projects in the past. However, the breadth of experience each co-researcher brought to this research resulted in diverse stories of individual work, without crossovers, more often than not.

Also, by limiting my sample by location I limited the experiences I drew from. However, even though the focus group did not occur I do believe that having the majority of the interviews face-to-face was powerful enough to make restricting the location appropriate.

I chose to not ground this research geographically with deep consultations within only *one* community. As this project seeks to find more commonly applicable recommendations across diverse environmental issues, I chose to involve multiple communities to identify more large-scale patterns.

My choice to cancel the face-to-face focus group due to scheduling issues and replace it with an online collaborative document, using *Google Docs*, is another unintentional delimitation. While both the focus group and online document are processes that allow for individuals to build off each other's experiences, the focus group would have offered a level of commitment from the co-researchers attendance that was not possible from an online document. However, had I gone through with the focus group as planned many co-researchers would not have been able to attend, thus not offering a collaborative dialogue regardless while the online document allowed co-researchers to go into the website at their convenience.

Further, the technical difficulties that occurred and the use of a *Microsoft Word* document meant that some individuals were collaborating on a partial document; however, most co-researchers were collaborating on a partial document regardless as only one co-researcher, to my knowledge, went into the site more than once to build on new ideas since their previous input. Also, although everyone was invited to collaborate, not everyone participated in the document. If I were to do this again I would explain the process of the *Google Doc* at the end of the one-on-one interview in order to prevent confusion. This was not possible in my case because at the time of the interviews I was still planning on hosting a focus group.

I also chose to loosely define “cross-cultural environmental initiatives” to any project dealing with an environmental issue that involved individuals from both First Nations and Euro-Canadian backgrounds. This broadness prevents applicability of findings to one type of environmental work, such as specific resource management, planning, or environmental assessments; however, it does allow for commonalities to stand out from different experiences with hopes of offering a wider application of the findings. I hope my findings prove useful and offer insights to deepen the understanding of other individuals working cross-culturally on environmental initiatives.

Limitations

While being collaborative offers a respectful, diversified and inclusive approach, managing schedules is challenging. I found this particularly difficult with this group of individuals because they are so busy and involved in their respective communities. Scheduling and availability directly impacted my findings because although everyone had the same one-on-one interview, their involvement following the interview differed; some had more time to contribute than others. As a result some individuals offered more time to this study and consequently more of their voice is shared.

Scheduling also affected my findings section as I wrote it first in order to send it to my co-researchers for feedback. Due to busy schedules there was often large time gaps between responses, and in a few cases no response at all. As I continued to write my thesis there were times I wanted to add more quotes but in order to respect confidentiality and the collaborative design I could not do this without checking in with the co-researchers, again putting me in the situation of waiting for their response. I do believe

the collaborative methodology adds integrity to this research and my findings but it was a challenging methodology to implement.

Research Significance

Lertzman, who has looked at *Planning Between Cultural Paradigms*, is a leader in the area that he terms “cultural literacy”. In his work he calls for further research that focuses on social and cultural capital, stating that “our sense of place in the universe, of who we are, of how and with whom we relate are powerful sources of meaning and offer vital resources for the transition to ecological sustainability” (Lertzman, 1999, p. 351). This research attempts to fill part of that gap through an ethnographic frame of each co-researcher’s ecological identity and cross-cultural environmental work experience.

Other research in the field of cross-cultural environmental work tends to focus on the integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Western science in resource management, typically through case studies of initiatives in specific communities (Cronin & Ostergren, 2007; Lertzman, 1999; Whiten, Karjala, & Lousier, 2007). The literature that discusses this integration identifies that there is an attempt for these two knowledge systems to work together, yet research also shows that TEK and Western science are incompatible at their core: TEK is qualitative, holistic, and intuitive, whereas Western science is positivist, dualistic, and reductionist (Nadasdy, 1999). These fundamental differences are also evident when one looks at the difference between an Indigenous worldview and a mainstream Western worldview. This research does not specifically look at the integration of TEK and Western science directly, but I have collaborated with several co-researchers who work in that field specifically and I have included their interpretations.

Research on cross-cultural work has also included making broad recommendations based on a compilation of other literature (Crawley & Sinclair, 2003; Lertzman & Vredenburg, 2005). This research offers something new as it is more than a literature review and more than a compilation of stories: I have collaborated directly with 10 people that have been working cross-culturally in a myriad of communities and initiatives in BC and present recommendations for future work that were co-created by this group.

Finally, this research is significant because not only do the findings come directly from people who work in this field, but the recommendations could be immediately applied in their work. In addition, approaching the final recommendations using a decolonizing lens allowed ideas to emerge that were not based on a Western worldview and provide an inclusivity and accessibility of these ideas for others working cross-culturally in the environmental field. Specifically, 10 different individuals who spend a typical workday in a cross-cultural space built these recommendations and used language and phrases that were meaningful to them and their experiences. The variety that this methodology offers, as opposed to coming from my voice alone, will hopefully connect to numerous other individuals who work in this field and offer them a potentially new way to approach their work.

Researcher's Perspective

It is important to acknowledge that I have approached this research from a Western academic background. I also came into this research with certain assumptions and perspectives. I believed that by choosing five co-researchers from each cultural background I would find considerable differences between them that would lead to a

better understanding of cross-cultural work. I organized the research in a way that highlights the “us and them” mentality that I still struggle with yet the interviews led me to a place beyond those categories as I came to realize all of the incredible work happening in this field. My assumptions melted away through each interview and the depth of these individuals’ connection to Earth, connection to place, and connection to each other, regardless of cultural background, captivated me. These perspectives did not alter my approach to this work, but as my assumptions changed so did my approach to the findings. Rather than research that is looking at two different cultures, I looked at the individual culture of each person involved in the research, valuing what each person can contribute to moving forward in cross-cultural environmental work. My co-researchers are passionate about this topic, working outside of those containers and through this divide both in their work and in their lives. As a result, the energy of my inquiry followed their lead, and I rose above the tensions I had previously experienced in cross-cultural work to explore the larger landscape of what collaborative environmental work looks like and what is possible in this field.

THE WEST: RESPECT AND COMMITMENT

The West is the place of sacrifice. When we stand in the West we learn that nothing may be taken from the universe unless something is given. For each of the great gifts of the medicine wheel there is a price. And yet we will learn that the mystery of sacrifice is that there is no sacrifice. (Bopp, et al., 1984, p. 58)

When standing in the West the sun is setting and one must look and learn from the other directions and develop oneself accordingly, creating a vision and a goal to work towards. The West represents: respect, commitment, vision, maturity, and achievement. As such it is in this section that I offer the thoughts and insights as offered by my 10 co-researchers. The experiences shared in this research were varied and included stories from environmental initiatives in the realms of: forestry, fishing, resource extraction, energy, development, and environmental assessment. This chapter takes readers on a journey through the themes that emerged from each of these experiences, the collective voice of the co-researchers, leading from the individual to the collective, from the parts to the whole.

I was deeply humbled and moved by the one-on-one interviews conducted with each co-researcher. Although I entered each conversation with a list of guiding questions, each interview unfolded in its own way, honouring thoughts and stories as they arose. Individuals opened to me through storytelling, offering a window to their character: they embodied passion, shared strengths, and showed courage. Through the seriousness, the laughter, and sometimes tears, I was lifted to a space where I felt both a deep sense of gratitude for their work and accomplishments and immense hope for the future.

Each interview lasted between 1 and 2 hours, providing me a depth and richness of findings to work with. In order to share all of what was offered to me, I chose to use fewer quotes than might be typical in this type of research; however, I still quote the words of my co-researchers when appropriate, so that readers may also feel their emotions, their passion, and their energy.

Each finding layers on the next to paint the big picture – a holistic and dynamic portrait of what cross-cultural environmental work is, alongside recommendations for future process. This chapter is divided into three sections (see figure 2). In the first section, I explore ecological identity, offering a snapshot of a few small pieces of the collective identity of the co-researchers, aimed to provide a picture of who is doing this work meaningfully and authentically. The second section, political system, discusses themes that arose regarding the political container in which all of these cross-cultural experiences interactions exist. The third section, cultural literacy, focuses on cross-cultural experience and alternative ways of being in the world. Each section contributed to and assisted in building my recommendations for future cross-cultural environmental work. Below is a chart offering a thematic summary of my findings in the order they will be discussed.

Figure 2: Thematic Summary

Ecological Identity		Values
Political System		Lack of Education
		Stereotypes
		Cultural Inappropriateness
		Mistrust
		Lack of Consultation
Cultural Literacy	Relationship	Personal Connections

		Joining Community
		Sincerity
		Leadership
		Risk
		Balance
	Respect	Respect for Rights and Title
		Respect for Language
		Respect for Place
		Respect for Diversity

Findings on Ecological Identity

I begin with an investigation of ecological identity in response to my first research question: What are some of the components of individual co-researchers’ ecological identity? Focusing on “ecological identity” provided an opportunity to investigate the human dimension of the system I am exploring in this research and assess potential cultural differences in regards to connection to the natural world. Because this research focused on individuals working on environmental initiatives I felt it would be beneficial to explore the connection that these individuals have with the natural world. Based on Thomashow (1995), each interview began with stories of childhood, influences, and connection to place as a means to explore ecological identity.

Typically, although not exclusively, First Nations co-researchers remembered growing up in their traditional territory hunting and gathering and learning about the natural world from grandparents and elders. Art reminisced about hunting camp and story time around a meal prepared by Granny after a day of hunting. He also remembered as a child preparing pelts from the little animals and walking 3 miles to sell them. Judith remembers picking grasses with her grandmother and being shown different medicines

and uses for traditional plants. Greg talked about “good memories ... just being in my territory” and listed fishing, berry picking, hunting, and cutting wood.

On the other hand, individuals from a Euro-Canadian background tended to share stories that occurred away from their homes, often camping and at cottages, specifically in the summer. Brenda recounted her first solo overnight experience in nature at a girls’ camp. Fern told me about a canoe trip she did with her family when she was 12 years old, and Reg remembered every summer going to an island inherited by his grandmother on a lake in Ontario. Catherine also shared summer memories of a lake and the woods.

This research balanced environmental work with social dynamics, and thus it was fitting that the most significant shared component of ecological identity among all co-researchers is that of their *connection to the natural world*. There were definitive differences in how co-researchers from a First Nations background and those from a Euro-Canadian background grew up and the early influences of the natural world; regardless of early experience, however, they all shared a deep and meaningful connection to the natural world. When discussing their connection to the natural world, their thoughts, their language, and ultimately their values are very much aligned. These individuals feel spiritually and intuitively connected to the natural world. They described it as living both *in* the natural world and *with* the natural world. Regardless of childhood memories, all of these individuals share a deep connection to nature and value the natural world beyond human need. They all have a strong desire to heal it, and a longing to create balance. Brenda said

I think it's intuitive. If you are exposed to it and if people around you are attuned to it you absorb it. ... I think it's in us and so I think when you're exposed to it you just want to embrace it and protect it.

Catherine eloquently described it as feeling that "everything around is a living breathing part of the planet and so are you. And you fit. And it does bring a sense of calmness and a sense of strength and peace."

While the original purpose of this section was to highlight differences between cultures, once the interviews were complete I realized that my findings represented more of a collective identity. On a deep level, regardless of different backgrounds, upbringing, and formal and informal training, these individuals all expressed a strong environmental ethic linked to an ecological worldview. There were few cultural differences between individuals and instead I was offered stories that portrayed strong ecological identities. All of the co-researchers have, at one time, been working on land use and resource management issues in some capacity and thus had a basic understanding of and appreciation for how the natural world operates. Many shared stories about different activities in different seasons, exhibiting their knowledge and understanding of the natural patterns and many co-researchers also shared scientific knowledge: both of these types of knowledge and understanding link to skills of ecological literacy (Orr, 2005). However, beyond a systematic understanding, these individuals also shared a deep connection to the natural world. It was clear to me through the interviews that each co-researcher has connected to the natural world in a way where he or she understands and respects the natural world's rhythms.

Findings on Cross-Cultural Experience

This section explores my second research question: What factors contribute to greater understanding and agreement in cross-cultural collaboration in environmental initiatives, and what factors exist as barriers to these processes? Here I offer a window into the world of cross-cultural environmental work as experienced by the 10 co-researchers. Although each individual comes from a different background and different community, and has a different career focus, many common themes emerged from their collective experience. Their experiences reveal what is happening “on the ground”, and ultimately, what has worked and what has failed in cross-cultural environmental work. Specifically, this section explores two main categories: the political frame and cultural literacy, categories that I identified as emerging from the data.

The Political Frame

In this section, I explore the dominant political frame and consider the lack of education about Canada’s Indigenous history, I reflect on experiences of stereotypes and cultural inappropriateness, I describe the cycle of mistrust, and I explore the lack of consultation in cross-cultural work, all as described by the co-researchers. Each of these themes arose from the interviews and were identified as themes due to their commonality amongst co-researchers.

It is necessary to begin the journey through cross-cultural environmental experiences by recognizing and naming the primary area of tension, as it is the container in which all interactions exist. The current political system and its effect on collaborative processes between First Nations and Euro-Canadians is a topic that came up in many of the conversations and which consistently brought up feelings of frustration and anger. As

described in the section above, the co-researchers are individuals with high levels of ecological literacy, who are striving for sustainability and community with an ecological ethic at the core of who they are. However, I see the political framework in mainstream society as one that is not compatible with ecological understandings; the political framework is a construct that reinforces Cartesian dualisms, hierarchy, and domination.

Description of the Political System

Similar to Cardinal (1969) and Helin (2006), many co-researchers described the political system as one designed to guarantee inequality, assimilation, and disrespect. As described above there is a power struggle occurring between the Canadian federal government and the First Nations government (Helin, 2006); these systems are not compatible. Some of my co-researchers stated that the Canadian government has been designed to destroy traditional hereditary systems that have been in place for thousands of years. Greg, straight-faced, told me that “INAC is almost like a swearword” in his community. He said: “We’re being given cheques by a system that was created to destroy us and ensure that we weren’t going to be strong. Since I’ve been involved in politics that’s what I’ve seen. They don’t recognize our hereditary system.” Similarly, Briony pointed out that “the system in place right now was created by the Indian Act and it’s obscene the way it divides and conquers. It doesn’t serve anybody.” Reg added:

The dominant bureaucratic funding system reinforces ‘silo-thinking’ and disintegration instead of integration within First Nations communities. No matter their perspectives, most managers are forced to adhere to the dominant power-over-and-subservient-function-and-reporting role if they want to keep the bucks flowing. It’s no wonder trying to achieve holistic programming or integration

between social, health, education, environment etc. is so damn hard when faced with such an operational reality. Fortunately, creative leaders can make the integration happen despite the bureaucratic obstacles created by INAC.

There has been an obvious shift away from traditional ways of life and many people are surprised to learn that the romanticized hunter-gatherer, living-off-the-land ways of life, are not necessarily always the reality in First Nations communities. In descriptions of the political backdrop in Canada, many co-researchers point out that these shifts are a result of being part of the political system as it currently operates. Many co-researchers, although particularly First Nations, feel stuck and are not sure how to navigate within this system or how to get out of it, ultimately resulting in a perception of a lack of options. Ultimately, capitalism prevails and everything has become about money and the bottom line, making previous lifestyles near-impossible. Briony points to the inherent tension with environmentalist/First Nations alliances due to a deep lack of understanding of the needs of both sides. “We want the Indians to be noble savages and on the side of the environmentalists but the Indians are telling us they have to sell the forest and log it because they need the money ... what did you expect?” Greg agrees and says, “the fact that we’re looking at logging is because we have nothing else”.

Lack of Education in Aboriginal History and Identity

The co-researchers identified the lack of formal and informal education of Canadian society about Aboriginal history and colonization as being a huge barrier to positive cross-cultural experiences and one of the key supporting elements of the system in place. Admittedly things have improved in coverage over the past 30 years but not to the satisfaction of the co-researchers. So many people in Canada are not aware of our

history, or only know parts and pieces. Art attests that people “just don’t know the back story, as most Canadians don’t, because they’ve never taken the time to learn”. He also says that media is pretty biased and I argue that is because it is a product of the very system we are stuck within. There was a lot of media coverage about the government apology for residential schools but Art points out that “all that focus on residential schools... [lets] the government off the hook for all the other shit and atrocities that they committed, like appropriation of lands”. Greg points out that it is more than that as well. He says, yes there is the assimilation process, “driving the Indian out of the child”, but he also wishes that people were told the story of who his people are; their government system and the way it is based on the land, their teachings, their practices, their connection to the creator. He believes that is the story that has not been told.

Stereotypes

According to the co-researchers, a result of the ignorance and lack of understanding is stereotypes, something that has shown up in both directions in experiences working cross-culturally on environmental issues. As Hoffman (2005) and LeBaron (2003) pointed out, stereotypes come from what society has engrained in your mind and allow for quick judgments about an individual based solely on the group to which they belong. This was shown to be the case by many co-researchers who reminisced of their first impressions of individuals from another culture prior to first hand experience. Ultimately, the system in place has successfully created an “us” and “them.” Further, it was pointed out that there are not a lot of easy entry points for Euro-Canadians to work with First Nations communities, resulting in minimal opportunities to question and change views.

Multiple Euro-Canadian co-researchers admit to early negative perceptions of First Nations individuals based on what they heard in the news, or saw on reserves, often including First Nations being uneducated, addicted to alcohol, or in dire poverty. Because there is lack of education about Canada's First Nations history, there is little opportunity or reason to question these perceptions. Instead they become the norm, affirmed in society. Catherine pointed out that

There is this whole entrenched racism in the society all around you that reaffirms [stereotypes] at every opportunity. It wasn't until later in life when I sought out my own interactions and was exposed to a whole other world. You just internalize those perceptions without even realizing it.

Stereotypes exist in both directions where First Nations also make judgments on Euro-Canadians as a result of both past experiences and the political system in place. Although this may not be a result of a lack of education, it is still an issue that was mentioned by the co-researchers. Examples discussed included that Euro-Canadians cannot be trusted because they are only out for money and toeing the bottom line of their employer. It was also mentioned by multiple First Nations that there is often an ulterior motive and a lack of sincerity. A few Euro-Canadian co-researchers also stated that at times they have felt labeled as environmentalists and stereotyped accordingly, described by them as that they do not care about people or culture, only the natural world.

Culturally Inappropriate Behaviour

This political system creates a cycle where there is a lack of education contributing to stereotypes and these beliefs are turning into negative and inappropriate behaviour as described by my co-researchers. When asked about circumstances of

cultural inappropriateness and experiences of racism or oppression, unfortunately almost all co-researchers shared stories of a time or times when they felt they were treated inappropriately based on who they are.

The most common description of inappropriate behaviour towards First Nations described by the co-researchers is the belief that First Nations cannot be experts. Mark gave one example from his previous job where he worked with a Euro-Canadian band manager for many years that did not trust his credentials and continued to hire outside consultants. He recounted:

It was pretty frustrating, because she didn't think I could do my job because she thought I wasn't qualified. She would hire some other guy to come in, pay him five times what I make, and he would come in and get me to do the job anyway. So it was a weird cycle, where they paid someone else because I wasn't qualified and I would end up doing the work.

I was witness to one of these experiences with Mark in work that we were doing together on renewable energy. I was very interested in working with the community to develop a culturally based energy conservation program and I was given the go-ahead by one of the Euro-Canadians working for the band. However, when I went to talk to Mark, the Environmental Coordinator, about my ideas it turned out that he had suggested the same thing months before my organization had even begun our work, but he was ignored. Mark said "because I'm First Nations I wasn't capable of doing the job but someone like you who is coming in as a consultant, non-First Nations, is totally capable". I was interested in collaborative work believing that community leadership and involvement was crucial for success and I had no intentions of taking a job away from someone in the

community, yet the underlying expectation from the man that hired me was that I would do this work for the band. I can definitely understand and appreciate Mark's frustrations when I showed up at his desk. Ultimately, I fed into the cycle that Mark outlined above without realizing it.

Similarly, Judith recounts a meeting with some potential partners who would turn their bodies away from her and not even look her in the eye when she was the Chief. Similarly, she remembers a frustrating time when she was trying to explain a cultural belief to be included in treaty negotiations and was not fully heard. Art also told me that "there have been a couple of instances I've met government officials that have absolute hatred for native people". Russell also remembers being treated badly when he was trying to integrate TEK and ecosystem-based management into his mapping work. He remembered being in a BC Forestry office where "one of the foresters, [was] literally screaming at us to get out of his office ... he was really pissed off and didn't want anything to do with us".

At the same time, many Euro-Canadian co-researchers have also felt they have been treated inappropriately in cross-cultural interactions. Many individuals shared stories of being blamed for Canada's historical circumstances and colonization. Catherine recounted:

One thing that was challenging for me, personally, was to repeatedly acknowledge and repeatedly listen to the list of grievances against the white community from the First Nations. Totally legitimate, totally understand them, I share in the guilt as we all do about what our forefathers did to First Nations people but it was hard

having to start every meeting being lectured and being told how bad you are and how bad your forefathers are. And the pain you've inflicted on people.

Fern recounted a similar story and admitted: "That sort of blanket statement, it doesn't make me feel nice. That really hurts to be lumped into something like that."

Mistrust

Mistrust is another piece of the system as a result of the lack of education and understanding in mainstream society, along with the stereotypes and culturally inappropriate behaviour. For the co-researchers, the primary way mistrust became visible was through the protection of information and a lack of willingness to share. This is an extremely sensitive topic for First Nations due to culturally-accepted practices around the sharing of sacred information; however, Euro-Canadian co-researchers that understand and respect sacred information feel that beyond those circumstances there is still often a failure to provide other pertinent information. Beyond a willingness to share, Reg argued that there is a failure to develop the information-sharing protocols required to move forward together. The complexity continues when we acknowledge that based on experience, many First Nations believe that Euro-Canadians are often not upfront and honest making it difficult to share and open up. Therefore, the lack of trust alone creates a vicious cycle where First Nations have a hard time trusting Euro-Canadians because of previous experience and therefore do not share while Euro-Canadians are frustrated because without an open, sharing relationship it is very difficult to collaborate together.

Lack of Consultation

One of the most concrete products of the system is that decisions that affect First Nations communities are made by the Federal Government as long as there has been

“consultation”. The majority of co-researchers agree that there is no alternative to consultation and community engagement. Reg noted:

There is no substitute for engaging community based practitioners and professionals, be they from the community or those in relationship with the community. If industry and government think they can do circles around that they will end up in either legal quandary over the lack of proper meaningful consultation, or they’re going to miss things like important values.

However, many co-researchers attest that this process is not being followed or respected. Mark said, “what [government] thinks is consultation is coming in, telling the nation what they’re doing, and it doesn’t matter what the nation says, they’re still going to do it anyways”.

The story that resonates most with this issue was a heartbreaking story told by Judith about the Hupacasath forests in Port Alberni.

The Hupacasath people had built a strong working relationship with Weyerhaeuser and were working amazingly well together, staying in close contact and discussing what could be cut and what could not, based on cultural importance. Rarely did the Ministry of Forests have to intervene to make a final decision. In 2004, the land owned by Weyerhaeuser was sold to another company.

Just prior to this happening, the community was notified by a press release delivered by Weyerhaeuser that the lands held privately by them that was part of the Tree Farm License, had been removed from the Tree Farm license. This was 70,000 hectares of land, over one third of the territory of the Hupacasath. What this meant was that according to Weyerhaeuser, and the new owner, Island

Timberlands, Hupacasath did not need to be consulted any more. What this meant is that Island Timberlands could cut sacred sites, destroy medicinal plants and old growth ecosystems, and destroy many other rights of the Hupacasath people. In the long run, Island Timberlands could divide up the land and sell it, make it into a mini-Whistler, or other resort and Hupacasath would never exercise their rights again. The Government of British Columbia did not consult with Hupacasath before taking an action that would alter their rights forever.

Hupacasath went to court and the court ruled that Hupacasath should have been consulted even though this was private land. The court gave 2 years for BC and Hupacasath to come to an agreement. After 2 years, Hupacasath felt they had not been consulted properly and had to go back to court to get an order stating they had not been consulted properly. The court agreed and appointed a mediator. There still is no resolve even though the decision was made over 6 years ago and the mediator has been appointed for 18 months.

The question is a difference of values. Putting a price on the loss of 30 sacred sites, numerous hunting, fishing, and gathering sites, and other activities that incorporate the rights of the Hupacasath are beyond value. The Government of British Columbia does not see that and determining appropriate compensation has been very difficult. Experiences have also shown that there is no acceptable procedure to follow when there is a lack of consultation and court is the only option. Court is lengthy and expensive and as you can see, may not have the ability to resolve the issue. Hupacasath Nation paid over a quarter of a million dollars in legal fees to get the decision that they had not been consulted twice, and

there is still no resolve and more money is being expended to deal with a decision that was made over 6 years ago without consultation as is required by law.

While it is saddening to begin the exploration of experience with such negative findings it is important to understand the political backdrop and the effect it has on cross-cultural interactions. All of this behaviour is unacceptable, yet it is part of the cycle of the political system in place. Yet, even with the political system in place, true leaders have still been able to do meaningful work, although often requiring it to be more than work and often a life choice, embracing the experience and volunteering personal time.

The next section of my findings goes beyond the political construct in place and explores both what has worked and what could work in cross-cultural environmental initiatives in the eyes of the co-researchers.

Cultural Literacy: Relationships and Respect

Co-researchers identified the next two themes, relationships and respect, as crucial components of cross-cultural environmental work. These themes are not man-made constructs reaffirming the political system discussed above, but instead break free from this system and get to the core of human relations acknowledging interconnections, interdependence, complexity, and diversity. I view these themes as core components of cultural literacy as they offer tools for someone to be “bi-cultural”: to know “oneself and one’s place in another cultural context” (Lertzman, 1999, p. 176). They are ways of being, and ways of seeing and understanding the world that looks beyond one’s own lifeworld and into the lifeworlds (Hoffman, 2005) of others. Lertzman (1999) said that “all non-Native Canadians can benefit from developing skills in cultural literacy with

First Nations. In doing so, we may not just be facilitating the discourse of cultures, we may be bringing together our ancestors” (p. 345).

Relationships

Ultimately, what is required, regardless of the system in place, is that human beings come together to talk, learn from each other, and embrace diversity. “Heshook-ish tsawalk, everything is connected, everything is one”, said Greg. I believe that people need to come to this realization, find their common ground, and collaborate together, moving beyond historical circumstances and political constructs. The majority of co-researchers stressed that relationships are the primary factor in contributing to greater understanding and agreement in cross-cultural work, and similarly identified the lack of relationships as the primary barrier.

Thomashow (1995) writes that “ecology is a science of relationships” (p. 13). Capra (1996) defines relationship in an ecological context as partnership and states it is “the tendency to associate, establish links, live inside one another, and cooperate”, arguing that it “is one of the hallmarks of life” (p. 301). Brenda stated: “Fundamentally caring about the environment is a spiritual thing so it is a relationship thing and I don’t think that you can do environmental work without feeling stuff.” She said that race, colour, and background does not matter; what matters is that you work together as humans and connect with others on a personal level. The elements of relationship discussed include personal connections, joining community, sincerity, risk, and balance.

Personal Connections

The key factor in connecting with someone and building a meaningful, authentic relationship is to listen and share. It is about getting to know the people you are working

with as individuals in order to understand who they are and appreciate where they are coming from. “You can’t promote cultural integration unless you’re willing to park your own ways of thinking and listen,” said Reg. Using a systems perspective, I think that it becomes crucial to open to other people’s reality. And while this may sound like an overwhelming task, co-researchers often described these situations as some of their favourite memories. For example, Catherine has loved “working with communities, getting to know people there and understanding their view of the land and their concerns”.

Every co-researcher shared a story about a time when a personal relationship was built with someone from the other culture, and the passion and love that resonated in these stories demonstrates the importance of human connection when working together. Brenda fondly remembers a relationship that started off personal, moved to political, and ended up being practical and really efficient in getting things done. Had she not spent the time building the foundation of a relationship they may never have been able to work so efficiently together. Fern described a beautiful scene of a co-worker and a Chief sitting on a rock together and she highlighted the time and energy that they both had put into that relationship:

Those two people really understood each others’ positions and were able to talk openly with each other. Getting outside of the government box and those other boxes to just be able to talk to each other as people. People that they respect and care about. I don’t think that it would have happened if a new person had come onto that file and tried to have that conversation, I don’t think there would have

been the same outcome. So part of that was trust because they knew each other and had put energy and effort into making that relationship.

Russell also recounted a positive experience where the sharing process was reciprocal. They were doing an inventory in the forest and he had the opportunity to learn a new methodology. However, what excited him equally as much as learning new things was the non-First Nations he was working with learning new things as well. He reminisced about Western scientists who were asking the hereditary Chiefs about the area and their traditional knowledge.

In one particular circumstance it even became clear that relationships and connecting with a community was more important in his job than any formal certifications. Reg recounted how when he first arrived at his new job in Moberly Lake BC, he was working hard as a “community worker”; however, he did not understand community relationships. The community told him that he was not spending enough time with community members. They said: “It doesn’t matter what you know, it’s about who you are.” Reg reminisced:

It wasn’t about getting myself certified with the Canadian Institute of Planners, I didn’t even do that until 6 years after. ... What mattered was that you have conviction. I shared stories about my time with the Blackfoot and conflict and how that almost ended in bloodshed. I shared tears with people. I was really formed into community and solidarity with them.

While the situations described above allow for deep and meaningful connections, this may not always be the case. However, Brenda notes that even when it is not possible to connect and build a personal relationship prior to doing work you just have to

remember the principles of human relationships. “You’re respectful, open, honest. You’re traveling through the experience with integrity, you’re not power broking”.

Joining Community

Many conversations with co-researchers included the concept of community as a key component of what makes home, home. Thomashow (1995) relates community to the commons, “the people and species with whom we interact on a regular basis, or with whom we share the place where we live” (p. 84). Co-researchers described community as a closed circle with people connected and responsible, in relation to a physical place and space. They also explored the concept of working in community and teamwork and collaboration as opposed to a top down approach. Joining community can mean joining and relating to the community on a social level and also on a physical level. Joining community on a social level is discussed below and on a physical level will be discussed under the section, respect of place.

It should be noted that joining community in the context of this research was always Euro-Canadian co-researchers joining First Nations communities. I believe that this is a common situation due to the land debate as discussed previously. Even if the land being discussed is not within the boundaries of a reserve it would still be in the traditional territory of a First Nations group. In my experience the reservation system places boundaries around a community that do not align with the land that was used traditionally by the community.

Multiple co-researchers from a First Nations background reminisced of times where Euro-Canadians that they were working with came into their community and helped organize an event or attended a potlatch or culture night and sat down and ate with

community members. Mark compared this type of experience to the more common experience where “they come in and they do what they need to do to get their money or research ... and then they’re gone”. The power of this type of experience went both ways and many Euro-Canadians told similar stories. Catherine remembers the feeling of attending a huge ceremony in a community that was opening their big house.

The carvings, the totem poles, and just all the community work and passion that went into this... they had a massive celebration and invited all the First Nations on the coast to come. Being given a gift and being recognized at that ceremony for the work that we had been doing together was huge for me.

My favourite memory from my time with T’Sou-ke Nation was also at a community event. Through the months we were there working with the community we often attended culture nights and at the end of the project we hosted a big community celebration where we cooked for the community. It was fantastic to just be with the community and not think or speak about work but just celebrate and be together as people.

Leadership

I also examined leadership, as I believed it to be a crucial piece in collaborative work. Beyond shared ecological values, these individuals demonstrated to me what type of leader is required in the complex arena of cross-cultural work. I was humbled as I listened to stories of the gifts they share in order to create change for the better. They follow their heart and stand up for what they believe in, yet they always put their community first. They are team players, encouraging full community involvement, yet they step forward and lead by example. Brenda directly mentioned partnership as one of

the components of leadership in a cross-cultural context where individual leaders from different cultures can help each other achieve their goals. My co-researchers also talked about standing up to fear and being willing to face difficult issues. Finally, they are creative, and work around the system, as will be illustrated in their experiences shared throughout this chapter. Judith was the Chief of her community for 14 years and describes her experience as:

The job of being Chief and being a leader anytime is 24/7, no matter where you are and where you go you never take off that hat, you're always in that position. You're always the role model. You're always the representative of your community. So that's the tough part just dedicating yourself to the job and I tried really hard. I put in a lot of effort no matter where it was.

Art reflected on his leadership experiences and said:

I think it's a fine balance between being humble and being willing to lead from behind, and being willing to lead by example and to serve tea and change light bulbs, that's fine. But you also have to be willing to speak to the tough issues when nobody else is. And you have to be willing to lay things on the line when the time is right. So it's a mixture of sort of the back door servant approach when your community is always ahead of you, that would have worked maybe more in traditional times; but, in the business world, the corporate world we live in today, sometimes you do have to be up front and you do have to be vocal, you do have to lead the way. It's finding a balance between those two and knowing when to be which one and which hat to wear at any given time. And I think that you would have to be able to live what you preach. If you don't live the lifestyle, people

won't take you as seriously. If you're not out there picking plants and hunting, what right do you have to be talking about it to companies when you don't even know about that life. It's ok if you're a consultant who is hired, you're not expected to know that, but if you're from the community, you should know that.

Sincerity

In order to truly make authentic connections and enter community, co-researchers point out the importance of sincerity. Unfortunately, sincerity must prevail beyond the political system and the cycles of mistrust that result. Based on historical circumstances and the dominant system we are operating in, sincere, honest connections are required above all else, and they need to be more than good intentions with ulterior motives. Art mentions his naïveté through his experiences taking people at face value. He said:

In reality, they're representing companies and corporations and governments that are not going to be honest, and even if they are honest as an individual they're going to toe the companies line in the end because that's where their money comes from. So I believed people and I believed that they were trying to build a sincere relationship with myself and my people and so many times had the rug pulled from under us. So many promises were broken.

This lack of trust that Art articulated based on past experiences highlights again the importance of taking time to build relationships, and connecting with each other as individuals. Mark shared a specific example of an incident where T'Sou-ke Nation was approached about using their traditional languages on signs in a local park; however, he later learned that restrictions included that they have to be able to be pronounced by the

general public. He points out that “this is the exact attitude that destroyed our language” and questions the sincerity in that.

In order for there to be true sincerity and authenticity it must be clear that each party is entering a partnership or relationship with their own ideas of what should be done, how, and why. It is important to acknowledge what your intentions are at the beginning, because that is the only way that negotiations will be able to move forward in a positive way. Art notes that sincerity, not just lip service, is crucial. He points out that many people have their own agendas, and stressed it is important to “probe a little deeper”, assess people’s agendas and question their politics. Along the same lines Catherine mentioned how inappropriate saying “we’re here to help you” is when entering into a relationship with a First Nations community. When speaking of her experience, she said:

It is a bad approach and a dishonest approach because I wasn’t there to help. You just have to find the common ground. You need to say, look I’m here with an agenda, but I think my agenda overlaps with parts of your agenda so let’s figure out where the overlaps are and figure out if there are ways we can work together to advance our shared interests.

Briony said it simply, “I love this place, and you love this place, so how can I help you help me?”

When it comes to making a decision or reaching an agreement, Catherine explains that it may always feel like a lose-lose; but, you need to be confident and trust in the process and be sincere in what you are looking for and sincere in your motivation to

reach an agreement. She says that each party has to be willing to give something up and, ultimately, if you were sincere you will end up with something that matters to you.

While I offer this one small taste of the importance of sincerity I believe that it was an underlying theme throughout so much of the research. I believe this is because so many of the other themes are dependent on sincerity in order to be effective: is it truly possible to build relationships or join community without sincerity?

Risk

Alongside building real authentic relationships with people comes the element of risk. Greg describes it as having to lower your own walls and just come out and ask the questions. Ultimately, it is a choice on how you want to work with other people, points out Brenda, and her style is to build those personal relationships. She stated that

If it all goes well, then that's great, because the relationship is then a strong foundation for doing the work. But when things go wrong, on the work front, your personal relationships are at risk and you are at risk as a human being because the work turns on you basically... So at that point it's a choice and I choose to do it that way because I gain more and I think that the work is better work because of that.

By not taking the risk and not building sincere authentic relationships with individuals and community, you are feeding back into the mechanistic system that does not allow for relationship building thus nurturing the cycle of mistrust. Even co-researchers who told stories of getting burnt because they put themselves out there would still rather work that way than any other.

Balance

The need for balance in relationships was an issue raised in response to the recommendations document. Data from the one-on-one interviews unanimously acknowledged the importance of personal relationships, however, Judith added another layer of complexity during the creation of the collaborative recommendations document. Judith agreed with the findings discussed thus far in this chapter, but after reading the first draft of the findings and contributing to the online recommendations document she added:

My experience with becoming “friends” with people is extensive. I remember one point during a renegotiation of a basic agreement where a business partner got mad at me for positions I was taking and said, “I thought we were friends.” I said, “We are, but when we are at the negotiating table and I am representing my community, friendship has nothing to do with it.” He did not take to that kindly and we never did regain the friendship footing to the same degree. I have also seen provincial negotiators become friends with [band] members and they eke out information to use against us at the tables and to provide to their principals. There is a fine line to it.

Cross-cultural work between First Nations and Euro-Canadians is challenging, as the literature and my data attest. And while the themes throughout the relationship category offer significant suggestions and insight as to what is required in cross-cultural work, it is also important to keep balance and maintain some distance and boundaries as discussed by Judith above.

Personally, I believe you must fully trust in order to build authentic relationships, yet I also understand Judith's point as it is always disappointing when you trust too much and it ends up negatively affecting you. However, I cannot help believe that part of turning the page of history may be to let go of these boundaries and break down the walls. If we enter into these relationships with honest and genuine intentions and we begin to create a cycle of trust as opposed to perpetuating one of mistrust, we might begin to break down the walls between these groups.

Respect

Building relationships and joining community is not just about relating as people; it is also about respecting a different way of life. Most First Nations communities operate differently than a corporation or government and are typically based in community, relationship, and celebration. Judith says, "I don't know how many thank you ceremonies we've had. When we reach a certain part of a project we have a party. And I don't care if we paid you a million dollars to do something, we're going to thank you or acknowledge it." And a cultural event and thank you is just one cultural process that needs to be acknowledged and respected. Judith said:

When we're going to build a power project we go to the water and ask permission and we do a ceremony. When we break ground we do prayers. We follow those things and being able to incorporate and be there and support that is huge. Just going through our processes.

While respecting cultural processes is important, it was also pointed out by the co-researchers that it is important for First Nations to share who they are as a people, and their expectations, with Euro-Canadians. Greg spoke about asking forgiveness from all

the creatures whose lives would be changed from a forestry harvest, sharing, “every day that I was out there working I was there talking to the birds and trees and I wasn’t shy about sharing it with our white people.” This openness is crucial in order to let Euro-Canadians know what respect means for that community and what the expectations are. Catherine states that “respect is a two way street”, and says that it is important to identify what respect means to the different parties. “I think you have to verbalize it right from the get-go. You have to talk about it.”

Respect for Rights and Title

Beyond the respect of cultural processes it is also important to respect the rights and title of First Nations communities. Judith said:

Title isn’t just about the land but also the resources and to figure out what our place is within Canada. It’s rights and title and our own governance. If we can have a role in what’s going on in our territory, where we haven’t in the past that’s going to be the most important thing to me.

Part of respecting rights and title includes respect for decision-making processes. Brenda pointed out:

I think what we’ve tended to do is impose our decision making methodology on First Nations communities. They don’t make decisions in the same way. They don’t make decisions by sitting around a table and putting their hands up and voting. That has no contextual relevance for them. So they make decisions by speaking to community members and then the leaders role is just to impart what the community wants. We have this top down thing, where if you’re the king you

get to make all the decisions but theirs is flipped upside down where if you're on the top you're only job is to tell the story of what the people want.

Judith and Brenda both acknowledged that it is First Nations governance that is often ignored or not respected and I believe that this is because it is not the dominant governing system. Although changing the current political systems is beyond the scope of this work I do believe this research did result in a clear message for the need to acknowledge more than yourself and remember that there are other ways of being in the world that are also valid. I see the issue here as bigger than respect for rights and title alone, but respect for all different forms of governance. It is not about what is right and wrong and which way of doing things is better; things are the way they are right now and we must learn to work with them.

Respect for Language

Respect for language differences was also rated as being very important by co-researchers. Frustrated, Greg explained to me how there is an expectation in forestry meetings for everyone to know and understand all the acronyms if you do not want to be considered ignorant; yet the same people that hold these expectations were not familiar with his language and words important to his culture. However, even when Euro-Canadian groups try and learn and adopt traditional languages, there are still complications. Brenda says that the Nuu-chah-nulth word for 'precious' has been adopted by many environmental organizations but the translation is not being used correctly, causing conflict as opposed to unity. "Precious doesn't mean protected. If you translate precious into [Western mainstream] understanding it becomes protected but in Nuu-chah-nulth it is to be preserved but that doesn't mean not to be logged, it means to be taken

care of'. Potentially, again this is due to a lack of conversation. Greg talked about the same experience as Brenda and told me that the environmentalists that adopted this Nuuchah-nulth word for precious took the time to define what it means to them in pages and pages but never actually spoke to the community.

Russell is extremely passionate about language and how the language you speak shapes the world in which you experience. He argued:

English is a good general purpose language but it's lousy at certain kinds of relationship stuff. It lacks certain kinds of concepts. ... When you refine that into other dialects of English even the dialect that an accountant speaks is different than the dialect a biologist speaks and they are unintelligible to each other. And they see the world based on the language they speak. I've been told often enough by my elders that to really understand about working for the land and doing things right you have to actually speak the language to do it properly. Otherwise you're just guessing.

He gives an example of a story from the field where a biologist asked an elder about a mineral lick for goats. She was trying to make sense of why the goats were in a certain area but asked the question using what Russell referred to as "biologist language". The first response was a simple "I don't know". However, upon rephrasing the question in a different way, the elder understood right away. Russell commented that it's not about "dumbing it down but using different ways of thinking or presenting the information".

Respect for Place

Respect of place is not just about a physical location but it is about all that inhabits that place. As Reg said, it's not about trees or people, it's about trees and

people”. He says it is about “how the land affects people and how people effect the land”. People need to see and know the land that they are making decisions about but they also need to learn about that place from the people who have long inhabited it. Without an intimate knowledge of a place how can you be sure you have enough information to make the best decisions about it? Greg gave an example from his territory where false photos of a clear cut, claiming to be in his territory, were published in the media. He also pointed out that many people involved in the conflict have not seen his territory and yet are making decisions about it, now based on that false information.

In order to ensure this does not happen and people involved in an issue do know the land, many co-researchers stressed the importance of decisions being discussed and made in the place that they are about. Briony spoke about a memory of people in San Francisco fighting to protect the Rainforest:

They’ve never been in one, they’ve fought for an abstract concept but they don’t feel it, they don’t have visceral feelings for this place. ... So you’ve got to come up and spend time in the landscape and get to know it and understand what it is that shapes the people that live in it. I don’t think there is any substitute for that.

Mark made a similar argument and said, “I think the biggest thing is that all the people who are in power, who make the decisions about the environment... don’t know the history, they don’t know the traditions”.

Respect for Diversity

Finally, while there are obvious differences between First Nations communities and Euro-Canadian communities and there are complex historical circumstances at play, there is strength in diversity and it is important and valuable to hear different views and

opinions to help come to a solution. Further, it is crucial to remember that diversity is not just between First Nations and Euro-Canadians but there is diversity within these groups as well. Catherine got emotional as she recounted a time where she was personally yelled at because she was the face of Greenpeace:

There's a tendency to see the environmental movement and people in it as this amorphous green blob that is all the same. ... You have those things ascribed to you ... there is diversity among the First Nations communities, they have made it very clear and there is diversity in the environmental movement as well. And that needs to be respected.

Each person brings a gift to the table and "you need to find the strength of each party and use those strengths to build whatever it is you're going to build together, whether it's a business or a land use plan, whatever it's going to be," argues Judith. "Instead of creating the conflict, how do we work together?"

Summary of the West

All of these themes and ideas offer a great deal in gaining understanding of cross-cultural environmental work between First Nations and Euro-Canadians. However, one crucial aspect to note is that in order to truly engage and work together, there is a necessity for resources, specifically time and money. A few individuals mentioned the need for money to be set aside in budgets to allow for both personal relationship building and for joining with community. And more than money, individuals must be willing to put in the time and energy to share, open to new ideas and a different way of life, build trust, join community, prove sincerity, and get comfortable with each other. Understandably, this is not always financially feasible or logistically possible but it is

valuable to note that most positive experiences shared in my interviews included meaningful relationships, whether that time spent was part of the budget or on the co-researchers own time.

Resources should also be spent on follow-up as a few co-researchers expressed concerns that there is a lack of follow-up on all sides. Mark mentioned that many Euro-Canadians come into a community do what they need to do and leave, while Art and Judith expressed concerns at a First Nations government level where things do not get documented and work is put on hold because of a new Council coming in. This combination of a lack of follow-up on both sides can be detrimental to getting work done effectively and resources must be set aside to ensure that continuity in work becomes a reality.

In conclusion, there were positive and challenging stories shared by everyone which are crucial in understanding the dynamics at play in cross-cultural environmental work and in identifying ways forward that acknowledge both the way people feel, and acknowledge what they need in order to be able to trust and move forward. Catherine recounts a time when a First Nations leader compared the working relationship with environmental groups to a romantic one, saying that they were not married, but were only dating. Thoughtfully, she told me “in a way it’s funny but it’s very accurate.... We have so much in common but then the longer you date you find annoying habits and you start to grate on each other and I think that’s inevitable in any relationship.” It is how you work through that relationship that will affect the work being done.

THE NORTH: WISDOM AND LOGIC

“The North is the place of winter, of white snows that remind us of the white hair of our elders. It is the dawning place of true wisdom” (Bopp, et al., 1984). The North is a place of completion, balance and reflection and it is in this section that I offer both the collaborative recommendations as identified by my co-researchers and a final discussion of my findings and of the process.

Collaborative Recommendations

This section addresses my third research question: How can cross-cultural collaborative processes be more effective and respectful? The objective of this research was to engage individuals who are working cross-culturally on environmental issues, gain an understanding of their ecological identities and work experiences and co-create recommendations for future cross-cultural environmental work. I have defined “co-creation” to mean co-authoring the recommendations by my co-researchers and myself and thus, I offer these recommendations using the co-researcher’s voices as provided to me (see figure 3).

These recommendations have also been positioned in a medicine wheel frame as they incorporate the different aspects of self, allowing us to approach these situations holistically as called for by a systems perspective. The recommendations are divided into two parts: individual, personal recommendations and organizational, systemic recommendations. As everything is interconnected many of these recommendations fit in multiple directions and in both categories but I have chosen to only list them in one place.

These recommendations offer hope for positive future cross-cultural collaborations offering guidelines for how to best approach this work. I present these

recommendations to my co-researchers with hope that they have been able to take something new away with them as they move forward with their work. I also offer these recommendations to any individual who is First Nations or Euro-Canadian who works cross-culturally on environmental issues. Based on conversations with my co-researchers, I believe that if people who are working cross-culturally can access these recommendations their work will be more positive, respectful, and effective.

Figure 3: Collaborative Recommendations

Direction	Personal Recommendations	Systemic Recommendations
EAST Spiritual Protection Yellow Beginnings Renewal Truthfulness Vulnerability Hope Innocence	Embrace open communication	Information sharing
	Trust in each other	Take time to define respect for each group around the table
	Bring your authentic self to the work	Bring true intentions to the table and be able to honestly and authentically stand behind who you are representing at the table
	Make time daily to stop and centre oneself	Allow time for process and do not insist on artificial deadlines
	Be the change you wish to see in the world	Learn about and then follow protocol and processes of First Nations when conducting business and joining community
	Be courageous and vulnerable and build personal relationships but also keep a distance	Allow for enough time to embrace every aspect of the work being completed: connection to the land, personal connections, decision-making, celebration
	When you need to be strong about a certain value or protection mechanism, you cannot let personal relationships get in the way because you do not want to hurt the other person causing awkward situations and unrealistic expectations	
	Take time out of work to just be in community, share in both the high and low points of people’s lives and be open to learning and understanding about the community	

	Embrace leadership - Recognize <i>formal</i> leaders in the community and follow the formal leadership processes	
	Embrace leadership - Recognize <i>informal</i> leaders and figure out how to work with them but also acknowledge that in the end the decision makers are the formal leaders	
SOUTH Emotional Nourishment Red Sensitivity Heart Loyalty Growth Love Passion	Bring love to the table, both for the natural world and for other human beings	Enter into relationships with the motivation to collaborate
	Be kind and treat others how you expect to be treated regardless of background	Map out goals and expectations and revisit throughout process
	Make the most of your time in this short life on Earth and be alive with passion about the work you are doing	Ensure community dialogue is properly recorded and maintained for public view and incorporation into various community learning initiatives
	Respectfully share your authentic feelings of joy, anger, and frustration as a way of building trust	Recognize that you do not hold a monopoly on “the right way to think or act”, and that others have the right to their own worldviews
	Experiment with new ideas, ways of doing things, make mistakes and learn from them	
WEST Physical Growth Black Respect Commitment Humility Awareness Silence Vision	Respect for the First Nations’ rights and title, spirituality, prayers, ceremonies, how they value the land, how their internal processes work and other cultural activities	To “save the land” you have to walk on it and understand what you are saving
	Respect different ways of life	Seek to understand each others’ ways of communicating and don’t feel compelled to fill the silence
	Take time to listen to the other’s voice and hear their story	Explore possibilities and options as a group
	Show commitment to the established goals	Review and verify agreements and/or conclusions - ensure that all parties have the same understanding of what has been decided
	Celebrate work completed	

	Commit to living, eating, being well	
	Understand we all have biases, and be clear what principles you stand for (e.g. loyalty to local community etc.)	
	Understand that peoples' lives, roles and jobs can change (sometimes not by choice) but that does not negate the work they have done or constitute personal abandonment	
NORTH Mental Wholeness White Wisdom Logic Completion Balance Reflection Detachment	Have patience	Be willing to give something up in order to reach consensus
	Increase ecological literacy (example: ecological identity work - Thomashow, or reconnecting workshops - Macy)	Teach ecological literacy
	Learn Canada's history	Allocate money in the budget for travel to remote communities for face-to-face relationship building
	Learn pertinent language	Follow up with work completed - do not just walk away
	Learn about the place and community of the land/resource in question	Employ participatory research and action methods as much as possible
	Participate in training programs and cultural activities with community members such as healing circles, traditional ceremonies to share in a common continual journey of self-awareness and discovery	When external resource people are employed in community, ensure projects build in technical extension support so that results foster ongoing community learning
	Acknowledge and address that language and cultural differences sometimes mean we 'hear' differently during discussion	

CONCLUSION

My findings are not linear nor conventional but rather dynamic and interconnected as they weave the tapestry of these complex social issues between First Nations and Euro-Canadians in British Columbia. As mentioned previously, I was surprised that there were so many similarities between each of my co-researchers, regardless of their background. I chose each co-researcher based on their extensive experience working cross-culturally, however I believed that I would find significant differences in their ecological identities and consequently in the way these individuals approached their cross-cultural environmental work. I think that the most valuable finding of this research is simply that positive and effective collaboration is happening in British Columbia and has been for many years. It is inspiring to know that while the literature and many of my co-researchers believed that the political system in place does not support truly collaborative work, individuals, like my 10 co-researchers, have found ways to creatively construct change working “on the ground” in cross-cultural situations.

The wisdom shared by my co-researchers represents a network of ideas intertwined and closely connected with each other, regardless of the co-researcher’s location or field of expertise. A common thread of ecological sustainability laced its way through many of the stories that emerged in our conversations. This tapestry is extremely meaningful as it not only represents the deep connections in my findings but it also mirrors the interconnections of the natural world. To reflect on these findings I called on the basic principles of ecology and the concept of systems thinking as a means to understand what is happening “on the ground” in cross-cultural environmental work, exploring both what has worked and what has not. I also consider the findings in terms of

healing. This chapter concludes with the potential for future research and personal reflections.

Consideration of Findings in Terms of Systems Thinking

Just as literature has reflected the need for a societal shift to a systems perspective (Capra, 1996), this research reflects the same notion. To reiterate Capra (1996), shifting to a systems perspective involves understanding and reconnecting with the interconnections of the web of life; learning from and mirroring ecological systems which are inherently sustainable communities. Capra (1996) considered this at a community level and the potentially positive outcomes that can result from community awareness:

If the community is aware of the interdependence of all its members, diversity will enrich all the relationships and thus enrich the community as a whole, as well as each individual member. In such a community information and ideas flow freely through the entire network, and the diversity of interpretations and learning styles – even the diversity of mistakes – will enrich the entire community. (p. 304)

Some of the basic principles of ecology to be considered in this shift include “interdependence, recycling, partnership, flexibility, diversity, and, as a consequence of all those, sustainability” (Capra, 1996, p. 304). The individuals, the stories, and the themes that emerged in this research resonate with these principles and consequently with an ecological systems perspective.

The first category I identified, concerning the Canadian political system, was discussed in terms of its mechanistic approach fostering a lack of respect, stereotypes, cultural inappropriateness and mistrust. My co-researchers told stories of the limitations the political system places on the potential for collaborative work; yet collaboration, or

partnership, is one of the basic principles of ecology. Thus, there is a lack of compatibility between taking a systems approach to cross-cultural environmental work and the political container this work is situated within. Not only do these findings reflect this lack of compatibility they also point to the need for a shift in perspective as the political system in place has been one of the primary causes for the cross-cultural issues and tensions that exist.

The lack of education in Aboriginal history and Aboriginal identity in BC, as discussed by my co-researchers, is one critical component of the political system that is creating a block to effective collaborative work through perpetuating stereotypes. According to Meadows (2001), one principle of working within a systems perspective is taking the time to listen to the system and to learn about it. She states that “starting with history discourages the common and distracting tendency we all have to define a problem not by the system’s actual behaviour, but by the lack of our favourite solution” (p. 59). I believe that people think they have the best solutions to issues, but they are operating in a political system that prevents a full understanding of current circumstances based on a lack of understanding of history. Thus, increasing understanding through education can be one step towards embracing a systems perspective.

The need for cultural literacy in the form of relationships and respect were the two other categories that emerged from the experiences of my co-researchers. Relationships and respect in the context of this research refers to both the interactions between people and between people and the natural world, and the co-researchers indicated that there is a need for time to be taken to build these relationships and cultivate respect. I believe both categories are deeply ecological practices that address a way of being in the world that

considers oneself as part of a bigger ecological community. The categories of relationships and respect, and the sub-themes discussed, mirror elements of a living system: interconnections, interdependence, complexity, and diversity. Therefore, I believe the argument can be made that the elements of a living system are also at the core of human relations, aligning perfectly with a systems approach.

The ecological principle that resonates most with my findings is the role of diversity in cross-cultural collaborations. Diversity is an integral part of an ecosystem (Capra, 1996) and crucial in a systems perspective, contributing to resilient communities. Capra (1996) writes, “in human communities ethnic and cultural diversity may play the same role. Diversity means many different relationships, many different approaches to the same problem. A diverse community is a resilient community, capable of adapting to changing situations” (p. 303). Cross-cultural communications are diverse by their nature thus providing the potential for resiliency; however, diversity needs to be balanced. “Diversity is a strategic advantage only if there is a truly vibrant community, sustained by a web of relationships. If the community is fragmented into isolated groups and individuals, diversity can easily become a source of prejudice and friction” (Capra, 1996, p. 303). This again points to the importance of relationships and respect, as I believe they are crucial ingredients in cultivating the “vibrant community” referred to by Capra.

Meadows (2001) points out that “living successfully in a world of systems requires more of us than our ability to calculate.” She continues, “[it] requires our full humanity – our rationality, our ability to sort out truth from falsehood, our intuition, our compassion, our vision, and our morality” (p. 59). I believe that my co-researchers characterize what Meadows offers and truly engage their full humanity with their work.

Through the wealth of experience and insight they have shared, we should learn from them. As leaders in the field of cross-cultural environmental work, these individuals have had many positive experiences working cross-culturally that suggest a need for values aligned with a sense of ecological literacy and strong leadership skills. I also believe that these attributes are required to create the necessary shift of perception to a systems approach.

Consideration of the Findings in Terms of Healing

One of the key underlying principles of this work is that of healing: our planet is in ecological crisis (Capra, 1996; Suzuki, 2003), and Canada is socially torn. Indigenous communities have been caught up in a system of dependency (Helin, 2006), and individuals, such as my co-researchers, who are trying to make a difference in these areas are feeling lost and unsupported by the political system as reflected in their interviews. Without healing on multiple levels to deal with these various issues, I do not believe that we, as a society, will be able to move forward sustainably. As stated in the introduction, I feel that there is a deep connection between our social issues in Canada and our ecological crisis as we all share the natural world and are all a part of a bigger ecological system. Somehow the wrongs need to be healed and we need to move forward in a loving and respectful way. Lertzman (1999) shares these sentiments and has considered healing specifically in terms of planning and wrote:

The other meaning for holistic, derived from the Saxon origin of heal, as in, “to make whole”, I related to the re-linking of things previously perceived or acted upon as separate. This re-linking could pertain to the perceived separation of humanity and non-human nature: a healing of our relationship with the Earth. It

could also relate to a re-linking of the disparate functions of being and features of knowing I have referred to as cognitive dissonance: a healing of ourselves. If planning is to play a role in facilitating the transition to ecological sustainability, it is not a difficult conceptual leap to think of planning as healing. One obvious focus for planning between cultural paradigms is to facilitate intercultural healing between the mainstream and Aboriginal peoples. (p. 343)

Colonial policies have created a need for healing to take place on an individual and community level. Land appropriation and residential schools, for example, have led to many serious social issues in Indigenous communities such as alcoholism and teen suicides. As a result, healing is a component of everyday life in many communities as individuals work through these issues and historical circumstances. Greg has been on his own healing journey for many years and also works in a healing centre. He spoke openly and honestly about his healing journey, believing that

Being able to speak on healing can be used as a stepping stone to better things, a stepping stone to economic development, a stepping stone to managing better forests, a stepping stone to fishing, a stepping stone to litigation. Healing is telling the story because you're letting it out and it's not burdening you or holding you down.

Colonial policies have also affected Canadians on a larger social level by attempts to assimilate, as opposed to respect, Indigenous cultures in BC. These historical circumstances, and the lack of education about First Nations, perpetuate a cycle where generation after generation of Euro-Canadians accept colonial attitudes and associated stereotypes. There needs to be healing between these two cultures so this cycle can be

broken and things can move forward positively. Literature cited has shown that this can include becoming culturally literate. Reg discussed this type of healing on a community level:

Being truly present in community is a healing journey, especially as one commits to one place for a long enough time and people get to see all sides of you, and you get to experience the love-hate relationship that always develops. But as one learns and makes peace with the shadow-self, one can also make peace with the dark side of community and keep focused on all the beauty that is still there as changed as it may be. For me the cross-cultural lessons have been very powerful from my adopted home at Moberly and I call them the four Gifts: Humility, Humour, Honesty and Compassion.

Finally, there needs to be a healing of our relationship with and treatment of Earth. While undoubtedly this healing can take shape in a variety of ways, this research suggests that people need to learn ecological literacy skills, thus strengthening their ecological identity. While this research does not delve specifically into how we can increase ecological identity and heal people's relationship with the natural world, I believe that by looking to the co-researchers as leaders in this work, it does identify our relationship to the natural world as an important part of effective cross-cultural collaborative environmental work. Through the stories and the themes that emerged from the interviews it was apparent that my co-researchers approached their work, regardless of the issue, with a systems perspective whenever possible, with one of the keys to their approach being the acknowledgement of themselves and their work as part of the larger ecological community. By seeing environmental work as part of something bigger than a

single forest, or a particular community, individuals can begin to consider the effect of their choices and their actions in a bigger way, understanding the interconnections of the world.

Call for Future Research

I am excited as I complete this journey and consider many potential ways forward. This section discusses potential improvements to this study, inviting new doors to be opened, and offering hope for the future of cross-cultural environmental work. I see new paths that have emerged concerning face-to-face work, identity, conflict, and tackling the “how” of the bigger societal shift that needs to occur.

I am pleased overall with my research and my findings, and happy that an acceptable alternative to the focus group was identified and implemented. I learned that face-to-face work is ultimately the ideal for cross-cultural work, yet I also saw through my work that there are other forms of communication that are inclusive and collaborative. However, one of my co-researchers felt that the findings and the recommendations tended to stay on a softer level, not discussing many of the really difficult issues, such as abuses of power and privilege, something that often happens in Northern remote communities. Part of the cause of this may have been based on the experiences that my co-researchers have or have not had, or perhaps the limited time to explore issues. Future face-to-face work could allow co-researchers to explore these issues deeper and intensify their contribution to the recommendations.

There is also a call for future research that delves deeper into identity work. Lertzman (1999) said that cultural literacy can be learned and Capra (1996) believes that ecological literacy can be learned but what does it take to learn these skills and bring

them forward in cross-cultural collaboration? This research acknowledges that cultural literacy and ecological literacy are skills that are valuable in cross-cultural work; future research could study how to better-educate people and foster these skills.

While the recommendations suggest ways of approaching cross-cultural work with a systems perspective, the problem still remains that the current political frame and the corresponding dominant Western worldview does not support this type of approach. While these co-researchers have shown that with creativity it is possible to work around the political construct, this type of creative approach is challenging and ultimately an unsustainable solution as many of the co-researchers told stories of going above their job descriptions and putting in a lot of their personal time in order to create the conditions for success. While it is inspiring to acknowledge the successful projects that are happening I do not believe that there are enough people who are doing this work who are willing to put in the same effort that my co-researchers do.

I believe our recommendations present a way of being and doing this work that needs to be supported by the institutions and organizations they represent rather than the onus on making it happen being on the individual alone. I am not sure whether implementing small step recommendations like the ones offered in this research can help a large scale systemic change occur or if the political system needs to change first, but I think that the recommendations are a great first step regardless. Future work can consider the application of these recommendations in different ways, with different groups.

Final Thoughts

In the preceding pages I offered my collaborative journey in the examination of cross-cultural environmental initiatives. This research looked at more than case studies

and more than literature; it entered the lives of people who live in this cross-cultural space in their daily work. I believe that through an ethnographic framing and the culmination of the collaborative and decolonizing methodologies taken, this research leads to a strong understanding of what has been happening in many instances “on the ground” in this kind of work. This deepened understanding and the resulting recommendations can lead to more positive cross-cultural experiences in the future.

Most profoundly for me, is that I find this research to be applicable beyond cross-cultural environmental work. Through this research journey, I worked with more than two cultures: I was introduced to individuals with huge hearts who are trying to make a difference in the world through actively connecting with each other to maximize their effectiveness and impact in the work that they do.

There is a need for people to acknowledge the larger ecological community and take a more holistic systems perspective, acknowledging the interconnections of the web of life while deeply contemplating the effects of individual actions. The recommendations offered may be geared towards cross-cultural work but the heart of the recommendations are based on relationships and respect, values I believe to be transferable to any life experience. Ultimately, this research has reminded me of one of the most important things in life; we need to remember to take time to deeply appreciate people, places, and creatures around us. We need to heal the disconnects in society between people, place and environment. We need to take time to connect with each other and ourselves and I believe that only then will we be able to move past our current ecological crisis.

The final email I received from Judith during this process said: “I like what you are doing, in some ways I am cynical that things can change, but sometimes it is about the right people and the right time.” This research tackled a complex topic and I think it is easy to be overwhelmed and cynical. However, it is my hope that I’ve given a glimpse of what can be possible when people work together respectfully and with integrity. Along with my co-researchers, I offer tools for “the right people” to work cross-culturally in order to assist in cultivating the transition that needs to occur if we are to begin to heal both the social and ecological fabric in British Columbia.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER OF CONSENT

Research conducted by:
Jennifer Williams
School of Environment and Sustainability
Royal Roads University
XXXXXXXX

Dear Participant,

The purpose of this study, Getting to yes: Towards and understanding of First Nations and Euro-Canadian experiences in environmental initiatives, is to deepen understanding of cross-cultural differences in environmental planning initiatives to inform future decision-making. This project will be collaborative, working to enable mutual understanding, create a shared vision, and provide public knowledge in order to foster positive social change.

I am inviting you to be a co-researcher with me in this study because you work, or have worked, cross culturally on environmental issues and these findings will be applicable to your everyday work. As a co-researcher I am asking for approximately 5-7 hours of your time over the course of March, April and May 2010. Initial correspondence will take place over email and phone to collaborate on the research questions and design. Next an approximate one-hour, one-on-one interview will take place where I will ask questions about your experiences working cross-culturally in environmental decision-making processes. Following the interviews there will be a two hour focus group, at a central location to all co-researchers, to build on themes that arose from the interviews in order to come up with recommendations for future cross cultural work. Finally there will be a telephone conversation with me to ensure you have been understood properly and are happy with the results.

Interviews and the focus group will be audio recorded for research purposes. Individual themes will be drawn out of the research and findings will be discussed with all co-researchers. Identity will be attached to information collected from individual interviews and the focus group only if permitted by each participant. Identity will be revealed to all co-researchers but only Jennifer Williams will have access to interview information. All researchers will have access to focus group transcripts. Jennifer Williams will keep all audio recordings and written transcripts in a locked cabinet or a password protected computer and be destroyed after one year. Each participant will receive a copy of the final thesis report.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and as such you can refuse to answer any question and/or withdraw from the study at any time. Should you withdraw from the study interview transcripts will be destroyed immediately and any comments used from

the focus group that are necessary to keep due to conversation flow will remain completely anonymous.

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the primary researcher, Jennifer Williams, as listed above. This research will be carried out under the supervision of Dr. Robin June Hood, adjunct professor at Royal Roads University. Should you wish to contact Dr. Hood she can be reached at

Thank you for your participation.

I, _____ have read and understand this consent form and I agree to participate in this thesis study on cross-cultural environmental decision-making.

**** Please be advised that typing my name in the space provided and emailing the form back to Jennifer Williams will be considered consent for participation.**

PARTICIPANT's Name (printed) _____

Signature _____

RESEARCHER's Name (printed) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Ecological Identity

Please introduce yourself.

I want to understand more about what influenced you and shaped your life the most powerfully, whether it be people, places, experiences... or something else. Maybe a good place to start would be for you to tell me a particular story that comes to mind.

I'm interested in your culture and learning more about how that played a part in your life as you were growing up. It would be great if you could tell me more about people or activities that helped shaped who you are in a cultural context.

Where is home for you? Can you tell me about what makes that place home?

Can you describe for me your connection to the natural world?

What were your main experiences in western education?

What were your experiences in traditional education?

How would you characterize your current location in these two ways of knowing? Are there tensions there for you, what works for you and what doesn't work?

Is there anything else you would like to add before moving on to experience?

Cross-Cultural Work Experience

There is a lot of research that talks about how these two cultures can work together in environmental initiatives and what could and should be done in this realm. I want to look specifically at what is happening on the ground and work from that place. I'm interested in ways that these different groups can work together more cohesively, collaboratively and respectfully and I would like to talk about some of your experiences working with different cultural perspectives in environmental work.

Can you tell me some stories about some of your best memories working cross-culturally? What worked and why do you think that it worked?

Similarly, can you describe for me some memories of the most challenging experiences working cross-culturally?

What did work? What didn't work? What made them fail? What made you uncomfortable?

Were there any circumstances of cultural inappropriateness and can you help me understand those?

Any experiences of racism or oppression? What made them oppressive?

Ultimately I want to co-create a new model and I would like to hear how you would design the process of cross-cultural work for the future. What would it look to you in terms of planning, process, language, location, underlying principles, or anything else you can think of?

What keeps you going in this work?

What do you see your role being in this work?

Is there anything you would like to add?