A Year of Forest Connections: The Stories That Unfold

by

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Abstract

Beginning with vignettes of primary students engaged in place-based inquiry and culturally responsive experiences, this study asks how my teaching practice aligns with the First Peoples Principles of Learning and the sḵ'ad'a, which describe principles of learning in the context of Haida culture, while meeting B.C.'s Curriculum. Using autoethnography, the narrative vignettes are presented followed by analysis, primarily using the Indigenous principles of learning as the framework for the analysis. As the researcher and educator, I also examine my own identity as a non-Indigenous settler teacher. The analysis of the vignettes describes my growing awareness of the importance of fostering Core Competencies while connecting students to the continued Indigenous presence on the land. In light of this analysis, I draw further conclusions about the use of the pedagogy of story.

Keywords: Haida, First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL), sḵ'ad'a, Core Competencies, anti-colonial, B.C. Curriculum, settler, inquiry, story

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

The Story

Many years ago, my husband's late uncle walked beside us along a salmon creek. He spoke of coming there as a child every fall, to fish for dog salmon and dig clams, as his family had done for generations. He showed us where their seasonal house sat, and in fact we still see midden at the edge of the forest from his, and more ancient times. For thousands of years, there has been life in this place.

For those many generations, children have been coming to this estuary in the fall, learning while helping to gather food, seeing and smelling the salmon and bears, and playing in the grass and mud, just as our children do now. The winds and tides ebb and flow as they always have. The story and the place connect us to the generations before - if we are paying attention to the story.

This is the story of a group of school children building their connections to the beings of the forest, river and sea. As our education system changes to include the story of Indigenous people and their relationship to the land, the story also tells me what my role can be.

Purpose and Research Question

Finding that role in all of its complexity is the impetus behind this research, and has been

something I've grappled with for many years. While exploring pedagogical approaches to build

my own teaching capacity, I also examine my own perspective as a non-Indigenous educator

living and working in an Indigenous community, and connecting to the place we live.

The research question guiding this study asks: as a non-Indigenous teacher, how does my

teaching practice align with the First Peoples Principles of Learning (First Nations Education

Steering Committee, 2008) and the sḵ'ad'a principles which draw from Haida culture (Davidson

& Davidson, 2018)? Through this research I hope to understand how these two sets of principles

can guide culturally responsive educational experiences, and foster the development of the Core

Competencies of British Columbia's New Curriculum (British Columbia Ministry of Education,

2017). Using autoethnography and narrative vignettes, I employ the First Peoples Principles of

Learning (FPPL) and the sḵ'ad'a principles as frameworks to explore my own understanding of

holistic school experiences which intend to honor and incorporate Indigenous knowledge and

ways of knowing for all students. In so doing, I draw from the perspective of traditional and

contemporary land-based education of Haida people as I understand it, based on the life I lead in

a Haida community.

Background

My teaching career initially took me to small villages in northern British Columbia, and

eventually to Haida Gwaii where I have made my life. As a child in suburban British Columbia, I

was raised in a family of European ancestry that valued outdoor play, eating clams and oysters

from the beach, and eating from a garden that my grandparents and family tended. Respecting

the soil and the land wasn't spoken of as such, but I learned that my grandparents understood

methods of gardening and farming that were more sustainable over the long term, although the

organic label had yet to be popularized.

As an adult I moved to teach in coastal Indigenous communities that had a different

relationship to the land, one that sustained their people over millennia. I married into a Haida

family, and have raised my own Indigenous children here. With their mixed ancestry, they have

been raised with a set of values in addition to mine, and another way of relating to the land. My

worldview has been profoundly shaped by the life I am able to lead, through marriage into a

community with a strong Indigenous culture, and on land which is in many areas the same as it

has been for thousands of years. Although I clearly acknowledge that my background is not

Indigenous, cultural experiences on the land and in the community are now an important part of

my life; they shape our family's values, and guide me as a mother, community member and

teacher.

The Haida adults of my generation were raised among the last generation that spoke

Haida as their first language. A sense of balance and sustainability is inherent in the ways that

families live together on Haida Gwaii. My husband's stories of his childhood tell me of his

worldview. Matrilineal uncles have always had a significant responsibility to their nephews.

Throughout his life, he was taken to the land and sea not only by his parents and grandparents,

but also by his eldest maternal uncle. While he learned the mechanics of fishing, hunting, and

gathering, he was immersed in the land that was imbued with stories of both supernatural and

human ancestors on that land. He knows his ancestral village, and had a close relationship with

his great-grandmother who had lived there in the largest longhouse in the village. The totem

poles and house posts of the old village are returning to their natural state on the forest floor

now, but the village remains an important place for clan and family, and we have visited many times.

He speaks of watching his grandmother look at the salmon in the holding pen of her fishing weir and selecting only the salmon that she wanted for that day's preserving, while also ensuring that the others would be let through to continue the spawning journey. Food gathering in a sustainable way, and the giving and receiving of traditional foods are an important part of his life, and our family life. "The provision of our foods is important. There is pride in providing food for family. The catch is one thing, taking it to family and elders is more rewarding" (Guujaaw, personal communication, July 27, 2019).

Over years of being on the land with his uncle, they also saw the accelerated rate of destruction through logging and industry. Although the Haida people are now prominent in media stories of Indigenous people protecting their land, there was a period when they did not have influence over what was happening. Responsibility to the land and the generations to come is the foundation of Haida governance, and the ensuing political action has been the backdrop to our family life. It has heightened my awareness of the strong connection to the land.

These and many other stories and experiences on Haida Gwaii in my adult life have shaped my values, which are reflected in the way I teach and my relationships to the children of all backgrounds in my community. I bring all of these experiences and community relationships into my teaching whenever possible. However, I fully recognize that while my values have been shaped by the life I lead now, I make no claim to having an Indigenous worldview. I have the privilege of being welcome in an Indigenous community, but I do not have ancestral and spiritual connections to the people, the culture, and the land. I acknowledge that my racial identity has

come with a set of systemic and personal privileges. My own awareness of these privileges continues to expand and impact my pedagogy and this research is part of that ongoing work.

Facilitating outdoor experiences with my students has always been comfortable for me, though now I do so with more purpose, both from a personal sense of urgency to sustain and foster children's connection to the land, as well as knowing that the British Columbia Curriculum now recognizes the importance of incorporating place-based education and Indigenous knowledge for all of our students (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018).

British Columbia's Educational Transformation

Core Competencies at the centre.

Education in British Columbia is transforming, taking on the ambitious challenge of preparing children for the century ahead in ways that go beyond strong foundations in literacy and numeracy. Our task as educators is to help prepare students to be competent thinkers, communicators, and responsible citizens with a strong sense of their own identity and responsibilities. British Columbia has recently revised its curriculum significantly to guide this transformation, placing these personal, social, communicative, and thinking competencies at the centre (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2017).

Indigenous worldviews.

Foundational to the new curriculum is a profound shift in ways of thinking about education and its goals, toward a holistic view of education more closely aligned with traditional Indigenous pedagogies, but for the benefit of all students. In rising to this challenge, educators of all backgrounds are guided by principles of Indigenous learning, which includes a fundamental connection to the land (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015, 2018).

The Haida Nation expressed their powerful connection to the land in the Proclamation to their Constitution: "Our culture is born of respect; and intimacy with the land and sea and the air around us" (Constitution of the Haida Nation, 2014, Haida Proclamation). As a non-Indigenous teacher on the traditional land of the Haida Nation, I am inspired by this proclamation, and look to Haida culture and Indigenous principles of education for guidance.

Indigenous principles of learning.

Indigenous principles of learning and worldviews are a significant foundation of the curricular transformation, and are included at all levels, for all students. The First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL) are a set of principles developed in British Columbia by the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) to ensure that teaching not only includes culturally relevant content, but also reflects and honors Indigenous ways of knowing and learning (Chrona, 2014). Other guiding principles have been described by Indigenous educators in more local contexts. Haida educator Sara Davidson worked with her father Robert Davidson and the stories of his upbringing. She has described principles of sk̲'ad'a (learning) which emerged from her study of these stories ((Davidson & Davidson, 2018). Archibald (2008) coined the term storywork to describe a set of principles to be used when working with Indigenous stories and storytellers. The storywork principles, which include respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy, added to my understanding of the FPPL and the sk̲'ad'a. These three sets of principles inform my understanding of incorporating Indigenous worldviews and pedagogies in my own teaching practice.

Justification

With the new B.C. Curriculum in place, all teachers in B.C. are being tasked with teaching content about First Nations cultures, and framing their teaching in ways that embody

the attitudes and perspectives of the FPPL (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018). It is an uncertain and uncomfortable position for many non-Indigenous teachers, perhaps even more so for those that are teaching in areas where they have minimal or no connection to First Nations communities or the land. On Haida Gwaii, connections to the land and cultural practices are still strong, and visible, and so the path to culturally responsive teaching seems clearer to me here than it might be in a more densely populated urban school setting. Teachers here are encouraged and supported to incorporate outdoor, place-based and culturally responsive activities in our programs. For all educators this is a way to start changing our practice, and is in fact where this research began. By examining these sorts of experiences through the lens of the FPPL, it is possible to draw out the essence and intent of the principles, which then might be applied by others throughout our education system.

Definition of Key Terms

First People's Principles of Learning (FPPL): The First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL) are a set of nine principles developed in British Columbia by the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) to ensure that teaching not only includes culturally relevant content, but also reflects and honors Indigenous ways of knowing and learning (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008).

Sḵ'ad'a principles: Haida educator Sara Davidson worked with her father Robert Davidson to understand traditional Haida pedagogy. She has outlined nine principles of sḵ'ad'a (learning), which emerged as she studied her father's stories (Davidson & Davidson, 2018).

Storywork principles: Archibald (2008) coined the term storywork to describe a way to work with Indigenous stories and storytelling. The storywork principles articulate a set of principles or practices to guide that work.

Land-based education: Land-based education, or land-based pedagogy generally refers to Indigenous ways of raising children on the land before colonization. Children grew up and acquired knowledge and understandings of cultural practices, beliefs, and ways of life in relation to the traditional land of their nation (Battiste, 2010; Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007; Hansen, 2018; Simpson, 2017). Land-based education also entails a spiritual connection to the land, as described by Cree elders (Hansen, 2018).

B.C. Curriculum: The B.C. Curriculum is frequently referenced in this thesis. This renewed curriculum is based on a "concept-based approach to learning and a focus on the development of competencies, to foster deeper, more transferable learning" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018). The Core Competencies in the areas of Communication, Thinking, and Personal and Social underpin all areas of learning in the B.C. Curriculum (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2017)**.**

Brief Overview of Study

In Chapter One of this study, I describe my background as a non-Indigenous teacher, and the context of B.C.'s New Curriculum with its focus on Indigenous principles of learning, and the inclusion of Core Competencies in the curriculum. The research question asks how my teaching practice, as depicted in several vignettes, aligns with the First Peoples Principles of Learning and the more local sḵ'ad'a principles which draw from Haida culture. Chapter Two describes and situates these Indigenous principles of learning in the context of traditional Indigenous pedagogies, including land-based education and storytelling, and aspects of the life stories of Haida people. This chapter also provides background on B.C.'s New Curriculum and calls for change in the education of Indigenous students. Chapter Three describes the evocative autoethnography methodology chosen for this research (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Indigenist,

narrative, and anti-colonial approaches are discussed. The autoethnography is based on the

vignettes of learning experiences with a group of primary students. In Chapter Four, I present

these vignettes, each followed by reflection and analysis through the lens of Indigenous

principles of learning, the B.C. Curriculum, and from my developing personal perspective as a

settler colonizer. In Chapter Five I discuss the implications of my research. In light of the

analysis, my research demonstrates the need to shift my pedagogy to highlight the importance of

identity, story, and Indigenous principles of learning in developing B.C.'s Core Competencies.

Chapter 2 – Background and Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this review of literature is to position Indigenous principles of learning as one of the foundations of the development and implementation of British Columbia's New Curriculum (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018), a significantly transformed curriculum which in part, responds to calls for change in the education of Indigenous students.

These principles are a contemporary expression of continuously existing Indigenous pedagogies. Particularly relevant to this research are the First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL) (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008), and the sḵ'ad'a, which are principles of learning observed and described by Haida educator Sara Davidson (Davidson & Davidson, 2018). This review references descriptions of traditional pedagogy from Indigenous and academic scholarship and describes the transformation of the B.C. curriculum.

This curricular transformation comes after decades of calls for change in the education of Indigenous students. Principles such as the sḵ'ad'a (Davidson & Davidson, 2018) and the First Peoples Principles of Learning (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008) can be used as a framework to assist educators in conceptualizing and incorporating Indigenous pedagogies in the implementation of this new curriculum. In this current autoethnography, these principles will be used to guide reflections on narrative vignettes describing selected learning experiences of a primary class in British Columbia.

Traditional Indigenous Pedagogies

Land-based education.

Indigenous principles of learning, such as those represented in the sḵ'ad'a, the First Peoples Principles of Learning, and the storywork principles, are contemporary expressions of

continuously existing pedagogies (Archibald, 2008; Davidson & Davidson, 2018; First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008). I am aware that as a non-Indigenous researcher describing in general terms the traditional pedagogy of diverse Indigenous nations I might risk overgeneralizing and stereotyping, and I am cautious not to do so. (In Chapter Three's discussion of anti-colonialism, I further describe my position, and my efforts not to reify aspects of colonialism in which the researcher determines what Indigenous people need by way of research). Acknowledging that I am an outsider to an Indigenous worldview, my research is informed by the writings of Indigenous researchers, and by the narratives of Haida people in my community, as discussed below (Jisgang & Steedman, 2011). However, Chrona (2014) also explains the importance of the more general First Peoples Principles of Learning: "There are still strong similarities in the ways of knowing and learning, and commonalities in cultural constructs and worldviews among Indigenous peoples in British Columbia that could serve to enhance the public education system for all students" (Background of FPPL and Current Context, para. 1). While the principles deliberately do not set out specific teaching plans to integrate Indigenous content, all educators are encouraged to understand the principles and their interrelated nature, in order to guide the choices we make in determining how to best facilitate learning experiences. She further advises educators to seek out sets of principles which may have been articulated by First Nations in their own locality (Chrona, 2014).

Chrona (2014) describes key features of Indigenous pedagogy as "personal, holistic, embedded in relationship to each other, to self, and to the land" (Background of FPPL and Current Context, para. 12) . A significant relationship to the land is usually foundational in descriptions of traditional pedagogy, often referred to as land-based education (Cajete, 1994; Chrona, 2014; Simpson, 2017).

Land-based education, or land-based pedagogy generally refers to Indigenous ways of raising children on the land before colonization. Children grew up and acquired knowledge and understandings of cultural practices, beliefs, and ways of life in relation to the traditional land of their nation (Battiste, 2010; Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007a; Hansen, 2018; Simpson, 2017). Cajete (1994) elaborates:

> Every cultural group established their relations to [their place] over time. Whether that place is in the desert, a mountain valley, or along a seashore, it is in the context of natural community, and through that understanding they established an educational process that was practical, ultimately ecological, and spiritual. In this way they sought and found their life (p. 113).

Further, according to Simpson (2017) it is "the whole context of relationships" in that setting; the traditional knowledge cannot be "deterritorialized" and isolated as mere technical knowledge (p. 154). These relationships include non-human beings, community and family and a responsibility to honour and ensure continuity of that knowledge (Corntassel & Hardbarger, 2019). Land-based education entails a significant and often spiritual connection to the land (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2007b; Hansen, 2018). "Teaching and learning were natural outcomes of living in close communion with the natural world" (Cajete, 2008, p. 489).

In addition to this fundamental and often spiritual relationship to the land, traditional Indigenous pedagogy is characterized by Battiste (2002) as "learning by observation and doing, learning through authentic experiences and individualized instruction, and learning through enjoyment" (p. 18). Cajete (2008) contrasts these relational features with "the low-context, formal instruction characteristic of Euro-American schooling" (p. 488).

Haida community context and relational accountability.

Given that this research is relationally accountable (Wilson, 2008) to the local

community of Haida Gwaii, it is important to include descriptions of traditional pedagogy as

related by Haida scholars, knowledge holders, and community members. I take into

consideration Carlson's (2017) caution that life stories not be used in a fragmented way which

extracts themes to be "analyzed across participants" (p. 511). With that caution in mind, I share

the following aspects of stories in an attempt to firmly ground this research in the context of my

local community.

 Elders and language speakers of the Haida Nation recounted portions of their life stories

in *That Which Makes us Haida - the Haida Language* (Jisgang & Steedman, 2011). In their own

stories of their upbringing and their passion for preserving the language, many of the stories

describe childhood experiences gathering food according to seasonal rounds. They frequently

described travel with family members within Haida territories, usually under the care and

mentorship of extended family members, often grandparents (Jisgang & Steedman, 2011).

People told of travelling to pick berries or gathering a variety of seafoods on the beach in front of

their village. Stories of daily seafood gathering and preparation on site are common. Many of

the families regularly travelled to different areas of the islands to stay for extended periods, and

stories of social and family connections while food gathering, fishing, hunting, and trapping are

fondly recalled. The connection to their place, Haida Gwaii, is central. K̲ii'iljuus (Barbara J.

Wilson) and Luu G̲aahlandaay (Kevin Borserio) describe the findings of an extensive Haida

place name project, in their paper *Gam tluu tllgaay aa k'iix̲a G̲ang ga* (There is no land lying

vacant), which involved many of these same Elders:

Each place name has been passed down orally from parents and

grandparents to the younger generations through stories, songs and other

information as the families travelled and went about their daily lives. This way of

transferring knowledge stayed intact for many millennia and still happens today to

some extent. (This paper appears as an edited version in Jisgang & Steedman,

2011, p. 196).

The stories are numerous, and it is difficult to select only some examples from the many

people who have added to my knowledge. I cite these stories here as a way of localizing and

connecting to the traditional pedagogies and Haida culture which informs my teaching practice.

Many of these life stories talk of practices similar to those in the academic citations mentioned

earlier in this chapter, but they are told in the voices of the individuals, and are inseparable from

the places of which they speak. These stories give direction to educators such as myself that

attempt to create space for place-based experiences, and are foundational to the vignettes which

are presented in this research, in Chapter Four.

At this point it is important to assume (and examine) a significant responsibility for using

these stories respectfully, and for the necessity of abbreviating them in this situation. Indigenous

researchers emphasize treating stories with respect, and responsibility (Archibald, 2008;

Davidson, 2019; Wilson, 2008). These principles are among several which are important

throughout this study, and are presented in the following sections of this chapter. I endeavor to

represent these stories as accurately as possible and to use the stories in a relationally honest

way, accepting full responsibility for any mistakes.

Storytelling.

Storytelling, stories, and storywork have an important role in traditional Indigenous education (Archibald, 2008; Cajete, 2008; Kanu, 2011; Thomas, 2005). Archibald (2008) coined the term storywork to give significance to the process of knowledge production through stories, whether they be traditional stories, or stories of lived experience. The storywork principles guide my use of the stories from Haida Elders as noted above. Cajete also explains the importance of stories in coming to understand information and relationships (as cited in Marin & Bang, 2015, p. 34).

While this current study does not represent an analysis of Indigenous stories and their potential role in teaching, it does employ reflective analysis of narrative vignettes. In an Indigenist methodology which priorizes holism and relationality to land and community, many of the principles of storywork and its foundation add depth and breadth to the lens with which the narratives are analyzed.

Principles of Learning

Haida educator Sara Davidson sought to further her understanding of traditional Haida pedagogy by carefully reflecting on stories told to her by her father. The sḵ'ad'a, or principles of learning emerged from those stories:

Learning emerges from strong relationships.

Learning emerges from authentic experiences.

Learning emerges from curiosity.

Learning occurs through observation.

Learning occurs through contribution.

Learning occurs through recognizing and encouraging strengths.

Learning honours the power of the mind.

Learning honours history and story.

Learning honours aspects of spirituality and protocol (Davidson & Davidson, 2018).

While reflecting on her work with her father, Davidson (2016) was guided by the Indigenous storywork principles of respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy (Archibald, 2008).

The First Peoples Principles of Education (FPPL) describe and summarize descriptions of Indigenous pedagogy, some of which are described earlier in this chapter:

Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the

community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on

connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.

Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.

Learning recognizes the role of Indigenous knowledge.

Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

Learning involves patience and time.

Learning requires exploration of one's identity.

Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared

with permission and/or in certain situations. (First Nations Education Steering

Committee, 2008).

The articulation of the FPPL initially arose from work done by Indigenous educators and knowledge holders in developing the English First Peoples 12 course. Their purpose was to

ensure appropriate content as well as worldview were represented in the English First Peoples 12

course (Chrona, 2014). This advisory group went further though, to make sure that the course

embedded "not only authentic First Peoples knowledge and perspectives, but also reflect(ed)

First Peoples' epistemology and pedagogy" (Chrona, 2014, Background of FPPL and Current

Context, para. 2).

B.C.'s New Curriculum

British Columbia began significantly transforming its entire curriculum in the first two

decades of the 21st Century. The transformation marked more than just revisions of curricular

outcomes, but a move towards more holistic learning, with fewer learning outcomes, and the

explicit inclusion of social-emotional learning (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2012).

Regional working sessions produced clear goals, including a more flexible curriculum with 21st

century priorities, a focus on social-emotional learning, and cross-curricular competencies that

"will best prepare students for their futures based on curriculum that prescribes fewer but more

important outcomes" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 2).

As part of the shift in curriculum, Indigenous content was recognized as important for all

students, not just Indigenous students (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013b, 2015).

There is now recognition that the FPPL describe ways of facilitating learning that are of benefit

to all students (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2012, 2013b). "The increased emphasis

on personalization and the recognition of the importance of paying attention to more aspects of

self may be new to the BC education system, but it is not new to Indigenous peoples" (Chrona,

2014, Background of FPPL and Current Context, para. 12).

The redesigned curriculum includes and expands upon social-emotional learning. Guided

by the work of Schonert-Reichl (2012), the Ministry developed a set of cross-curricular

competencies which aligned with competencies described by the Collaborative for Academic,

Social, and Emotional Learning (Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning,

2016). The FPPL and a summary guide "Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in the

Classroom" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015) were among the documents which

informed the development of these cross curricular competencies, ultimately called "the Core

Competencies" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013a).

Q   The Core Competencies in B.C.'s New Curriculum are Communication, Thinking, and

Personal and Social, with sub-competencies included within each of these competencies (British

Columbia Ministry of Education, 2017). These Core Competencies address the holistic,

relational, personal aspects of Indigenous pedagogy, as described by the FPPL and Davidson &

Davidson's sḵ'ad'a (Davidson & Davidson, 2018). Cajete (2000) notes the importance of

positive personal identity in Indigenous pedagogy: "a shared body of understanding among many

indigenous peoples that education is really about helping an individual find his or her face, which

means finding out who you are, where you come from, and your unique character" (p.183).

Calls for Change for Indigenous Students

Q   While British Columbia's provincial curriculum was being transformed, Indigenous

people and organizations had been calling for change for decades (eg. Battiste, 2010; Kirkness,

1998). In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood released *Indian Control of Indian Education,* a

position paper which called for parental responsibility and local control of Indigenous education

(*Indian Control of Indian Education*, 1972). The document calls for all children to learn about

the history, customs and culture of this country's original inhabitants and first citizens. More than

forty years later, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission called on the government of Canada

to create and support curriculum which educates all Canadian children about the history of

residential schools and colonization (*Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*, 2015). Yet, in 2015, the BC Auditor General report stated the BC Ministry of Education had yet to provide appropriate and culturally relevant education for Indigenous students (The Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, 2015).

Indigenous researchers stress that culturally relevant education is more than an appearance of a multicultural environment. "Aboriginal teachers emphasize that teaching about Aboriginal culture and history must go beyond cultural artifacts" (Denis, 2011, p. 314). Not only is content important, but there is a requirement to adjust curriculum and pedagogy to authentically incorporate differing perspectives, and ways of building knowledge and understanding (Battiste, 2010; Denis, 2011; Gebhard, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lipka et al., 2005; Marin & Bang, 2015; Oskineegish, 2014). Some researchers point to a distinction between culturally relevant education, and culturally responsive education stating that culturally responsive education responds to and builds upon the needs and cultural knowledge of the students and community, rather than making education culturally relevant with the goal of meeting mainstream curricular objectives (Lipka et al., 2005; Nicol, Archibald, & Baker, 2013). Particularly relevant to culturally responsive and relevant education on Haida Gwaii, Neel (2008) found extensive examples of authentic contemporary numeracy applications in the lives of people of Haida Gwaii. Nicol, Archibald and Baker (2013) have also worked extensively with local educators on culturally responsive mathematics.

Battiste (2010) describes the depth and breadth of change which Indigenous researchers and educators are calling for. She eloquently and directly charges us:

> To effect reform, educators need to make conscious decisions to nurture
>
> Indigenous knowledge, dignity, identity, and integrity by making a direct change

in school philosophy, pedagogy, and practice. They need to develop missions and

purposes that carve out time and space to connect with the wisdom and traditions

of Indigenous knowledge. They need to teach holistic and humanistic connections

to local and collective relationships. They need to generate educational space that

allows them to be challenging, caring, inspiring, and alert to their students'

intellectual travails and attuned to their inner conditions" (p. 66).

To respond to Battiste's call, Indigenous principles of learning, such as the sḵ'ad'a, the

First Peoples Principles and the storywork principles can be used as a framework to assist

educators in conceptualizing and incorporating Indigenous pedagogy in the

implementation of B.C.'s New Curriculum.

The FPPL are foundational underpinnings of B.C.'s New Curriculum. It is notable and

inspiring that the use of the FPPL as a framework to analyze teaching practice appears to be an

area of immediate interest for practising teachers. Among those, Davis, (2019) a primary French

Immersion teacher examined her own practice for alignment with the FPPL, which ultimately led

to increased incorporation of the FPPL. Nyeste (2011), an Indigenous educator of mixed

ancestry, incorporated the FPPL and authentic texts into her instruction of high school English,

and measured improvements in aspects of social responsibility. As a settler educator, Hanson

(2019) engaged in self-study, trying to understand the First Peoples Principles as underpinnings

of B.C.'s New Curriculum from her own perspective.

Researchers have sought to further understand the New Curriculum in the context of

teaching on Haida Gwaii. Davidson and Davidson (2018) looked to the storywork principles, in

reflecting on her father's stories of being raised on their traditional land. Nicol et al (2013) drew

significantly on storywork principles, in their multi-year project investigating culturally responsive mathematics instruction on Haida Gwaii.

Conclusion

In my own research as a non-Indigenous teacher, I use the principles described in this chapter to reflect on learning experiences which were initially undertaken to foster an awareness of our ecological connections on Haida Gwaii, in what I hoped was a culturally responsive manner. In the next chapter, I describe the autoethnographic methodology used in this reflection on my own teaching practice, always keeping in mind that although the experiences were intended to foster a relationship to the land, I do so from the perspective of a non-Indigenous educator, and cannot purport to replicate land-based pedagogy. In Chapter Four, vignettes of these land or place-based learning experiences are presented for reflection, through the lens of Indigenous principles of learning.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

Research Question and Purpose

As a non-Indigenous teacher, how does my teaching practice align with Indigenous principles of learning? My purpose in conducting this research is to further understand how the First Peoples Principles of Learning (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008) and the related sḵ'ad'a principles which are more specific to Haida culture (Davidson & Davidson, 2018) should guide educational experiences and foster the development of the Core Competencies of British Columbia's New Curriculum (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2017).

Qualitative Methodology

My research is designed to increase my understanding of aligning my teaching practice with the FPPL and the sḵ'ad'a principles, in a locally culturally responsive way for the benefit of my students. My practice is unique to my local and relational context, so it is important that I choose a methodology which fully acknowledges those factors as important for any knowledge production. Qualitative research acknowledges that real, lived experiences have many variables which are not controlled or standardized, and that the value system of the researcher is inextricable from the research (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

My classroom practice and the reflective writing which forms the basis of this research was responsive to the inquiries of my students, and therefore evolved and shifted as the school year progressed. As the researcher, I determined the most salient themes in those experiences, adapting the focus of my reflections, and learning and growing along the way (Leavy, 2014). Leavy (2014) notes that qualitative research "can be adjusted over the course of a project to facilitate new learning or new insights" (p. 6).

Qualitative research developed at a time when society experienced an undercurrent of calls for social justice (Leavy, 2014). B.C.'s New Curriculum, the First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL), and the 7 Principles of Learning from the Organization for Economic Development (OECD) Innovative Learning Environment Project all point to best teaching practices as cross-curricular, and connected to students and their communities (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018; Dumont, Istance, & Denavides, 2012; First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008).

Autoethnography

As I began to implement our new curriculum, I had several teaching experiences which led me to question and reflect on the intent and essence of the First Peoples Principles of Learning. In order to examine this aspect of my experience, I look to methodologies which align with Indigenous paradigms, as described by Indigenous researchers. Autoethnography and narratives emerged as an appropriate qualitative research method (Graeme & Mandawe, 2017; MacDonald, 2017; McIvor, 2010; Wilson, 2008).

Autoethnography developed as scholars began to question whether research and knowledge production in the social sciences could really be completely objective and reliably quantified (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Rather, research is influenced by the worldview and background of the researcher. Much of what constitutes my worldview influences what I will be able to learn by reflecting and inquiring about my experiences. Charmaz (2005) explains that "what we know shapes, but does not necessarily determine, what we 'find' " (p. 511). Autoethnography openly acknowledges that understandings gained are influenced by the researcher's experience, in contrast to traditional quantitative research which, through its use of

formal academic language, attempts to remove the influence of personal experience and distance the reader (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

Reed-Danahay (2009) described autoethnography as "placing the writer's lived experience in a social and cultural context" (p. 30). My own worldview and context as a non-Indigenous teacher has many layers. Although I am non-Indigenous, I married into a Haida family, and have lived in the Haida community of Skidegate for almost thirty years. I have raised my three Haida children in this community. Living in this community, I have awareness of many Haida cultural practices which influence the way I teach and the opportunities I try to facilitate with my students. I have some knowledge of a set of values which differ from my childhood background, yet I also recognize that my worldview is composed of the multitude of values and experiences I live with. According to Dei (2005), all of these values and experiences, including the racial identity of the researcher are important considerations in terms of the knowledge produced. I pursued my career in northern Indigenous communities, and I have long been interested in Indigenous and culturally responsive education. Autoethnography allows me the opportunity to examine the intersection of my professional background, the influences of my personal context and the multiple facets of my identity (Rambo Ronai, 1995). Although I am not Indigenous, autoethnography allows me as researcher to situate myself "within a cultural context, moving in and out through one's own experiences" (Reta, 2010, p. 131). Part of that context is my sense of accountability to the community in which I live.

According to Carlson's (2017) principles of anti-colonial research it is important that white researchers openly state their position, and critically reflect on ways they may be enacting and reproducing colonialism. Grande (2008) also comments on the naming of whiteness as an

important marker of privilege which must be acknowledged as we critically examine our school systems.

Narrative methodology.

Narrative researchers gather data "through the collection of stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual" (Creswell, 2015, p. 504). I have chosen evocative autoethnography in particular as the most appropriate style of narrative methodology for my autoethnography (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

Bochner and Ellis (2016) encourage the writing of evocative, compelling life stories as a way of developing and discussing understandings of cultural concepts. This approach allows the researcher to determine which themes in the narratives merit further reflection (Delamont & Jones, 2012). Cortazzi notes that an increased emphasis on teacher reflection has influenced the development of narrative methods in education (as cited in Creswell, 2015).

I had written vignettes which describe learning experiences I shared with my students over a two year period. The vignettes afforded an opportunity for reflection on the many aspects of changing curriculum and current learning theory. The vignettes are intended to be "rich accounts of the processual nature and full complexities of experience" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2001, p. 361). Within the domain of evocative autoethnography, writing is used as a form of inquiry, of learning more about the self within one's discipline (Richardson, 2000). Through the process of writing, "stories of unique experience point toward cultural and social issues that transcend the personal and are important to all of us" (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 129).

Vignettes provide an opportunity to examine those experiences, and provide a window through which the reader can gain deeper understanding (Pitard, 2016). Reflection on a narrative vignette can lead to reflexive " turning back of an inquiry or a theory or a text onto its own

formative possibilities" (Macbeth, 2001. p. 36). Humphreys (2005) stated that the use of

autoethnographic vignettes will "enhance the reflexivity of the methodology" (p. 853). The

experiences I have written about are unique, but my research attempts to draw out what is

generalizable to other teaching situations, bearing in mind the principles of Indigenist research

which emphasize practical benefit to Indigenous people (Hart, Straka, & Rowe, 2017; Weber-

Pillwax, 1999; Wilson, 2008).

Indigenist Research

Narrative inquiry and autoethnography align well with an Indigenous paradigm for

Indigenous researchers (McIvor, 2010; Wilson, 2008). Non-Indigenous researchers though,

require methodological frameworks for conducting appropriate and decolonizing research, but

cannot claim to use methodologies which arise out of and assume an Indigenous upbringing,

history, and worldview (Carlson, 2017; Kovach, 2009).

In finding my own place, I am guided by principles of Indigenist research, which

acknowledges a role for non-Indigenous researchers employing Indigenous theory and

perspectives (Battiste, 2010; Wilson, 2008). Indigenist research is designed for, by, and with

Indigenous people (Hart, 2009). Key to the Indigenist position is placing oneself in relationship

with Indigenous people, including scholars, Elders, and knowledge keepers, and working

together to determine research questions (Wilson, 2008; Wyatt, 2018). That relationship carries

with it the understanding that any knowledge gained through Indigenist research must bring

benefits to the Indigenous community (Carlson, 2017; Dei, 2005; Weber-Pillwax, 1999; Wilson,

2008).

Adopting frameworks for analysis which have been articulated by Indigenous educators

is another way to shift away from a style of research which is not relationally accountable to

Indigenous people. In British Columbia educators are guided by the FPPL, (First Nations

Education Steering Committee, 2008) and are encouraged to consult local frameworks, such as

the sḵ'ad'a (learning) principles described by Haida educator Sara Davidson (Davidson &

Davidson, 2018).

Anti-colonial research offers another critical lens to shape my methodology. It cautions

that merely self-identifying as non-Indigenous does nothing to address inequity brought about by

colonialism (Carlson, 2017; Hart et al., 2017). Rather, that identity also has to confer a set of

responsibilities and action. I have a "moral, ethical responsibility" to use my research to inform

my practice and actions in a way which does not further enact colonial dynamics, and works

toward relationally accountable decolonial change. (Carlson, 2017, p. 500).

While I am driven by my desire to bring benefits to my students and our diverse

community, adoption of anti-colonial principles as a self-check is important. Among the

principles which are relevant to my research are recognition of the Indigenous teachers and

mentors working with me, stating my own social location and cultural identity clearly, and

building knowledge which acknowledges the central importance of Indigenous people's ongoing

connection to the land (Carlson, 2017).

Process: Writing the Vignettes

These vignettes describe experiences which took place during the 2018-2019 school year,

with the exception of *Gathering Spruce Roots with April,* which took place in the spring of 2018.

During the year, my primary students and I continually revisited an ecological inquiry, using the

guiding question: how are the forest, the eagles, the salmon and people connected? At the same

time, I was reflecting on my own pedagogy and B.C.'s New Curriculum, using Kaser and

Halbert's (2013) Spiral of Inquiry as a professional development framework. The Spiral outlines

a systematic and ongoing process in which educators take an inquiry-oriented, evidence-based

approach to improve outcomes for their learners. I wrote frequent reflections about my practice,

as it related to my own Spiral of Inquiry question: can connecting students to their place through

a yearlong inquiry allow horizonal cross-curricular connections, without detracting from learning

more traditional literacy and numeracy skills? The vignettes are based on those reflections.

The experiences described in the vignettes took place in and around a provincial school in

British Columbia, on the traditional land of the Haida people, in the village of Skidegate. The

school enrols Haida students as well as those from surrounding communities. As a visual cue to

indicate which part of the text is the vignette, I have set them in a different font. This is intended

to disrupt the academic tone as well as to facilitate transitions for the reader. Carlson (2017)

notes that the tone of academic writing often uses an "authoritative and abstracted third person

omniscient stance", as if the researcher's relationships should be obscured (p. 510). Such a tone

may also separate the knowledge from the community from which it arose, and thereby privilege

academic practice over community accessibility, which anti-colonial thought seeks to challenge.

By speaking in an "intimate, introspective and self-reflexive storytelling voice" evocative

autoethnographies compel readers, (including myself as researcher and teacher), to deal with

stories of lived experience (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 51). Anti-colonial practice includes

emphasizing location and standpoint, resisting neutrality, objectivity, and invisibility (Carlson,

2017). In fact, a narrative vignette can "give the reader a sense of being there in the scene"

(Erickson, 1986, p. 150).

Ethical Considerations: Respecting the Knowledge Holders

I have named the three different knowledge holders that figure significantly in the

vignettes. I have met with each of them and described my research and the vignettes, and asked

whether they would allow their names to be used. My intent is to honor their knowledge, and their willingness to share their stories and knowledge. Traditional knowledge keepers are not anonymous 'Elders'. Although I am not an Indigenous researcher, in an Indigenous research paradigm, it is considered important to name knowledge holders (Wilson, 2008). Among Carlson's (2017) principles of anti-colonial research methodology for settlers is the importance of acknowledging Indigenous teachers and mentors. All three of the women gave me permission to use their names, and expressed their approval of the manner in which the children were learning, as described in the vignettes. In the first vignette I recall an experience and conversation with an Elder. Although he is no longer alive, I have spoken with his daughter about the experience, his words, and the insight it gave me. She has expressed her approval of sharing his story, both with children and for inclusion in this thesis. I was also conscious that not all information can be shared, and was careful to not include traditional ecological knowledge which is not shared publicly (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008; Snively & Williams, 2016).

            After writing the vignettes, I met with the Principal of Aboriginal Education of School District 50, and described my proposal, and the vignettes. This led to a request that I present my plans for my research proposal to the Haida Education Council of School District 50. The members of the committee expressed interest in the activities I had undertaken with my students, and expressed support for my use of the vignettes to pursue my Master's thesis and further develop my understandings. Interestingly, I noted that while I showed photos linked to one of the vignettes in our discussion, committee members discussed the importance in their own lives of learning through family stories. Archibald (2008) noted that her Elders explained that in the course of walking from place to place, or doing chores, important teachings would take place in

the context of stories. These comments seemed to be a further validation that narratives were an

appropriate methodology for this research.

The vignettes are a product of self-reflection, not a product of research involving my

students, and therefore this research is not subject to Research Ethics Board review (C. Turner,

personal communication, September 18, 2019).

Limitations and Cautions from Anti-Colonial Theory

It is important to acknowledge that there is tension in choosing to write an

autoethnography which describes my work in an Indigenous community. My methodology

incorporates principles of Indigenist and anti-colonial research in order to strengthen my

understanding of Indigenous principles of learning in the context of my teaching practice. Settler

researchers can run the risk of reinforcing aspects of colonialism by claiming to do what is right

for Indigenous people, without actually receiving any direction from Indigenous people (Hart et

al., 2017; Tuck & Yang, 2012). As a framework for my reflection and analysis I have adopted

both the FPPL, written in consultation with Indigenous educators and Elders, and the related

sḵ'ad'a principles as articulated by Haida educator Sara Davidson and her father Robert

Davidson (Davidson & Davidson, 2018; First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008).

I am wary of the perception and risk that a non-Indigenous teacher writing about ways to

embody the FPPL, the sḵ'ad'a, and place-based connections could fall into self-indulgent

introspection or self-therapeutic writing, criticisms sometimes directed at autoethnography in

general (Coffey, 1999; Winkler, 2018). "Good autoethnography is not simply a confessional tale

of self-renewal; it is a provocative weave of story and theory" (Spry, 2001, p. 713). Wilson's

(2008) emphasis on relational accountability to the community is a central and cautionary

guiding principle in my research.

Trustworthiness

In Indigenist and anti-colonial methodology, relational accountability and practical benefit to the community are important measures of trustworthiness as well (Carlson, 2017; Hart et al., 2017; Weber-Pillwax, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Watt (2007) cites her concerns about the trustworthiness of her autoethnographical account and asserts that if openly acknowledged, experience and bias can be an asset to reflective writing, and can ensure that the researcher remains open to new information and avoid having the research become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Richardson (2000) offers the following criteria for evaluating ethnography: aesthetic merit, reflexivity, impactfulness, and ability to evoke lived experience. As an alternative metaphor to the concept of triangulation, she suggests using the image of a crystal. With its "infinite variety of shapes… and angles of approach" this image is more suited to a constructivist epistemology which disputes a single fixed point of knowledge (p. 912). I am guided by this metaphor, acknowledging that my teaching practice is influenced by all of my lived experiences and prior learning, and that these factors influence my analysis of the vignettes.

Analysis of the Vignettes

Bochner and Ellis (2016) discuss the placement of analytical text so that it doesn't detract from the autoethnographic narrative, and state that it can depend on the audience. Some autoethnographies will be framed with theory before the story, and analysis or conclusions afterward (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 203). My intent is to place the vignette first, putting the reader (and myself as researcher) into the scene, and follow the vignette with reflection and theoretical analysis.

I have chosen to keep the vignettes intact, rather than fragmenting the scene to insert analysis. The experiences described in the vignettes are infused with Haida cultural practices and

connections to the land. Because this research intends to deepen my understanding of embodying

the First Peoples Principles of Learning and the sḵ'ad'a principles, it is important to honor

Indigenous methodologies and my understanding of Indigenous worldviews with respect to

maintaining the holism of the vignettes (Archibald, Lee-Morgan, & De Santolo, 2019; Davidson

& Davidson, 2016; Wilson, 2008). While the FPPL attempt to describe values of learning and

teaching which are commonly held by many Indigenous people, educators are also encouraged to

seek principles which have been articulated by particular First Nations in their regions (Chrona,

2014). Davidson and Davidson outline the following principles which describe learning, sḵ'ad'a,

within Haida culture. "Learning emerges from strong relationships, authentic experiences, and

curiosity. Learning occurs through observation, contribution, and recognizing and encouraging

strengths. Learning honours the power of the mind, our history and our stories, as well as

spirituality and protocol." (Davidson & Davidson, 2018, p. 13).

When writing evocative narratives as inquiry, connections to personal and social issues

become apparent (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Richardson, 2000). My intent is to draw connections

and use reflexivity to gain knowledge which I can apply to my own future practice. Watt (2007)

deemed reflexivity in autoethnography essential, "potentially facilitating understanding of both

the phenomenon under study and the research process itself" (p. 82).

Pitard (2016) developed a six-step framework to guide analysis of her vignettes,

including context, anecdote, emotional response, reflexivity, strategies developed, and

conclusive comments on layers, with each step adding a different perspective to her analysis. In

my analysis of each vignette I will discuss the embodiment of the FPPL and the sḵ'ad'a, and the

ways in which the Core Competencies of B.C.'s Curriculum are being developed. As in Pitard's

framework, reflexivity, and implications for future strategies will also be discussed.

While I consider the experiences in the vignettes, I will also be accessing the other layers of my life experience, reflecting on the multiple lenses of my previous social, cultural, and professional learning (Rambo Ronai, 1995).

Conclusion

In the next chapter I present the autoethnographical vignettes, as previously described, followed by reflection and analysis. Writing, and analyzing the vignettes provides the opportunity to reflect on my teaching practice through the lens of the FPPL and the more local sḵ'ad'a principles (Davidson & Davidson, 2018). Through this reflection, I will also draw on relevant pedagogy which supports implementation of these principles as part of the British Columbia Curriculum. I intend to summarize the analysis for each vignette, in an attempt to synthesize the knowledge gained to guide my future practice.

In my final chapter, I will discuss the implications of the analysis in terms of my pedagogy as I reflect back on my purpose: to further understand how I can use these principles to guide culturally responsive educational experiences and foster the development of the Core Competencies of British Columbia's New Curriculum (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2017).

Chapter 4 – Vignettes and Analysis

Introduction

The seven vignettes presented here were originally written shortly after each experience itself. At the time I was interested in furthering my understanding of student-led inquiry and place-based activities, and the vignettes contain some reflections based on that lens. The vignettes themselves are presented in an alternate font while the analysis, which comes one year later as part of this thesis, reverts back to regular font. My intent in changing the font is to disrupt the academic tone, and instead, change to a tone more characteristic of a personal handwritten and reflective journal. The vignettes are informal, first-person stories, not objective or detached, written with the intent to engage the reader in the story. This post-experience analysis is informed and furthered by both the passage of time, and by the research involved in writing the other chapters of this thesis.

It is also important to note with regard to the passage of time, that current events at the time of this research included the COVID 19 pandemic of 2020, and a significant rise in anti-racist actions in North America, across the globe, and indeed, on Haida Gwaii. As the basis of this autoethnography is my self-reflection, I cannot help but be influenced by the events going on around me, and to be called upon to reflect on my own positionality.

Upon the declaration of a pandemic in 2020, Indigenous nations in British Columbia frequently referenced their communal memory of the trauma of previous pandemics as their leadership bodies prepared safety and protection guidelines for their communities. I had previously heard people tell stories of canoes travelling on the coast during the time of smallpox, often with passengers already very ill and infectious. Indigenous historians recall stories their grandparents had told about those times. Although I had heard these stories over the years,

during the anxious time of the current pandemic it was impossible for me to avoid imagining that

time in a more realistic and personal sense. As I worried about my own family near and far, these

stories gave me a remote glimpse at the collective trauma of that earlier time.

During the pandemic, violent and systemic racism in policing was exposed, and quickly

led to intense public anti-racist activism across North America. Although Canada's government

may have initially hesitated to acknowledge our own systemic racism, particularly toward

Indigenous people, our country's existence is based on a violent colonial history which carries

forward into our contemporary governance and infrastructure. I was compelled to examine my

own privilege, and the many aspects of our own inequitable structures which continue to

marginalize many people, and prevent them access to the privilege I have always lived with.

The research question clearly states that I am interested in my practice as a non-

Indigenous teacher, asking whether my practice aligns with Indigenous principles of learning. As

events such as the pandemic and the anti-racist activism unfolded, my analysis also included a

deeper examination of my positionality as a non-Indigenous teacher.

Archibald (Archibald, Lee-Morgan, & De Santolo, 2019) advises listeners to be "story-

ready" when listening to Indigenous stories (p. 2). Her words kept coming back to me while

reflecting on these vignettes, trying to understand how they fit together, and what I could learn

from them. I've tried to reread these vignettes as a story of my learning, and to be "story-ready".

This story begins with a group of primary students on Haida Gwaii in the fall of 2018.

The Vignettes

   Vignette #1: Sk'aagii[1] (dog salmon) in the Tarundl Creek estuary.

   In the fall, the sk'aagii come to the Tarundl Creek estuary
and make their way up the creek to spawn. It's always the first
big field trip of the year with my students. I watch the creek,
and plan the trip as soon as I know the salmon are there. We
walk through the forest along the creek until we get to the
estuary. We see signs of the bears, and lots of salmon in the
creek: some spawning at the moment we see them, some making
their way upstream, or creating their redd by fanning their
tails. We also see the salmon bodies on the bank, or in the
grassy field of the estuary, having been hauled there by bears
and eagles. The tall grassy expanse of the estuary is an
exquisitely beautiful and seemingly untouched place for children
to play in the fall.

   It's the perfect spot to see ecological interdependence,
Gina 'waadlu__x__an gud ad kwaagiida, (everything depends on
everything else). We learn from the biologists that usually join
us. The salmon feed the bears, the decomposing carcasses nourish
the trees, the flies, and the other scavengers.

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[1] The Haida words in the vignettes are from the Skidegate dialect of the Haida language, and are spelled according to the HlG̲aagilda X̲aayda Kil K̲aalang glossary produced by Skidegate Elders and the Skidegate Haida Immersion Program (Elders of Skidegate, 2016).

But there is another layer to the interdependence which I'm just coming to understand and highlight with my students. Many years ago, I came to the creek with my husband's late uncle. He had come here as a child every fall, to fish for dog salmon and dig clams, as his family had done for generations. He showed us where their seasonal house sat, and in fact we can see midden at the edge of the forest from more ancient times (the Late Nathan Young, personal communication, permission to share given by his daughter in September 2018).

It's another story that is relational: the story and the place connect us to the generations before, and the knowledge held by those generations of ancestors. For hundreds of years children have been coming here in the fall, learning while helping to gather food, playing in the estuary, seeing the salmon and the bears, just as our children do now. We're learning so much more than the salmon life cycle.

I began taking students on this trip many years ago, as an opportunity to see spawning salmon in an intact ecosystem. Our focus is on interdependence among spawning salmon, bears and trees, and the featured guests are local fisheries biologists. This particular year my professional goal was to learn to incorporate inquiry. I began by posing a guiding big question to my students: "how are the forest, the salmon, the eagles and the people connected?". This was place-based outdoor education, in a pristine looking estuary, guided by the Haida phrase *Gina 'waadlux̱an gud ad kwaagiida* (everything depends on everything else); I imagined that this field trip would lead to an understanding of the ecological connection between the salmon and the

forest. I thought I was doing all the right things. Teaching about interconnectedness in the biological world is an entry point for a non-Indigenous teacher to begin to facilitate understanding interdependence among people, ancestors and history. Or is it?

I had written 'The *tall grassy expanse of the estuary is an exquisitely beautiful and seemingly untouched place for children to play in the fall'*. It is the 'seemingly untouched' part of this vignette that I now see as troublesome, as it threatens to negate Nathan's story. His story tells of people being there each fall, and having a home there. The creek and estuary are not terra nullius, the children and I are on Haida land. I think of the First Peoples principle that learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits and the ancestors. What began years ago as an opportunity to teach about salmon ecology has now morphed into taking initial steps to firmly foreground the lives of Haida people on that land.

Teaching about place, and in ways that respect the place, must connect us to the people that have lived on that land. Nelson, Pacini-Ketchabaw and Nxumalo (2018) lay bare the reality of modern society's current fascination with nature-based programs, which "rely on colonial discovery narratives of empty 'nature spaces' devoid of Indigenous cultural, economic, and spiritual connections" (p. 7).

In beginning to tell the story of Nathan, I have had to face my own "settler colonial awakening" (Nelson et al., 2018, p. 6). It is much easier to rest comfortably with my well-intentioned incorporation of cultural elements, from my unexamined place of complicity. I was struck by Dei's (2006) statement "The site from which we oppress is the site on which we least cast our gaze" (p.11). I hadn't recognized that taking the children to natural spaces without acknowledging when, how, and why those spaces appear to be unoccupied now might be negating Haida presence on the land, an act of colonialism which I had never recognized as my

own. I needed to critically examine and change my pedagogy of connecting children to places of

nature. Nelson et al (2018) suggest "that thinking collectively about such issues in early

childhood education might create movement beyond preoccupations with individual children's

well-being or some imagined idealized future state of improved eco-stewardship" (p. 5).

My story of Nathan was an early attempt to ground the field trip experience in an

informal story of a child and his family being in this same space many decades ago. This leads

me to another beginning, to think about the pedagogy of story. By sharing this story, and

providing the space to see themselves on Indigenous land, we can foster each child's

understanding of their identity, a key competency in our curriculum.

Archibald (2008) spoke of gathering information about the land through stories while

walking about. Nathan had given me that story, in part because a familial relationship brought us

together on that walk. It is another view of the relationality of learning, as highlighted in the

FPPL and in the sḵ'ad'a. The story of being on that land in the fall doesn't hold a lot of detail,

but it is a fragment of people's history on the land, their seasonal cycle, and a small piece of

information about Haida food gathering on the land. Both the FPPL and the sḵ'ad'a reference

the importance of embedding learning in history and memory, and honoring that history

(Davidson & Davidson, 2018; First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008). As Davidson

(Davidson & Davidson, 2018) says fragments can be "pieced together to form a mosaic of

narratives" (p. 72). She is speaking of being a Haida person, piecing together history which was

fragmented due to colonialism. However, I would argue that it is critical for all of us to learn

from that history of being on the land here. As a non-Indigenous teacher, I accept responsibility

to share that fragment, to push back on the notion of terra nullius, and to give all of my students

accurate information as they develop their sense of identity amid the stories of this place.

This vignette was the start of a year of beginnings for me as an educator. I began with professional development goals including a more thorough exploration of the First Peoples Principles of Learning, student-led inquiry, and expanding culturally relevant aspects of teaching. However, the theme of acknowledging, and gazing upon my settler position, became more prominent in the following year while writing this thesis. As I sequenced the vignettes, and reflected on them as one continuous story, I saw the interrelated threads of many of the First Peoples Principles and the sḵ'ad'a, and the potential to go beyond my previous understanding of place-based and culturally relevant experiences.

Vignette #2: Collecting ḵ'aas (spruce pitch).

The Constitution of the Haida nation proclaims: "Our culture is born of respect; and intimacy with the land and sea and the air around us" (Constitution of the Haida Nation, 2014). Children here are surrounded by natural spaces, so it seems obvious that our work and play together will be anchored by the place we live, and Haida culture.

Children that spend time in the forest have all encountered spruce pitch, it frequently gets on their hands and clothes. While my students and I were in the forest playing, there were a group of students that were busy collecting spruce pitch almost every time we went out. Spruce pitch, ḵ'aas, is used medicinally by Haida people.

We asked for advice from Nanaay Laura Jormanainen about gathering the pitch, as the popsicle sticks that I had provided

didn't seem to be ideal. What transpired was a beautiful sharing

of knowledge, at the perfect level for children to understand.

She talked about gathering pitch using cockle shells as a child

with her own grandmother, at a time when the village was smaller

and the big spruce trees were close to her house.

One Haida value expressed in some documents is Gina

k'aadang.nga gii uu tl' k'anguudang, seeking wise counsel (Haida

Gwaii Marine Plan, 2015). Students wrote about preparing the

k'aas, and included not only seeking "knowledge from old people"

as one child said, but also showing yahguudang, respect, and

saying "thank you to the tree". The practice of noticing and

incorporating these principles into our conversations had begun,

and continued because our activities are so connected to the

land and the rhythms here.

In an Indigenous worldview, knowledge is relational.

Learning about a medicinal plant in the forest is not separate

from hearing stories about an Elder's childhood. The advice we

sought did not come as an isolated technical instruction, but

comes within the context of relationships (Simpson, 2017). Other

adults in the building were happy to extend this learning by

sharing their knowledge about its use, and speaking in Haida

about it. Traditional knowledge is held in the language. As

GwaaGanad (Diane Brown) says, "Our connection to the land, when

you hear it in Haida, it's much more direct and clear; you can

understand our relationship better. Haida is more intimate"
(Jisgang & Steedman, 2011.p, 5).

The learning in this experience was authentic, guided by
the students' interests. My role as the teacher was to support
their learning; I proceeded to arrange for another Haida
knowledge holder to show the students how to prepare the pitch
into a medicinal salve, which was then used in the classroom for
the remainder of the year to treat a myriad of small injuries.

At this point, while still intending to learn more about student-led inquiry, I was watching

what the children were doing time after time in the forest and I saw that this interest in pitch was

gaining the attention of the others. Cajete (2000) explains that technical environmental

knowledge is a major part of Indigenous education, "making a living in a place by understanding

and interacting with it" (p. 184). When the children started collecting pitch, they already knew it

was medicinal. This connection to the land, and their curiosity led to the making of salve, but

also led to Laura's story in which the collection and use of pitch was contextualized.

One of the sk̲'ad'a principles is that learning emerges from curiosity, which is at the heart

of inquiry. Wien (2008) describes the emergent curriculum, (a term originally coined by others),

in which curriculum does not prescribe single unit plans in separate curriculum areas to be

followed in a linear path, but rather emerges from the child's own inquiry. Learning does emerge

from curiosity, as the story from Sara Davidson's father showed her (Davidson & Davidson,

2018). We can model for our students being comfortable with curiosity, and seeking answers to

our questions. In the vignette of k̲'aas, I was comfortable with the students' curiosity and search

for answers, up to a point. I hadn't yet learned to let the children guide the process.

In this case, their curiosity led to a story. The story though, emerged because they had a strong relationship with Nanaay Laura, and they believed that they could ask her about it. The students perhaps, were showing me the meaning of the FPPL and sḵ'ad'a principles which speak to the importance of relationships in learning. In terms of my evolving pedagogy, I need to remember that part of my role is to facilitate their connections across the school and broader community.

Laura provided a "life-experience story" as described by Archibald (2008, p. 108) At that time she also talked about the many descendants of her Nanaay (grandmother), so many people that it seemed that every second house in the village were descendants. Although not all of our students live in this village, our school is located there. Archibald (2008) learned that life stories may answer immediate questions while also providing "values, background or contextual information" (p. 108). While answering the children's surface question about collecting pitch, Laura also provided information about her upbringing, firmly locating her life story in this same community, another perspective helping to locate the children among generations of people on this land.

Archibald (2008) also refers to the principal of synergy as power that moves "among the storyteller and story listeners in the storytelling situation" (p. 100). I respectfully borrow this principal from storywork to deepen my own reflection on the power of Laura's life story as she shared it with the children. Davidson sees that the principle of synergy helps teachers incorporate her father's teachings into their own practice (Davidson & Davidson, 2016).

Does Laura's life story help the children get a more holistic and personal sense of the lives of people in this village beyond their own place in it, and in so doing help them develop their own sense of identity? Not only is this a Core Competency in B.C.'s Curriculum, but the B.C. Language Arts Curriculum contains several Big Ideas about the value of stories, to help us

learn about ourselves, our families, and communities and to connect with others (British

Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018).

Story can also be the foundation for science instruction (Marin & Bang, 2015).While

there is science curriculum being met in the study of pitch, there is so much else going on in this

story of gathering a traditional medicine. According to Cajete (2000b), Indigenous science is

"essentially a story, an explanation of the how and why of the things of nature and the nature of

things" (p. 13).

These first two vignettes embody several of the sḵ'ad'a and First Peoples Principles of

Learning. They also enrich the scope of my reflection. The learning is holistic, relational, and is

imbued with the power of memory and story, and in the case of the spruce pitch story, emerged

from curiosity. What started with curiosity (inquiry) led to a story. In the next vignettes, the

students and I once again ground ourselves in the presence of intergenerational learning on the

land.

Vignette #3: The people and the forest. Gathering cedar bark.

The trees in the Eagle Forest so close to our school are

ancient. We can see that to stretch our arms around the biggest

cedar, many children have to link hands. The spruce tree that

holds the eagle nest towers above us.

As children walk and play and learn in this forest, we

notice that there is another old cedar with the scar of a bark

stripping taken many generations ago. Paula Varnell, an

accomplished weaver and staff member guides them to notice and

learn from the tree. Long before these children were born, even

before their Old Nanaays were born, Haida people have been

coming to this forest for bark.

In the spring, Paula begins working on a woven cedar mat in

the foyer of our school. The mat will be used later in the

spring for a traditional salmon pit cook. For a few days, her

Nonnie (grandmother in the northern Haida dialect) visits our

school, preparing cedar bark and separating the strips into

thinner layers. Many times, Paula has taught the children

through stories of being on the land, learning from her mother,

grandmother and great-grandmother. When the children are with

Paula, Yahguudang and 'Laa guu ga kanhllns (respect and

responsibility) are always part of the stories. For these few

days the children are included in this relationship of learning

from grandmothers.

When it becomes apparent that there isn't yet enough bark

for the mat, Paula invites the children to find a suitable tree

and collect more bark. While it seems to be a serendipitous

opportunity, fitting so well into our yearlong focus on

exploring our connections to the forest, opportunities and

invitations to engage in traditional land-based experiences come

more naturally when we follow the activities of the seasons.

The children have the opportunity to watch Paula take bark

from another cedar, in an area we've come to call 'the learning

forest'. It's all done with great respect, and a sense of

responsibility to the tree and the land. Those values are part

of the context of learning from someone raised in an extended

family of weavers. The children aren't allowed to pull the bark,

their role at this point is to watch and listen. Learning

involves generational roles and responsibilities.

"Is it letting you take bark?" the children ask. They've

been told that the tree will let us, if it is treated with

respect.

They hear that they can't come on their own and take bark,

though they can come and visit the forest. They learn that

weavers take only what they can use, and what they have time to

prepare, as there is a small window of time after harvesting

that the fibers can be separated easily. There is a special

relationship between weavers and the trees. Respecting that

relationship is important, as the tree gives its bark to the

weaver. The children thank the tree, and to show their respect,

they place the outer bark at the foot of the tree. Their

gratitude is important, and imbues the experience with a sense

of the sacred.

This tree now takes on another role in the learning forest.

When these children walk the forest as they grow older, they

will know that there has always been a connection to the forest.

We are connected to the forest over generations, it's not ours

to harm.

Over the next several weeks, the children take part in weaving the mat. Finally, our school community gathers on the beach; most of the younger students play, while the older students tend the fire and the cooking pit. Hlgun (skunk cabbage) from the forest lines the pit, and helps to hold the steam from the fire-heated rocks. The cedar mat seals the pit while the chiina (salmon) steams inside.

This kind of learning takes time, a year in the classroom and beyond. So much is lost if we fragment the learning into short technical demonstrations. As a non-Indigenous teacher, traditional knowledge of the cultural significance of the cedar tree isn't mine to provide. The learning comes from the land and in the language and context of the people that have lived sustainably on that land for millennia.

When Paula collects the bark while the children watch, she doesn't say, 'this is how you do it'. In a slight shift of language, she says, 'this is how my *Nanaay* (grandmother) taught me'. She shares the generational roles and responsibilities, and infuses ceremony, protocol and prayer into the experience, and in her teaching I see the embodiment of both the FPPL and the sḵ'ad'a: learning honours spirituality and protocol, learning supports the well-being of the ancestors and spirits, and involves generational roles and responsibilities (Davidson & Davidson, 2018; First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008).

When the children ask 'is it letting you take the bark', they are being given an opportunity to recognize the other beings in their world, a feature of the common worldings approach, which questions nature education programs that place humans at the centre, separate

from other living beings in their environment (Nelson et al., 2018). The cedar becomes the central figure, the teacher, as we move away from the anthropocentric concept of stewardship which centres the people. In these ways, Paula may be finding a way to include Indigenous ways of knowing, responding to the challenge of including these worldviews in contemporary education (Battiste, 2002).

This vignette brings me firmly back to my 'settler awakening' which began in the earlier reflection of being on the 'untouched' estuary. I've always been so appreciative of the fact that we have a beautiful old growth forest minutes away from the school. I've tried to draw their attention to the beauty of this wilderness, but haven't made space to surround ourselves with the knowledge that Haida people have always been there. I've missed an opportunity to foreground our year together in the forest with the old cedar, to give space and time for all of us to understand that the eagle forest has always been part of the lives of people and holds stories of the grandmothers coming for bark. The bark itself is taken in such a way that the tree remains strong and lives on.

Centring the old cedar tree would give prominent attention to the value Haida people place on protecting the well-being of the land, a foundational principle also included in the FPPL. The story of the people collecting cedar bark in the forest may become a chapter in the guiding story for future classes, with the story of families fishing in the estuary in the fall. Each of these vignettes holds the story of our children being connected to the previous generations through the land and all of its beings. It is this missed opportunity that is pointing the way to a shift in my pedagogy which will highlight this story. I continue to draw on these vignettes as my ideas about future teaching practice evolve. In the final chapter of this thesis, I attempt to synthesize my reflections, and discuss pedagogical shifts.

Having been taught by her grandmothers, exemplifying the principle that learning involves generational roles and responsibilities, we are fortunate that we are given the opportunity to learn from Paula's mother, as described in the next vignette.

Vignette #4: Gathering spruce roots with April.

Traditional weaving seems like a perfect match for culturally relevant teaching about pattern in primary math classes. We've had lessons about weaving with two accomplished Haida weavers and we've looked at weavings in the museum. The pieces are stunning, some utilitarian and some ornamental or ceremonial. The children clamour to touch the weavings, interested in who they belong to, who made it for whom, and what stories are connected to the weavings.

They learn that the patterns in the weavings reflect patterns in nature: snail trails, cockle shells, spider webs and strawberries. But it's all done in the classroom or a museum, separate from the forest, in a chunk of time bookended by bells and busses. The connection to the trees and to the land is remote, not visible to the children.

Knowledge of gathering spruce roots for weaving is highly specialized, and held in families by generations of Haida weavers. I understand only that it is a complex process, dictated by seasons, and careful site and tree selection. It is an unexpected privilege when the weavers invite my class to participate first hand.

We meet weaver April Churchill and her daughter Paula Varnell in the mossy area surrounding the big spruce tree, in a different area of the island than the school. The children are greeted in the circle, with a personal acknowledgement for each child.

April's first comments are: notice where you are; look around the forest; who else lives here? She takes time to allow the children to sense and connect to the place before beginning the process of gathering the roots.

While she talks and demonstrates, April reminds the children of the life of the tree, and our responsibility to care for it: 'laa gu ga kanhllns, (responsibility). In time, each child has an opportunity to gather a piece of the root. We have an intimate look at what lies on the forest floor under the strands of the moss.

The limits for gathering roots are dependent on what the tree can offer; no one gathers more than the tree can give. The moss is handled so gently, rolled up and then placed back into position before we leave. If we don't rebury the roots, the tree may die. If we leave visible signs of disturbance, there is greater likelihood that animals will dig up the roots and eat them.

We're taking the whole day for this learning. After collecting sections of root, it's important that the roots are

then prepared in the fire right away. It takes time, and it isn't easy to do it properly. Each child has a chance to assist during the process of roasting and scraping the roots, guided by the weavers in a process practiced for untold generations. All the children get to have a hand in these next stages of preparing the roots for storage and weaving. It's a long day, for both the children, and our master weaver and teacher.

I have such gratitude to these women for this day, for sharing their knowledge and reverence for the forest, and the practices taught to them by their Elders. We have special people in our community who are willing to share with children.

I wrote and reflected on this story more than one school year after our second spruce root gathering trip. We have immense gratitude to April for spending a long day teaching the children, but we also respect her physical limits. Last year when April wasn't well enough to be out with us, gathering spruce roots wasn't part of the children's school experience. In my teaching career, it was a highlight, but the most important lesson is broader than any mathematical or science content. We care for the people in our community, respecting that our relationships are reciprocal.

Authentic learning experiences aren't prescribed and selected from province-wide scope and sequence curricular documents, but rather are responsive to community and culture.

They take time to emerge from the relationships we have in our

own communities.

The lessons for all of us involved in this experience were respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and reverence: for all beings in the environment and for the people that came before us that held and shared the knowledge. The two weavers spoke repeatedly about the generations of women who had taught them, and their responsibilities as they learned. Archibald (2008) identified these values as important storywork principles in working with Elders and Indigenous stories. Hardy (2016) cautions that Indigenous knowledge is sometimes used as an instrument to meet Western curricular objectives, rather than valuing Indigenous epistemologies as curriculum themselves. B.C.'s curricular transformation recognizes this by moving away from isolated learning outcomes and instead focusing on Big Ideas and Core Competencies, such as personal and cultural identity and personal responsibility.

The invitation to gather spruce roots with such accomplished weavers does not come often, and in my experience here, it is a practice which is permissible only for Haida people. The children were developing a relationship with Paula during the school year and I believe that she appreciated the respect and curiosity they were exhibiting in other situations. Davidson also recognizes the learning that emerges from strong relationships (Davidson & Davidson, 2018). I also am part of a network of relationships in the community, and I recognize that as a teacher my students and I benefit because the network is safe, trusted and established (Weber-Pillwax, 1999).

As I consider how to adjust my pedagogy, I am beginning to see that the holism and relationality, respect and reverence which are inherent in these vignettes can become foundational as I strive for an authentic context in which to foster the Core Competencies. As the

children develop their own story of their identity, the FPPL and sḵ'ad'a will play an important role in how that story develops, as I discuss in my final chapter.

As the year and our inquiry progressed, we turned our focus to the eagles, and our guiding question 'how are the forest, the salmon, the eagles and the people connected'.

Vignette #5: G̱uud (Eagle).

We frequently visit the old growth forest that sits quite close to our school, following a trail that winds past the Play Forest, through the Learning Forest, and to the Eagle Forest. We value the time outdoors; it is a fertile setting for watching the children's curiosity emerge, and seeing where their interests will take us.

In the Eagle Forest, an eagle nest rests two thirds of the way up an old spruce tree.
Several years ago, our Parent Advisory Committee and volunteers made it possible to have a wildlife camera placed above the nest in the tree, and more volunteers have helped keep it functioning over the years. The photos that we receive from the camera inspire more questions than answers, and allow for rich dialogue in the classroom.

One of the photos showed an eagle in the nest, with what appeared to be a small fuzzy looking animal in its talons. We met in a circle to discuss the photo, while I recorded students' comments and ideas about what they thought it was. As they listened and built on one another's ideas, their responses were

changing as they focused on small details that we hadn't noticed before.

I pointed out this shift to the students. One student gestured with his hands, and said it was like "building a tower of information". Throughout the year, the tower of information has been an effective metaphor for solving problems, and building understandings.

One student noticed that there were webbed feet sticking up from the carcass. Students became engaged in a rich discussion, building understandings collaboratively. While one child had read that eagles eat ducks, another child (with more land and sea experience) insisted that it couldn't be, and suggested a tufted puffin, a more exotic, but in reality, less likely possibility. I observed many fascinating group social dynamics in the ensuing discussion. Which child had more confidence? Which child's opinion seemed to hold more weight and influence even in the face of contrary evidence? How was the less confident child influenced by the group's opinion? Each child's voice was heard, and over time, the questions were revisited as new understandings emerged.

The ongoing connection to the forest and the land provided this rich learning experience.

The experiences that we have outdoors provide authentic and inspiring content for our classroom learning experiences.

This vignette picks up the thread of my own professional learning about inquiry, which led me to the *Natural Curiosity* resource (Anderson, Comay, & Chiarotto, 2017) and the knowledge building circle. The students' learning was anchored in our authentic connection to that particular forest and to the non-humans. The collaboration among the children to build their knowledge, fueled by their curiosity and natural affinity toward animals, surpassed what they were able to do individually.

The knowledge building circle is an effective practice for developing communication and thinking competencies, allowing the students to bring their connection to the forest into our indoor classroom work. Knowledge building discussions can advance their understanding through encountering the different ideas of classmates, and having the opportunity to "revisit, negotiate, and refine their thinking with the shared goal of idea improvement" (Anderson et al., 2017, p. 15).

I am coming to understand that inquiry, identity and spirit are related threads of the Core Competencies. "Inquiry-based learning reflects a simple, profound truth: learning is most powerful when rooted in the heart. The heart is our connection to Spirit, which in turn is what unifies all things" (Anderson et al., 2017, p. 58). Their interconnected nature honors Indigenous principles of learning as described in the sḵ'ad'a, and the FPPL.

Vignette #6: Ahaay.yad G̱uud ḵaawaay ḵaansda gan! Today the eagle egg hatched!

In April, we'd been watching the photos of the eagle nest closely. We saw the eagles eating fish every day or so, something we hadn't seen before. This project has been going for several years now, and we hadn't ever seen them eating fish this regularly. We know from conversations with biologists that the

adults need to eat lots of fish in order to be healthy enough to lay eggs. And then one morning, we saw an eagle egg in the nest!

We followed it closely, deciding which photos and comments to share with the rest of the school. As it happens, we also had chicken eggs in an incubator, so we had been comparing the two life cycles. We had a lot of opportunity for recording observations and questions, including Haida phrases, and working with calendars. While we were working on a life-sized drawing of the eagle, we were referring back to our big collection of eagle books, examining physical features, figuring out how to measure the various parts of a stuffed eagle, and working hard to accept one another's approximations.

During the last two weeks of May, the activity in the eagle nest eclipsed everything else. The eagle egg which we'd been so carefully observing actually hatched! The camera captured a moment where the parent stood back just as the chick was almost completely out of the egg. We had a shared moment of such exquisite joy! We went outside to our school field and spent an hour watching the nest in the distance where we could just make out the parent's head moving around. For the remainder of the day the eagle parent stayed over the eaglet, not giving us another peek. Each child wrote an announcement to take home to their families, (lots of exclamation points were used!!!!).

The next morning began with more photos of the eagle keeping the chick covered. However, at some point I saw that the nest was empty. Photo after photo showed no sign of the adults or the eaglet. I waited until we had a period of uninterrupted time together to look through the entire series of photos, from the hatch to the empty nest. I felt quite nervous, and wasn't sure at all how best to help the children understand this, but I hoped I could trust in the group process.

We formed a circle as we often did, this time using an eagle feather to clearly indicate whose turn it was to speak, because of course everyone wanted to talk. It took a long time to go around until comments were exhausted, three rounds of the circle and a full hour. There were no tears or displays of intense emotion. There was a mixture of questions and hypotheses, some insightful, some fantastical, and some which seemed unrelated to the eaglet.

Following this circle discussion, the students wrote, either collaboratively with friends, or on their own. It was a difficult task, finding the words to describe confusing emotions is a challenge for any of us. They wrote authentically, describing their observations, their feelings and their questions. I know there is more to learn, discuss and question.

The time spent leading up to this hatch event was full of collaborative work and discussion that comes with shared excitement. The lives of the eagles were guiding our work and

our questions. Emotion and motivation are recognized in Indigenous education, and in the

academic literature as the "gatekeepers" of learning, (Dumont et al., 2012). Both processes kept

the children's attention riveted during this experience, and in their subsequent collaborative

expressions.

This hatch, and death was an authentic emotional experience on which to base our

conversation about emotions. The children's relationships with the eagles and to one another

were honored. It took time and patience to let each child discuss their reactions, and to

experiment with finding the right words to discuss their emotions.

It was not a perfect happy ending after being so involved in watching the eagles' life

cycle. But it was real, and once again connected us to our shared place, a significant part of

identity. The FPPL describes identity as "what connects people to each other, to communities,

and to the land" (Chrona, 2014). It is this connection which I am now seeing as a continuous

thread in these vignettes, and a way to extend my pedagogy to embrace the essence of the FPPL

and give the students opportunities to develop Core Competencies.

The final vignette takes us back to looking at the human connection to the forest,

reminding us about the connections between Haida people and the monumental cedars.

Vignette #7: The old canoe.

In certain forests on Haida Gwaii, old but incomplete

canoes sit where their carving began. Taken from a length of a

monumental red cedar tree, the stump and tree top remain beside

the canoe. The canoe remains, shaped but suspended in an

unfinished state, holding the story of the carvers that worked

there.

In the spring, a master carver brings us to one old canoe in the forest far from the school.

Canoe builders come to this place in the forest now, to the same place where their ancestors carved, to learn to build their own canoes. The master carver teaches the children about the power of the canoe design; he gestures to show how it is shaped perfectly to slice through the waves.

The opportunity for children to see the hundred year old canoe, to see the stump of the tree from which it came, is powerful. They've put their arms around another huge cedar in the forest near the school. They know that people have been coming to the forest for cedar bark since before the Elders were children. They've seen the contemporary Haida canoes sitting near the beach, or maybe even in the water for ceremonial community events.

But to see the canoe sitting quietly, fragile as it returns to the forest floor, is evocative of a time before school and buses and speed boats. They see again that people have always been connected to the forest. Back at school, they make models of the iconic Haida cedar canoes, they give their canoes names which imply strength for their life on the ocean.

It's a complicated learning experience. As adults we know the ugly reality of that historical period of violence and disease, of what likely interrupted the carving, and prevented

the carver from finishing. For some of the children it may be

the beginning of knowing and questioning.

It's a place we need to return. The children will remember

the forest.

More than a year later, this vignette hits me hard each time I read it and try to put my

finger on what I've learned and what was going on in my teaching practice. The field trip itself is

rich with opportunity for learning about the amazing technology of the Haida canoe, the beauty

and the intellect of its design. But here it sits, incomplete, and we don't really talk about the story

behind that.

Gebhard (2018) observes that "teaching 'culture' is rarely a disruptive practice, but is

most often superficially accomplished rather than being an anti-oppressive practice" (p. 768). I

had facilitated a culturally relevant, authentic experience, attempting to honor the ancestors who

had been the carvers, and adding the human connection to our forest inquiry. As I examine my

own identity as a settler here, and the power that I have in my role as a teacher, I question what is

left incomplete and unsaid in this history lesson. There are many possible explanations of why

the canoe remains unfinished; how do I begin to address these possibilities in age-appropriate

ways? To fully acknowledge our identity and our connection to place requires an honest and

historically correct understanding of this place.

I think of the stories which led Davidson to name the sk̲'ad'a. What other stories are in

this place? How can I build on the story which began in the fall with the sk'aagii, and Nathan as

a child being on the land with his family decades ago?

Conclusion

Wilson (2008) says that "If research doesn't change you as a person, you haven't done it

right" (p. 35). I considered this outcome as possibly too lofty for this study, but I have found that

the research did not lead me where I thought it would. My purpose was to further my

understanding of Indigenous principles of learning in terms of my own practice in implementing

B.C.'s Curriculum.

Reflecting on these vignettes and the experiences that formed the story of our year

together is driving me to find threads of my learning amidst these stories, and look more closely

at them. I find myself reflecting less on the activities of the vignettes, and more on my identity

and obligations in my role as educator. Rather than an additional layer to consider, I find the

potential for the development of Core Competencies to be more deeply embedded than I

expected. In the concluding chapter, I explore ways to embed the Core Competencies, the FPPL,

and the sk̲'ad'a in the pedagogy of story.

Chapter 5 –Conclusions

Summary

In this study I have reflected on vignettes of teaching experiences with a group of primary students. The vignettes follow the children as they explore their connections to the forest, eagles, and salmon over the school year. The key research question guiding this study is: as a non-Indigenous teacher, how does my teaching practice align with Indigenous principles of learning? The First Peoples Principles of Learning (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2008) and the sḵ'ad'a (Davidson & Davidson, 2018) were used as a framework to guide my reflection. Using an autoethnographic approach, I also looked to connections between those principles and the Core Competencies of B.C.'s Curriculum (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018).

During the year of learning represented in the vignettes, 2018/2019, I was developing my own understanding of the First Peoples Principles of Learning. In particular, I was noting the importance of relationships, and that learning honored ancestors and the land. On further reflective analysis in the following year, other principles come to light, as well as a need to explore my own identity. From my reflection, the importance of story emerges as an appropriate pedagogy to foster the curriculum and to avoid further settler colonialism in my practice.

A Shift in Perspective, and a New Lens

With a research question such as this, I expected that I would conclude with either an affirmation, that my practice aligns with the FPPL, or perhaps some qualifications, that it includes some principles, but not others.

What I did not expect was the emergence of other themes, seemingly without looking for them. In fact, I found that the FPPL were guiding my own learning, as much as the students'

learning. While seeking to understand the Indigenous principles as a non-Indigenous person, I needed to look at my identity as a settler, a perspective and identity I had avoided claiming. Thomas King, a brilliant and often quoted Indigenous author and storyteller, advises: "watch out for the stories you are told" (King, 2011, p. 10). His words seemed to sit on my shoulder this past year, as I had to set aside the story I thought I would tell, and instead watched a different story develop as I dug into these themes.

The process of "unsettling the settler within" me (Regan, 2010) began slowly before this research. Dei (2006), distinguishes white as racial identity, and whiteness as the "system of privilege and oppression" (p. 12). I had easily accepted my white racial identity, but the 'white settler' identity was more uncomfortable for me as it comes with complicity. As I chose my methodology, I avoided autoethnography precisely because I didn't want to write a thesis about myself, a white educator trying to improve education for my Indigenous students. Instead, I hoped to focus on my teaching practice, and specifically the place-based experiences I facilitated with my students. However, once I began reading about anti-colonialism, and the many ways that settlers try to assuage a sense of guilt with good intentions, I found that there was a missing perspective in my analysis of the vignettes. The focus of the autoethnographic reflection expanded to include the lens of my role of non-Indigenous teacher as settler. From that position, I can see that I was not yet making space in our activities for the ongoing story which consistently locates the children and I in a Haida village on Haida land.

What I didn't find out until I got to the analysis of these vignettes, acknowledged and examined my whiteness and the context of colonialism, is that this study was not only about Indigenous principles of learning in the context of inquiry or nature-based learning. It was about looking to the life stories of Haida elders, and seeing how they might have led to frameworks

such as the sḵ'ad'a and the FPPL, and then adding the layer of my emerging awareness of anti-colonialism. My reflection then circled through the year again, picking up the thread of the story of Haida people and children being in these same places for generations.

Examined through this lens, the cumulative story of the year had the same events, but an added perspective. In Chapter Two's discussion of trustworthiness I presented Richardson's (2000) metaphor of a crystal as an alternative to triangulation. This is an apt metaphor for the different angles of repeated reflection I engaged in, with each cycle compounding the insight I was able to gain.

In my research I have avoided the term decolonization, as it seems to be used with a broad range of interpretations, and I wasn't sure how it could or should be applied. I was struck by Tuck and Yang's (2012) blunt statement "decolonization is not a metaphor" (p. 3). I am a non-Indigenous woman living on the unceded land of an Indigenous village, and I am ever mindful of the many Indigenous women I know who lost that privilege when they married non-Haida men. This privilege is a result of colonialization. Tuck and Yang state: "The absorption of decolonization by settler social justice frameworks is one way the settler, disturbed by her own settler status, tries to escape or contain the unbearable searchlight of complicity, of having harmed others just by being one's self" (p. 9). With this statement, acknowledging my position was unavoidable, and uncomfortable.

As I reflected on the first vignette of being in the 'untouched' estuary in the fall, under the beam of that 'unbearable searchlight of complicity' I acknowledged that I am in a position to do things differently. I saw the potential for facilitating experiences like that first field trip in a much different way, with a focus on informal stories of generations of people. This is one way to

halt a colonial narrative that erases people from the land. The words of Ballantyne (2014)

resonate for me:

> I am a settler and settler colonialism hurts people I love. Given this truth, how I,
>
> as part of settler colonialism, direct my energy and efforts into dismantling settler
>
> capitalism is critical. It is though (sic) this context that I write and that I act (p.
>
> 69).

I accept that I do have a responsibility to act. In order to change my pedagogy, I look to my

teaching practice, and the space created for story in B.C.'s New Curriculum.

Connecting to Curriculum Through Story

I see that children are much more engaged when there is a narrative, a story, to anchor

their thinking and new learning. I am not suggesting that traditional stories be appropriated to

create a narrative, but I am informed and guided by Archibald's (2008) discussion of how to

work with stories, using the storywork principles of respect, responsibility reverence, reciprocity,

holism, interrelatedness and synergy. Through Sara Davidson's work with her father's life

stories, she has learned to apply the sḵ'ad'a to her own teaching (Davidson & Davidson, 2018). I

can use these principles as a foundational framework for my teaching while guiding students

with a narrative as we engage in activities which connect us to this land and community.

B.C.'s New Curriculum emphasizes the importance of story, particularly in the Big Ideas

in Language Arts, to make meaning from personal experience and knowledge, and the

importance of story in developing personal, family, and community identity and awareness

(British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018). The curriculum also acknowledges how

important it is for all of our students to understand Indigenous cultures, historical and

contemporary, and to develop age-appropriate understandings of the impacts of colonialism and

our shared history. Our new curriculum emphasizes that for all students to be well-prepared

competent thinkers and communicators, we need to look beyond literacy and numeracy

outcomes, to central personal and social competencies.

The Story Studio developed in Delta, B.C. uses a structure well suited to my context and

teaching style, and creates space to allow for the principles of the sḵ'ad'a and the FPPL. The

Story Studio combines play-based approaches with place-based learning and the literacy

framework of Story Workshop developed originally by Opal School in Portland, Oregon

(D'Aoust, 2018). It uses a three-part cycle to "Inspire, Create, and Share". The cycle begins with

an inspiration such as an outdoor experience. The children then use various open-ended materials

to create their story, which may be recorded by drawing, writing or speaking. The final part of

the cycle is to share their story (D'Aoust, 2018).

I am reminded that using this model, we can look to the students' funds of knowledge

and funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart, Lalueza, Zhang-Yu, & Llopart, 2019; Hedges, Cullen, &

Jordan, 2011) for inspiration in the Story Studio model. This refers to the knowledge that

students bring from their lives at home and in their community. Informal stories, Indigenous land

acknowledgements, place names, art, photographs, food gathering and preparation, community

events, and experiences on the land are among many suitable inspirations which might be used in

meaningful ways to create a story together. In this way, "the story and the storyteller both serve

to reconnect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people, and

the people with the story" (Smith, 2012, p. 146).

Story Studio lends itself well to my goal of using story as pedagogy to develop the Core

Competencies and Big Ideas of our curriculum, while honoring the multitude of aspects of our

place and community, and many of the Indigenous principles of learning.

Implications: Personal and Pedagogical

Chrona (2014) elaborates on the First Peoples Principle that learning requires exploration of one's own identity:

> Identity is what connects people to each other, to communities, and to the
>
> land. The exploration of one's identity includes developing an
>
> understanding of one's place in the world, in addition to being able to
>
> identify all the factors that contribute to how people see themselves
>
> (Chrona, 2014, Learning requires exploration of one's own identity).

To underpin my teaching practice with the First Peoples Principles, I must continue to think critically about the many facets of my own identity. I now expect it to be an ongoing practice, not a matter of getting it right and moving on to something else.

While looking critically at place-based education, educators need to make sure we are not perpetuating a marginalization or erasure of Indigenous presence on the land. We can check which values we seek in nature-based experiences, and shift away from the notion of being in untouched wilderness. Instead we can celebrate that our students are in the same place, feeling the same wind, and touching the same trees as children for many generations before.

Challenges

During the year while completing this study, I was teaching a new group of students. Using the same seasonal plans and trying to replicate the previous year's path was not bringing us to the same place of collaborative learning and inquiry. I recognize that as educators we find some years easier than others to achieve that flow.

When Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) had difficulty trying to adapt existing qualitative methodologies to fit her purpose of studying Indigenous oral tradition and stories, she used the

metaphor of "staying near the fire", a metaphor she drew from a traditional story. In order to

address that difficulty, she went to her Elders to find a more appropriate way to work with

stories, something which she didn't yet know how to do, and described this as moving away

from the fire and "going into the dark" (pp. 36-37).

Archibald's metaphor of staying near the fire resonated with me when I struggled to teach

as I had been doing, during a year which presented many organizational challenges. I considered

that I had to go into the dark, to reach out beyond my comfortable circle of contacts and tried and

true experiences such as certain annual field trips and guest speakers. This will be one of the

significant challenges for me as I move ahead to transform my practice, with the understanding

that implementing new pedagogy is a process, not a single event. Sean Wilson (2008) describes

his own change as a "growing awareness of what I am doing and why" (p. 136). This study has

begun to answer the 'why' of my evolving pedagogy.

Recommendations and Next Steps

My own learning has embodied several of the sḵ'ad'a, and the FPPL. I have always

pursued ongoing professional development, and now I look again to our new curriculum. It is

complex and ambitious, founded on both Indigenous principles of learning, and on international

academic research, striving for so much more than the grade level content (British Columbia

Ministry of Education, 2018). If it is going to achieve its goals of 21st century learning, it is

important that educators engage in ongoing learning about the curriculum and its foundations,

and rethink the organizational structures that school systems have traditionally used (Schleicher,

2015).

Earlier in this chapter, I described circling back to look at the vignettes through the lens

of being a settler. Now, I need to circle back to studying our transformed curriculum, and the

documents which support it, through the lens of the conclusions I've drawn here regarding my

own settler consciousness, and the pedagogy of story.

Conclusion

I have seen the direction my pedagogy can take, to step forward into anti-colonialism by

examining my own identity and complicity. Connecting to place, and offering culturally relevant

lessons were one step, but not enough. As Ballantyne (2014) says, "no matter what your efforts

have been, settlers do not have an alibi" (p. 69). I recognize my own identity and position, and so

I must strive to teach in a different way; in a way that connects the children to this land, the

people, and along the way, helps them find their connection to their own personal identity.

Simpson (2017) emphasizes the importance of the connection to the land in Indigenous

pedagogy: "education comes from the roots up. It comes from being enveloped by land"

(p. 154).

I thought I knew where this study would take me, but instead, the children, the

relationships, and the land told me a different story. I just had to be ready for it.

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