

**WHEN WORDS ARE RETURNED:
APPROACHING TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY ORAL NARRATIVE
INTEGRATION IN WHITEHORSE PRIMARY CURRICULUM**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Committee on Graduate Studies
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ABSTRACT

When Words Are Returned: Approaching Traditional and Contemporary Oral Narrative Integration in Whitehorse Primary Curriculum

Tatyana Tekla Elizabeth Coulter

This thesis examines if an oral narrative tradition can be integrated into the Whitehorse primary curriculum. To explore this question, I conducted a storytelling curriculum model project in two Whitehorse primary classrooms, that introduced a hybrid space (Aboriginal and non-Native) in which to address and negotiate perceptions of place, community and the personal self in primary education. *When Words Are Returned* is equally an expression of an oral narrative experience in the contemporary North of Canada. It recounts how becoming a member of a community of listeners shifts one's epistemological perspective toward traditional methods of education and storytelling.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Chapter One	1
Chapter Two	8
Chapter Three	20
Chapter Four	45
Chapter Five	62
Chapter Six	97
Bibliography	101
Appendix	109

Chapter One: An Introductory Disclosure

... if there is no sharing of values, if there is no partnership of purpose, if we do not know or appreciate each other's stories - then no amount of constitutional jerryrigging can overcome the fissures of this San Andreas fault. My purpose is to address a deeper structural problem that has received little attention but is one that must be solved if we are to close the fissures in Canadian society ... Tom Axworthy¹

Pulitzer prize-winning American author Annie Dillard reflects, "I would like to learn, or remember, how to live. I come to Hollins Pond not so much to learn how to live as, frankly, to forget about it" (1992:33). Dillard contemplates a journey, how in going to a place, she may forget and remember. In her contemplation, she reveals a dialogue in memory reminding her reader of different ways of living and learning. My thesis has a similar intent ~ to remind its reader that there are other ways of living and learning, different from what we have been traditionally taught in our school system. This way of learning and knowing, based on memory work and life experience, is not universally definable because it reflects the particularity of place,"that moment," when and where it is engaged.

This thesis is also a journey, written out of the memory of my life experience in a place. I became a member of a community in Northern Canada and attempted, in a primary classroom setting, to introduce an oral tradition to children. The oral narratives and traditions that inspire the thesis belong in origin to the Yukon First Nations.² The retelling of these

¹ Excerpts from a speech by Tom Axworthy, executive director of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Foundation delivered to the Canadian Club in Toronto, January 1998.

²"The Yukon First Nations are not a single people, but belong to several different cultures" (RCAP, 1, 11 1996: 493). This observation made in the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal*

narratives in the Whitehorse primary classroom is contextualised as a hybrid experience of culture weighted by a historical "authority," and one that reflects the ethnography of the Yukon.³

I have focused my research on how Aboriginal traditional oral narrative conveys a model of education and teaches respect and listening skills.⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of *double-voicedness* strongly reflects the *hybrid* reality of Whitehorse and the continual redefining dialogue between the Aboriginal and non-Native cultures in this community. The interest of this thesis is the *double-voicedness* in the Whitehorse primary classroom. This storytelling discourse is " ... the process of communication, about how words can be used to construct meaningful accounts of life experience" (Cruikshank in Morrow and Schneider 1995:55).⁵

Peoples presents the difficulty in providing a clear definition for the reader of what is meant here as the oral narratives belonging to the Yukon First Nations collective cultural group. For the purposes of the thesis and the storytelling curriculum model project to be discussed in the thesis, I will rely on the expert advice of Louise Profeit-Leblanc (Yukon Aboriginal storyteller) and Emma Shorty (Elder) to determine what is defined here as the oral narratives of the Yukon First Nations.

3 The ratio of Aboriginal to non-Native in the Yukon Territory is one to two (Cruikshank 1990: 345). A summation of the cultural, educational and historical value of Yukon oral history and oral tradition is documented in the anthropological and ethnographical work of Julie Cruikshank and Catharine McClellan (*Life Lived Like A Story*, 1990 and *My Old People Say*, 1975).

4 I define Aboriginal traditional oral narrative as those oral narrative cycles, systems or traditions which are determined to belong to the originating people of a geographical location or place. They extend from roots in primary oral cultures, "those untouched by writing in any form "(Ong 1982:9).

5 I use the term discourse here when I also mean dialogue, to make it clear as to how language is viewed as a construct within an oral narrative investigation. Ashcroft explains,

John Wadland writes, "the path to understanding is paved with relationships" (1996:48). The contemporary storytelling event is an on-going dialogue and set of relationships between tellers and listeners.⁶ What you say and how you say it during the storytelling event is remembered and retold. It is "this *certain* knowledge that our words will return" that positions me as I recount the life experiences of an oral narrative tradition (Morrow and Schneider 1995:1-7, italics mine).

The precedent to clear a space for an oral narrative tradition in the Whitehorse primary classroom, one that is reflective of place, is inspired by the legacy and festival tradition of Angela Sidney. This Tagish and Tlingit Elder and storyteller spent much of her life "trying to convey, across cultural boundaries, the subtle lessons about human behaviour she had learned during her lifetime" (Cruikshank in Morrow and Schneider 1995:55). The Yukon International Storytelling Festival hosted by the Whitehorse community for the last ten years was inspired by Mrs. Sidney, who once questioned her travels to Toronto to tell her cultural oral narratives (Taylor 1994:i).

This festival consists of "moments." It is a cleared time and space when the Yukon's

"language is a discourse of power, in that it provides the terms ... a method by which the 'real' is determined ... the language itself implies *certain* assumptions about the world, a *certain* history, a *certain* way of seeing" (1995:55).

⁶ I define the contemporary storytelling event space as a situation of listeners and tellers engaged in the practice of oral narrative with an educational intent. It represents a discursive site of investigation often mirroring the indigenous oral narrative tradition and their formation of a storytelling circle. It is a post-colonial site of cultural dialogue, articulated by the theoretical notion of hybridity. It cultivates a different concept of authority within a group. Joseph Bruchac and Michael Caduto observe the consensus of authority in the Aboriginal storytelling circle formation: "People would sit in a circle during the time of storytelling because in a circle no person is at the head. All are at 'the same height'"(1985:12).

traditional oral narratives' ordering of knowledge is most focused and when listeners learn through stories the hybrid reality of Whitehorse and the Territory. My experience with the festival has taught me that storytelling and oral traditions sustain themselves in the late twentieth century.

One important notion Sidney expressed with regard to effective communication through oral narrative is that it "demands an expressive community sharing similar expectations" (Cruikshank in Morrow and Schneider 1995:73). The issue of effectiveness is central to this thesis. Do the audiences at the festival share commonalities or a set of similar expectations? Perhaps a more affective grasp of oral narrative traditions is achieved in the classroom, rather than at a festival, since the classroom is a community sharing a similar set of educational expectations?⁷ This thesis explores the notion of classroom as community and suggests to educators, specifically Whitehorse educators, a way to provide primary school children with a foundation, reflective of place.⁸

7 An affective grasp is defined by what a learner remembers (memory). It "... cannot be measured directly, cannot be constructed using conventional (atomistic, mechanistic) formal instruction, and cannot be reduced very easily to the forms of common scopes and sequences. Its origins and operations remain somewhat mysterious and emerge through the tangible evidences of human behaviour and creative endeavour. The oral literature, oral stories and storytellings are such tangibilities. The fact of such activity ensures the "confrontation" of conscious and subconscious and the confirmation of primordial subconscious reality" (Rietz 1988: 183).

8 In introducing the idea of a classroom existing as a community, I defer to Neil Postman who believes " ... one of the main purposes of public education ... [is to create] ... a common culture [with] ...the idea that students must esteem something other than self" (1995:76). Elsewhere he states that students are the "world-makers and word weavers," the generators of and participants in this common culture (1995:87). Accordingly, they have membership in the community of speakers, the classroom, where they are all contributing members and

The purpose of this thesis, then, is to illuminate a greater understanding of the hybrid reality in the Whitehorse primary classroom that is achieved through the practice of oral narrative. Will a storytelling discourse create an understanding of place, community and the personal self for the primary-school aged child? Does the relating of oral narrative connect Whitehorse children, Aboriginal and non-Native, to the Yukon's indigenous oral narrative tradition? Will an oral narrative tradition in the Whitehorse primary classroom develop a historical understanding of the two very different ways of life Aboriginal people in the Territory experienced?

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The second chapter provides a historical perspective on the Yukon in relation to why I believe it is important to consider an oral narrative tradition in the Whitehorse primary classroom. "A Method of Place," the third chapter, is a discussion of the relevant literature and theory in relation to this interdisciplinary investigation. The methodology for the thesis is constructed in this chapter chiefly relying on Bakhtin, Said and Cruikshank. They provide the background and framework to discuss the Storytelling Curriculum Model Project I conducted in two Whitehorse primary classrooms.

responsible for the creation of their language and stories.

The Swiss linguist and father of Semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure informs us it is we, as members of the human community, who create language and meaning through its construction (*Course of General Linguistics*: 1959). He stresses the need for a "community of speakers" in order to create language and meaning in our world: "...for the realization of language, a community of speakers *mass parlante*" is necessary. Contrary to all appearances, language never exists apart from the social fact, for it is a semiological phenomenon. Its social nature is one of its inner characteristics" (de Saussure 1959:77). This distinction is important when considering the classroom as a community of speakers participating in the creation of a discourse which is specific to that community and which can be marked as being their common culture.

The fourth chapter outlines the project, its three phases (Place, Community, The Personal) and the educational objective of each phase during the project. It is presented in a layering of sub-sections identifying the complicated and collaborative element involved in the construction of this project. Chapter five is an analytical discussion of the storytelling project. It is divided into three sections mirroring the project's themes and execution: Place, Community, and The Personal. "Place: Kawday Dan Kenji" addresses the children's experiences of place through the retelling of Yukon traditional oral narrative and a day trip to Kwaday Dan Kenji. "Community: Beyond Technology" addresses the experiences of the classroom community through the telling of contemporary Whitehorse oral narratives. Finally, "The Personal: Bringing Story Into Being," recounts the children's experiences of telling their own personal oral narratives.⁹

⁹ See Appendix One for an account of these narratives. I include reference to the narratives told to the children during the project.

1) PLACE STORIES, Yukon traditional oral narratives

2) COMMUNITY STORIES, stories of the contemporary Whitehorse community

3) PERSONAL STORIES, stories of one contemporary Whitehorse Primary Classroom. The stories from the third phase of the project were not recorded out of respect for the children involved with the project who did tell oral narratives. They expressed apprehension and fear when this was suggested; thus I respected their collective request to not have them recorded. Another point of consideration with regard to recording oral narrative as Morrow and Schneider contest, "... a story does not exist as something to be captured but as something to be passed on" (1995:2). I am sure the children's oral narratives have been told again and live on in their memories, as they live on in my memory. Here then is one of the difficulties in attempting to bring oral narrative and oral memory into the academic literate frame. The personal oral narratives of the *one* contemporary Whitehorse primary classroom who did tell stories during their own storytelling festival at the end of their project will be elaborated on in Appendix One.

The focus of analysis in chapter five is on the classrooms' experiences with oral narratives and not the oral narratives themselves. The discussion and analysis of the oral narrative space cleared with the project will demonstrate a hybrid, "fusion of voices" reflective of place (Bakhtin 1981:315). The analysis in the fifth chapter involves a life-written qualitative approach.¹⁰ The sixth and final chapter concludes the thesis investigation with "a conclusion of experience." It consists of my observations in having gone through the process of initiating, creating and conducting a project, essentially introducing the very conditions needed for an oral narrative tradition to thrive with children in two contemporary Whitehorse primary classrooms. These observations offer particular insight to those educators interested in oral narrative curriculum development in the Yukon educational system.

10 Here I would like to clarify a life-written qualitative approach to research analysis in relation to the thesis and project. As the thesis involves an oral knowledge base and people's life learning stories, a qualitative method of analysis will be used. Elizabeth S. Cohen says with regard to life writing: "It tolerates a model of making text that extends beyond old-fashioned notions of conscious authorship. There we can talk about many kinds of speakers, not just conventionally literary ones, as both shaped by their culture and shaping new expression with it"(in Kadar 1992:91). This life-written qualitative approach is highlighted, as described in Ong, by a listening method of apprenticeship (1982:9).

Chapter Two: Historical Perspective

A Yukon teacher proposed adding several Native legends to the curriculum in 1973. Her suggestion was greeted with the rather disingenuous response: "It would probably be a good thing to have Indian legends as supplementary reading rather than Fairy Tales stories which do not pertain to them or their environment but I'm not sure that these legends should be the ones used. I think legends with more of a theme or moral would be better for students. "Put simply, only legends that read like fairy tales would be acceptable"(Coates 1991:207).

Spoken narrative frames how the teller sees the world, like looking at a landscape through a window. The teller's sense of a landscape is embodied in their narratives, their expressed perceptions of place. The spoken, oral narrative guides the listeners' imagination, showing how to look and listen.

This thesis involves the telling of oral narratives in the community of Whitehorse where landscape and weather necessitate a strong human community. A community's identity is reflective of their relation to place, producing the interaction of community with its environment. In Whitehorse, the result is an especially strong sense of identity.

Yukon First Nations traditionally viewed summer as the season of outward activity - hunting and gathering in preparation for winter. Winter balanced summer: it was the season of reflection and relating stories, when people had time and the spirits of the world had all gone to rest (de Laguna 1995: 28-45). Today, the recorded narratives of the Yukon's oral tradition confirm generations of a long oral memory.¹¹ The Yukon's oral tradition conveys

¹¹ To assist in understanding oral memory consider this definition: "... the trained memory was of vital importance. And the ancient memories were trained by an art which reflected the art and architecture of the ancient world, which could depend on faculties of intense visual

an interconnected world-view and their social norms, behaviours and cultural prohibitions prior to the Territory's colonization.¹² The practice of telling stories was the method among Yukon First Nations of transmitting their culture and heritage with particular and relevant knowledge that reflected upon their place in the world. The stories were like tools, educating children how to be members of a community. Elders were regarded as storytellers and teachers responsible for passing on their history and heritage, like rich-laden vessels, from one generation to the next. These oral narratives honoured place, sewn with a thread of respect.

Today, traditional oral narrative reveals a model of education that we in academic circles term "interdisciplinary." Stories traditionally re-present knowledge in a simultaneous and integrative way within the context of a season (winter), an event (inter-generational, communal festivities) and for particular reasons (educational, cultural and historical transmission). If we view the oral narratives we tell in classrooms today from this traditional perspective, our attention is directed to "the active part people take in transmitting - but at the same time creating [and] re-enacting forms of verbal art and oral tradition" (Finnegan

memorisation which we have lost" (Yates in Finnegan 1992: 115).

12 Though the Territory was colonized in 1898 the assimilation of Yukon First Nations into a colonial and capitalist society did not really occur until fifty years later with the building of the Alaska Highway. The opportunity for improving one's "quality of life" within the capitalist structure brought First Nations people from the outlying communities to Whitehorse to be formally educated and join the mainstream of "the territorial wage economy" (Coates 1991: 240). Acceptance of the capitalist ethic did not become of relevant concern to First Nations people of the Territory until the 1950s when their traditional way of life was encroached upon and threatened by the arrival of more and more non-Native settlers. This short time between a traditional way of life and a modern, urban way of life makes it imperative to connect children of Whitehorse with an understanding of the two very different ways of life experienced by Aboriginal people in this place, Whitehorse, Yukon.

1992:115).¹³

Storytelling structures a pattern of knowledge within the experience of the contemporary storytelling event space. This pattern of knowledge functions as a meta-narrative. The meta-narrative is revealed in the active and shared memory experience created by its community of listeners. In this spirit of oral narrative, this thesis is evidence of an experience of one specific moment in one place at one time. It reveals a variation and complex piling of narratives that evolves from the representation of traditional oral narrative and the repetition of the storytelling event in the Whitehorse primary classroom. This particularization of a "specific dialogue at a particular time and in a particular place" provides a highly productive vehicle of distance (Bakhtin 1981:12). Bakhtin writes that the hybrid utterance or narrative:

... is able on the one hand to show the object of representation in a new light (to reveal new sides or dimensions in it) and on the other hand to illuminate in a new way the "expected" literary horizon, that horizon against which the particularities of the teller's tale are perceivable (1981: 312-13).

In relation to Bakhtin's observations, this particular investigation is committed to illuminating the value of retelling traditional oral narratives in educational classrooms today in a new light. Moreover, the thesis explores the educational value of oral narrative (traditional and contemporary) in light of the "expected" technological horizons of both educators and children. The classroom, especially the primary classroom, serves children as the foundation of an educational tradition they will be a part of for the next twenty years. The primary

13 Listeners and tellers are actively engaged in a dialogue during the contemporary storytelling event space.

classroom is a threshold place where the boundaries (rules) of their educational tradition are introduced. In this respect, Edward Said refers to Gramsci's recognition of the vital relation existing between culture and hegemony for analytical purposes. He writes:

Gramsci has made the useful analytical distinction between civil and political society in which the former is made up of voluntary affiliations like schools, families and unions, the latter of state institutions whose role in the polity is direct domination. Culture, of course, is to be found operating within civil society, ... *certain* cultural forms predominate over others, just as *certain* ideas are more influential than others; the form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci has identified as *hegemony*, an indispensable concept for any understanding of cultural life in the industrial West (Said 1978: 6-7, italics mine).

As Said indicates, the school and classroom are located within civil society. It is the place where notions of culture (historical and contemporary) are taught through a discourse to children.

The Whitehorse primary classroom's cultural discourse is limited, plagued by an attitude of disassociation and fragmentation. There are two reasons for this. Colonial history is the first. Its history of place has caused the loss of Aboriginal cultural integrity in the Yukon classroom since 1950 (RCAP 1996:493).¹⁴ The second factor is technology functioning as a meta-narrative. The technological, educational aids of the television and the internet in the classroom educate children within a framework of "boundlessness." In effect, technology's "limitlessness" of information renegotiates childrens' primary conceptualisation of place.

¹⁴ The historical terms of this investigation begin in 1950 when the first Yukon First Nations students entered the territorial school system (Coates 1991:203).

These two factors, broadly speaking, deter Whitehorse children from learning through experience, and make a storytelling project problematic and difficult.

Historically speaking, the colonization of the Yukon Territory, like that of the rest of Canada, tells the slow painful story of the annihilation of the Aboriginal culture, history and identity including the oral tradition (Coates 1991: xxii). In the Yukon specifically, colonization has obliterated much of the heritage and culture of local tradition. Colonial history demonstrates a disassociation from place in the suppression of *certain* cultural discourse (stories and voices) in children's "storied residence" to the Yukon Territory in the Whitehorse primary classroom (Cheney 1992:1-12).¹⁵

Increasingly, children are taught they need not cultivate the faculty of memory or remembering because we have so many other modes for recording cultural memory (the video camera, tape recorder, film, photograph, computer, CD ROM, not to mention the printed page). Mechanized memory provides a guaranteed documentation of our histories but lacks the human element of experience. In handing over our memory to a technological intervention we learn how to forget and forget how to remember. Walter Benjamin's fear that "the gift for listening is lost and [that] the community of listeners disappears" is fulfilled in the climate of

15 The *Royal Commission on Aboriginal People* states, "Aboriginal people speak of language and culture in the same breath" (1996 3, 5:483). Statistics and curriculum both indicate there to be a loss of indigenous languages in Whitehorse and the other outlying communities. Elders from across the Territory gathered at the *Voices of the Talking Circle* conference to discuss and devise strategies to preserve their languages and oral traditions. They collectively concluded, "language, culture and identity are inseparable" and that "creative ways must be found to motivate the children and make the learning of Native languages and culture a pleasant and rewarding experience" (Yukon Aboriginal Language Conference 1991: 29-32).

the late twentieth century (1968:91).

The curriculum of the primary classroom understood to be a "voluntary," consented re-presentation of our civil society is dominated by our political society dictating how we conceptualise authority (Said 1978:6-7). If children, their identities and cultures are to be given recognition and endowed with a sense of authority in the primary classroom curriculum, then curriculum should be equally informed and shaped by their voices. The consideration of an oral narrative tradition works toward balancing the limitations and domination of our political society in the primary classroom. Oral narratives serve to bring a tradition of place and an acknowledgment of the hybrid community identity to the classroom. Elder and master storyteller George Blondin of the Dene in the North West Territories refers to "that moment" of transmission, the act of listening and telling stories as "sustenance" or "medicine" (Blondin 1990: i). What is passed on and exchanged in the primary classroom from teacher to student, teller to listener, through the language of oral narrative is a form of medicine and should be regarded as something sacred.

In this context of an induction into twentieth-century historical and technological values, Kathleen Dean Moore inquires: "But who has studied the essential issue: What will draw our own children back *home* ?" (1995: 8, italics mine). Her definition of "home" assumes children identify with the place they grow up in and feel drawn to remain in or later return to. I compare Moore's "what" to the homing instinct of the trumpeter and tundra swans drawn back to the Yukon every spring. The swans' return to McClintock Bay marks a shift in season signifying a time of renewal. These birds' migratory pattern repeats a tradition and a way of knowing the landscape surrounding the community of Whitehorse. Nowadays,

however, there is little emphasis and value placed in knowing the landscapes of the places where we live. We turn our attention in education to the larger global context of technology, particularly the television and internet. As we turn our attention elsewhere, we forget about the significance of places like McClintock Bay, and the swans. It is a similar danger for children educated in the modern global context. Educators today are forgetting to teach the significance of place. Children educated in the fragmented reality of globalization have metaphorically lost their homing instinct.

I think we as a society have forgotten what it means to truly lose something because lost objects and ideas appear so easily retrievable with the aid of new information technologies. Yet once oral knowledge is lost, it is gone. Recognizing the value of the loss makes it vital to teach children the knowledge of place. This translates into teaching them the skill of how to "remember" (memory work) and to stress the value of human experience during their foundation experiences in the Whitehorse classroom.

Traditional oral narrative begins to educate children in a discourse of place. Such stories are of value to an integrated model of oral education because as Morrow and Schneider explain, "... ancient stories are rekindled in new settings and retellings bring meaning to the present"(1995:2). In this way, traditional oral narrative utilised in the Whitehorse primary classroom can serve as a method of educating all children, Aboriginal and non-Native, of the "hybrid interpenetration" of relationships in Whitehorse, and it can do so as a part of their educational experience and tradition (Ashcroft 1995:391).

In an attempt to answer Moore's question I conducted a four-month Storytelling Curriculum Model Project during the winter of 1996-97 in two Whitehorse primary

classrooms. I, in my role as a researcher, wanted to see if it is possible to put storytelling back in the education of children. My hope with the project is that it may serve to influence the future course of primary curriculum development in the Yukon territorial school system toward a kind of oral learning founded upon the integrative qualities of traditional oral narrative. The storytelling project created a space within the classroom where an oral narrative tradition thrived during the winter, as it was traditionally and seasonally observed. And where the children were encouraged through memory to reflect on the moments of transmission as a part of their educational experience in the primary classroom.

Cruikshank argues that "the issue, at least for some Native northerners, centres on who controls the images, the representations of their lives portrayed to the larger world" (Cruikshank in Dyck 1993: 134). Who dictates how we see Aboriginal culture within Yukon society is critically significant in relation to this investigation.¹⁶ Historical and political

16 The Whitehorse primary classroom offers an *optional* Native language program in Southern Tutchone, the traditional language of the First Nations of Whitehorse; while maintaining a *compulsory* French language program (Jacobs, 1996). One of the classroom teachers described the Native language program with frustration as "nothing more than another form of tokenism" carried on by the dominant political society. These observations imply English and French to be more important to learn and know than Aboriginal languages. Lena Jonhson, a Southern Tutchone Elder and educator, describes her routine as a Native language instructor: "You know we have only twenty minutes a day for each class and I only work three days a week, 9:00 to 12:00. How are children going to learn, with only twenty minutes a day? It's no way. They hear English in T.V.; they hear it in home; they hear it from their friends; they hear it from their brothers and sisters. A child, no way they're going to survive with their language" (YALC 1991:14). This issue reinforces the dominant authoritative discourse of the Whitehorse primary classroom. A society's choice of *certain* stories acts as a metaphor for understanding "what is considered knowledge, the mode through which knowledge is attained or created, and, consequently the ideologies and practices of educational institutions" (Freake 1997:4). The colonial historic ideology still dominates the Yukon's territorial school system. The relationship between Aboriginal and non-Native

practices are reflected in educational practices (Gramsci in Said 1978: 6-7). The colonialist trait in the history of the Yukon accompanied by the pedagogical trend toward the "boundarilessness" of technological media, generates a dominant educational meta-narrative and discourse influencing children's conceptualisation of place.¹⁷

The project discussed in chapters four and five of the thesis propose a method for developing a hybrid cultural curriculum, reinstilling in the Whitehorse child a sense of place.

The problematic present in the historical colonial discourse with concern to the Canadian Aboriginal experience is articulated by Peter Kulchyski, professor of Native Studies at Trent University. He writes:

curriculum is carefully constructed to appear cross-cultural - yet maintains a "white-bias" authority and control over First Nations content and heritage in the official story of the Yukon.

17 Debate may arise here of the technological perspective "accused" of deterring a storytelling-related curriculum and the development of community identity reflective of cultural difference. Seymour Papert contends in *Mindstorm* (1980) that the computer in the classroom forces children to be more tolerant of error (Postman 1995: 125-6). The computer may teach children how to be more tolerant of error or difference, yet this tolerance is constructed within the technological framework. Technology conditions children to tolerate only their own errors as a response to their interaction with the computer and not as an acceptance of difference in their direct and on-going human interaction. The distinction should be made clear, my position in the thesis does not oppose or accuse technology, but rather asks: how can a storytelling project assist to balance out the perspectives of community identity and cultural negotiation fostered in the Whitehorse primary classroom, in relation to technology's influences? I mirror Neil Postman's perspective when he writes, "I am not against using computers in school. I am arguing against our sleepwalking attitudes towards it, against allowing it to distract us from more important things, against making it a god" (1995:44).

In the Canadian context, arguably the fact of the colonization of Aboriginal peoples, broadly speaking, remains a kind of culturally repressed moment in the national identity: though it should be emphasized that this cultural repression was actively constructed (Kulchyski 1996: 7-8).

Kulchyski stresses the double negation experienced by people of Aboriginal origins within the colonialist narrative. Aboriginal people were consciously excluded from the history. This is as true in the Yukon Territory as elsewhere in Canada. Accounts of the Yukon's colonial history are documented and described well by historian Kenneth Coates (*Best Left As Indians*, 1991; *Canadian Colonies*, 1985; *Land of the Midnight Sun*, 1988). The Yukon's collective historical memory is dominated by a "*limited historical consciousness*" in the *certain* selections passed on as the official history that formulates the community identity of Whitehorse (Coates 1991: 246, italics mine).

Canada's official historical memory is dominated by a settler culture mentality collectively created and shared by the people who make up our nation. The settler culture motif assists in the formation of a shared identity so that everyone can tell this grand meta-narrative regardless of geographical location in our vast country. The distinctive "Canadian" approach to identity is now authorized by the *Multiculturalism Policy of Canada*.¹⁸

The settler culture motif has evolved differently in the Yukon. There, Canada's

18 Yet the *Multiculturalism Policy of Canada* excludes both the Aboriginal peoples of Canada and the Yukon and North West Territories from its definition (Multiculturalism Policy 2: c,d). The exclusionary tendencies of this term, *multiculturalism* in the American context are addressed by Neil Postman. He cites multiculturalism as denoting "... quite a different story ... [involving] a narrative that makes cultural diversity an exclusive preoccupation" (1995:50-51).

colonial narrative has acted like a parent to its territorial child (Coates 1991: xvi). Most non-Native "Yukoners" or "Sourdoughs" originate from other regions of Canada, making the colonial experience in the Yukon secondary to the rest of Canada (Coates 1991: 246).¹⁹ Non-Native settlers followed the economic opportunities as they arose in the Territory. These opportunities can be identified in three waves. The first and most historic wave was the Klondike Gold Rush at the turn of the nineteenth century. The second and most cultural destructive wave was the construction of the Alaska Highway through the 1940s, opening the Territory up to greater access for prospectors and settlers by roadway. The third economic wave is experienced today with tourists celebrating the Gold Rush.²⁰ Ironically, the Yukon's contemporary economic wealth relies heavily upon the tourists' romanticized dream of the wealth of the Gold Rush.

Traditional oral narrative assists one in comprehending that those narratives that are repeated are those most well remembered by a community of listeners.²¹ The Gold Rush meta-narrative dominates the Yukon's official cultural memory and collectively formulates its

19 Residents are often referred to as Sourdoughs after living in the Yukon for at least one winter. The number of years one must live in the Yukon to be considered a Sourdough is highly disputed, some say one year, while others say twelve.

20 "To date there is no quantification of the economic wealth generated by the tourism industry, but this industry is the largest private sector employer in the Yukon Territory today"(Clarke,1997).

21 Walter Benjamin writes, "... the perfect narrative is revealed through the layers [repetitions] of a variety of retellings" (1968:93).

identity.²² Thus, an aim of this storytelling project is to "disrupt a colonising world-view and to create and affirm a different set of relationships, experiences and forms of knowledge," founded on the educational values of respect and listening present in the oral traditions of Yukon First Nations as promoted by Australian educator Val Plumwood in her place-sensitive educational curriculum (in Jickling 1995:81).

22 The Gold Rush narrative is a historic success story represented by the male individual's physical and mental ability to toil and strain against the Yukon's harsh environment. He becomes a classic hero by striking it rich, destroying river beds in search of metal ores and then frivolously spending his fortune in a place like Dawson City on gambling and alcohol. The culminated narrative relies completely on the capitalist ethic, celebrating ideas of autonomy and the individual. If Aboriginal people appear in this narrative at all (they usually play no part) then they are utilized romantically in the role of helping the hero find his gold, thereby acting as an exotic messenger and emissary of the wilds. They thereby serve this narrative by being cast as servant within it. People of Aboriginal heritage find little place for their identity in this narrative as is generally the case elsewhere.

Chapter Three: A Method of Place

In the 1970s educators became interested with storytelling as a pedagogical tool and with traditional oral narrative as the foundation for the contemporary storytelling event space. This led to the development of a large body of writing over the next two decades essentially stating that storytelling is a useful pedagogical aid especially helping children in the process of learning how to read. This particular pedagogical interest with contemporary storytelling utilized in elementary curriculum is expressed by Kieran Egan, a professor of education at Simon Fraser University (*Teaching As Storytelling*, 1986; *Imagination in Teaching and Learning*, 1992). He is apprehensive about the new information technologies that may colour the study of oral learning. He suggests:

The key to humanizing it, or, better, rehumanizing it [the classroom] for children is to tie the computational tasks back to the human intentions, hopes, fears, etc. that generated them in the first place ... then we can embed the skill in a context that is meaningful (Egan 1986: 77).

Recently, with the writings of Neil Postman (*The End of Education*, 1995 and *Technopoly*, 1993), there is an increasing tendency to polarize oral narrative, the educational good, against computer technology, the educational bad. Postman asks: "Will the widespread use of computers in the classroom defeat once and for all the claims of communal speech?" (Postman 1993: 17). This polarization of the oral and the technological is an extension of a similar polarization in classical accounts of oral narrative. In *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*(1982), Walter Ong posits the two conditions as adversaries. He

favors literacy as a natural development of orality. He traces the evolution from the oral to the literate, blaming literacy as the cause of orality's demise. Paradoxically he stresses literacy as the *means* to comprehend orality today. He writes:

Literacy ... is *absolutely necessary* for the development not only of science but also of history, philosophy, explicative understanding of literature and of any art, *and indeed* for the explanation of language (including oral speech) itself (Ong 1982:15, italics mine).

Ong's theory situates further studies of orality and the oral narrative in a polarization obscuring the actual paradoxical or ambiguous relationships of oral and literary skill in any culture.²³ The interests of this thesis are the interdisciplinary relationships that arise when relating oral narrative (Aboriginal traditional and contemporary) in the Whitehorse primary classroom. The theoretical constructs that facilitate an understanding of these relationships are life writing, post-colonial oral narrative theory and hybridity.

As Marlene Kadar explains, life writing creates a space for the neglected texts, where they are *raised* to inclusion and discussed within the Literary Canon (Cohen in Kadar 1992: 91).

²³ I define oral narrative as "personal stories generated from the experiences of the teller as well as accounts that have been passed on from generation to generation, often referred to as myth, folktale, and legend" (Morrow & Schneider 1995:6).

Kadar describes life writing as 'a genre of documents or fragments of documents written out of a life, or unabashedly out of a personal experience of a writer,'and includes 'narratives which tell a story in their own right, even though they may not be fiction' (Cole in Kadar 1992: 114).

This thesis explores an oral narrative tradition that tells a story in its own right, thereby demonstrating oral narrative's pedagogical value in primary education. I, in recounting (orally conveyed) life experiences or narratives of children in Whitehorse, stretch the academic "literate" boundaries that define knowledge and how knowledge is taught, including the literature-based notion of life writing.

The inherent, colonial polarization of the marginalised (Aboriginal, Other) narrative and dominant (European, Western) narrative is diminished within the field of post-colonial studies. According to Ashcroft, unlike colonialism, post-colonial discourse:

... provides a methodology for considering the dialogue of similarity and difference; the similarity of colonialism's political and historical pressure upon non-European societies, alongside the plurality of specific cultural effects and responses those societies have produced (1995:56).

Post-colonial oral narrative theory validates a study of oral narrative within the academy, focusing on the values of traditional oral narratives. A definition of post-colonial oral narrative theory is articulated in the merging of traditional academic disciplines. Two Alaskan anthropologists, Phyllis Morrow and William Schneider collaboratively define this as:

... the place where folklore studies intersect with sociolinguistics and contemporary interpretive anthropology. In this interdisciplinary area, we can integrate previously disparate approaches to oral narrative in action (1995:2).

Post-colonial oral narrative theory creates a space for a dialogue to take place between the fields of Aboriginal oral history, oral tradition, contemporary storytelling, educational theory and colonial history (Ashcroft 1995:2). It is a hybridized space. Hybridity explores the "hybridised nature of post-colonial culture" where new and respectful dialogues are taking place (Ashcroft 1995:183). Hybridity contextualises my investigation of oral narrative in the Whitehorse primary classroom as a means to address issues related to the colonial history and contemporary culture in the Yukon Territory.

Amongst post-colonial theorists the concept of hybridity is recognized as a distinct feature of discourse (Ashcroft 1995:183). Hybridity moves beyond the limits of binary polarizations, emphasizing the strength and evolution of an oppressed culture through, for example, such atrocious acts of colonialism as the residential and missionary school systems of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Canada. Certain notions of hybridity emerge "where no simple possibility for asserting a pre-colonial past is available" (Ashcroft 1995:183-4). This is true of the Yukon's oral narrative tradition. There are few if any primary oral cultures left in the world today (Ong 1982:15). We cannot "go back" to a time when people lived without the influences of colonialism or mechanically-mediated forms of communication, but we, as the educating society, can remind and educate children of the "myth time," and of an other method of educating through the practice of telling stories (de Laguna 1995:28).

The Russian literary theorist M.M. Bakhtin contributes to post-colonial studies in "Discourse in the Novel" with his notion of heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981:259-422). He defines heteroglossia " as close a conceptualisation as is possible of that locus where centripetal and centrifugal forces collide" (1981:428). Differing from Ong's binary opposition of the literate and oral, Bakhtin's heteroglot reality stresses the complex, interconnected relationship between language and speech within narrative. He praises orality in the novel, defining language as an organic, living and evolving discourse (Bakhtin 1981: 327). He uses terms like utterance to "stress the speech aspect of language, [and] to emphasize the immediacy of meaning" produced (Holquist in Bakhtin 1981:xxi).

Bakhtin's concept of utterance is hybrid, "contain[ing] mixed within it two utterances, ... two semantic and axiological belief systems" (1981: 304). Utterance is a doubly-voiced refracting discourse of two voices in dialogue with one another (1981:326). His *double-voiced discourse* unmask the monologue of language springing out of a continual dialogic interaction, what Bakhtin describes as "dialogism" (1981:330). This theory of language "never runs dry - for the internal dialogism of discourse is something that inevitably accompanies the social, contradictory historical becoming of language" (1981:330). Bakhtin classifies this as the relativity of linguistic consciousness (1981:323). He clears a space within the "literary" scope of the narrative for the hybridised utterance and where the dialogues between language (literacy) and speech (orality) are made conscious within sociolinguistic theory. This dialogue is evidence of speaking and writing "*in another's speech, in another's language*" (1981:324). Bakhtin's recognition of the hybrid reality in the novel illustrates a

model for understanding social meaning. Holquist writes: "Histories are like novels in that they set out to provide more or less comprehensive accounts of social systems" (in Bakhtin 1981: xxviii). The central image of two actual people in dialogue with one another determines his theory of heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981:xx and 324). The speakers or tellers in this dialogue are "carriers of a particular verbal-ideological linguistic belief system" (Bakhtin 1981:312). Oral narrative and the contemporary storytelling event space requires a similar image and recognition of the hybridised utterance as its locus.

Interpretive cultural anthropology similarly discusses the nature of the close relationship between Aboriginal traditional oral narrative and the defining of social structure. We find in the work of anthropologists and educators like Alice Carlick (1995: 34), Robin Ridington (1988:70), and Julie Cruikshank (1984:14) the common metaphor of a window to express an understanding of traditional oral narrative. As if through a window we observe the reflection and mediation between how people "talk, [and how] members accomplish social structure" (Holmes 1996: 8). An oral tradition or oral system is a means to define and understand a community's culture and social systems, their way of being in the world and their way of seeing the world (Dauenhauer 1988:x).

Among these anthropologists, Julie Cruikshank is the most relevant to my storytelling project in the Whitehorse primary classroom. A non-Native white academic, she spent more than a decade in the Yukon Territory, living, conducting research and writing the extensive account of three Yukon Elders' life stories (*Life Lived Like A Story*, 1990). She refers to the "...collaborative research used," and how under the Elder's tutelage her "interests have *shifted*

away from an oral history committed to documenting changes in social reality and toward an investigation of narrative forms for talking about, remembering, and interpreting everyday life" (Cruikshank 1990: x, Cruikshank in Dyck 1993: 135, italics mine). Her time spent particularly as a researching cultural anthropologist in the Southern Yukon with three Yukon First Nations women Elders led her to be affected by their community and world-view, shifting her praxis and interpretation. This *shift* in focus led her to comment further that " ... an oral history attuned to narrative conventions provides an observatory from which to assess the shifting boundary between what we call *history* and what we call *myth*" (Cruikshank 1990:x). By listening to Yukon traditional oral narrative Cruikshank learned the Aboriginal cultural significance of the role of the listener, as likened by Ong to an apprenticeship in the discipline of oral narrative (1982:9).

Cruikshank expresses a *shifted* methodological approach. She conveys a different academic understanding of the relationship existing between language and speech. She recognizes Yukon traditional oral narrative as a form of cultural collaborative communication in effect mirroring Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia. Oral narrative today breaks open traditionally rigid, academic investigations. The retelling and use of traditional oral narrative in contemporary situations (for example, the storytelling event and festival) constitutes an interdisciplinary, hybrid location to observe the shifting and merging of the academically defined disciplines of literature, anthropology, history, and myth.

In the "Introduction to *Orientalism*," Edward Said focuses his critical discussion on the importance of identifying the position and methodological approach taken by an author

in relation to an investigation involving the marginalised "Other" (Said 1978: 1-28). He stresses the importance of recognizing the relationship between the Occident and Other as one "... of power, of domination, of varying degrees of complex hegemony" (Said 1978: 5). He articulates how there are no pure cultures or truths in the world, merely authoritative representations (Said 1978: 21). Mirroring Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony in his own investigation of the Orient, he identifies in an investigation of the Other - the relationship of authority. Said stresses that, "above all, authority can, indeed must, be analyzed" (Said 1978: 20). Thus, the cultural relationships present in post-colonial societies are representations of the varying degrees of authority that exist and operate within civil society (Said 1978:5). They can and indeed must be exposed, *shifted* and altered.

Said's method of authoritative analysis includes the terms *strategic location* and *strategic formation* (1978:20). A *strategic location* is an author's *position* taken in writing a text and the *strategic formation* is their *method* of analysis within a text (Said 1978:20). Cruikshank positioned herself "humanistically" in her methodological documentation of three Yukon First Nations Elders' life stories (Cruikshank 1990: 1-36). To use Said's terms, her strategic location was one of *place* (people, community and culture). *Place* was also then the determining factor in her strategic formation. As Said writes:

No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his or her involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society (1978: 10).

Said includes "the personal dimension" as a form of maintenance and critical consciousness

while writing *Orientalism* (1978:25-26). Like Bakhtin's sense of linguistic consciousness in a text, Said "takes inventory" of himself along the way of writing (1981: 323 and Gramsci in Said 1978: 25). He reveals his consciousness to be his methodology, his strategic location and formation.

Academic research strategies in the Canadian North are being "negotiated locally and based upon a model of *collaboration* replacing more conventional models of university initiated research" (Cruikshank 1988: 1-2). Cruikshank, like Said develops a similar level of critical consciousness from *the mere activity of being a member* of a community (Said 1978:10). The appreciation and sensitivity toward the community - the people and place chosen as the site of inquiry - is a current trend especially in academic Northern research practices. Norman Easton, former director of the Northern Research Institute and professor of Anthropology at Yukon College in Whitehorse, describes this methodological trend as "integrative." He suggests that a shifting in research methodology leads to greater "meaningfulness" for both the researcher and community studied:

... seeking to redefine the role of the North in research in a more pluralistic fashion ... encouraging efforts towards the integration of knowledge and place. It seeks recognition of and sensitivity towards the existing cultural traditions of knowledge that have prevailed in the North ... to expand its capacity for Northern relevance by forcing its vision towards concerns of local interest (Easton 1994: iv).

Easton's methodology begins with *place* and recognition of an embodied relationship - that of the researcher to community. Subsequently, place is the locus for a different form of

methodological analysis. Said and Cruikshank conduct their research for two very different reasons and in two very different locations, yet equally they come to share a similar experience and awareness of their surroundings. Their common consideration for the relevant relationships between their use of knowledge in a place, shifts their methodological inquiries to be reflective of place. And as well, in conducting research on the other, they both develop a consciousness which is critical of the writing self. This I will call hybrid consciousness.

Place in the field of post-colonial studies is "a complex interaction of language, history and environment" (Ashcroft 1995: 391). I define place in the Whitehorse primary classroom in a hybridised way. Firstly, its definition involves recognition of traditional oral narrative's educational value in children's early educational experience. The role of the child within Aboriginal traditional social structures was to listen and become "educated" through the practice of oral narrative (Heidlebaugh 1992: 4, de Laguna 1995 :74-75).

Nora and Richard Dauenhauer, who have extensively documented Alaskan Tlingit traditional oral narratives, affirm that "oral ... traditions evolve differently in different places" (1987:11). The evolution of an oral tradition of place is integrally linked to the people of that place, its community of tellers and listeners. Said posits the necessity in his study of the Orient:

... [to] take seriously Vico's great observation that men [and women] make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made, and extends it to geography; as both geographical and cultural entities - to say nothing of historical entities - such locales, regions ... (Said 1978: 5).

He, like Easton, acknowledges the interconnected aspects of history and geography in relation

to what people in a place say and how their language evolves into local knowledge and *stories*. Bakhtin articulates a similar tracing of histories and stories to locality when he writes: "A locality is the trace of an event, a trace of what had shaped it. Such is the logic of all local myths and legends that attempt, through history, to make sense out of space" (1981: 189).

Aboriginal traditional oral narrative is framed by an integrated definition of people to place involving an interconnected view of place with the aspects of the geographical, "cultural, social, political, economic and health" (RCAP 1, 11, 1996: 491). Traditional oral narrative is inscribed with the human community as a partner in life with the landscape or place. The traditional definition of place situates the subjective self integrally as a part of the objective landscape, as a kind of "ground of being" (Hodge and Mishra in Ashcroft 1995:392). Like the well which Bakhtin's dialogic spring runs from, this " ... discourse of place is a process of a continual dialectic between subject and object"(Ashcroft 1995:392).

My methodology involves a hybrid discourse of place and the activity of being a member of a community. Like Cruikshank, I lived in the southern Yukon and came to be affected by the Yukon's traditional stories, learning how to be a listener and a teller. My experiences in this place *shifted* my academic position and methodology. Consequently, I use an ethnomethodological perspective in the writing of my thesis. James L. Heap defines ethnomethodology as,

... the study of formal structures of situated practices as these practices are used by members of a culture to organize their reasoning and actions and their interactions, as rational, recognizable, orderly, identifiable events in a social world (1990:46).

My ethnomethodology involves the study of the oral narrative relationships I formed in and with the members of two primary classroom communities while living in Whitehorse. In the hybrid space of the classroom storytelling event, the situated practice of telling oral narrative (traditional and contemporary) led to a variety of voice and a collaboration of different cultures, evolving in a manner which was reflective of place. This particular collaborative discourse defined my position as an academic researcher in the southern Yukon and in turn determined my method of analysis.

Who Am I?

I was apprehensive entering the Whitehorse primary classroom, coming as I did from an academic place, a southern university where big words and thoughts have trained me to think and speak in a particular language. Could I relate academic concepts in a voice and language that grade-two children in Whitehorse would understand? Would my research and interest in Yukon oral tradition be taken as a form of cultural appropriation, as my identity was a part of this process?

I realized I needed to understand the Whitehorse childrens' sense of place.²⁴ I began

24 If I was going to make a true learning connection with this community of listeners, attention to their voices and stories would be a part of this learning experience. I would enter into a dialogue and equally become a listener of their stories.

the project with a personal story of my own place and childhood. This story was used as an entrance into the project and simultaneously as a way to introduce myself, who I was, where I was from and why I was there. The story I offered was told to me as a child by my Baba (grandmother), and it was told in relation to a place I spent my summers and as a way of passing on my mother's ethnic identity and heritage to my brother and I. As children at our family's cottage on Georgian Bay, my brother and I and cousins used to go out into the forest. My grandmother would worry about us getting lost or hurt. So, she used to tell us the story of the Baba Yaga as a way to keep us from wandering too far off and also as a way to teach the importance of listening to our Elders and to do as we were told, or face the consequences.²⁵ The Baba Yaga is a fierce creature, an old witch crone who eats children who do not listen and do as they are told (Robinson and Wilson 1962: 174). My Baba's presentation included herself as the child in the story, making it all the more vivid in my memory. I began the story from the place where I remembered it (Appendix One).

My thesis methodology is a different sort of *life lived* story and hopeful of demonstrating a way to conduct academic research filling "the gap" that Julie Cruikshank has described "between academics who live in southern Canada and residents who live in what has been called the Northern laboratory" (Cruikshank 1984:3). I walk away from this Master's degree with two experiences, one situated in the academy and the other situated in life experience.

25 For versions of Baba Yaga, see Ransome, 1916: 68-90, Winthrop, 1991 and Sherman, 1988.

Renegotiating Certain Authority

Using traditional oral narrative in primary classrooms raises questions of how knowledge and authority are constructed within the classroom. Within teaching practices there exists a set of power relations that dictate how children should be socialized. This authority construct may be described as literate and technological and views the child entering the primary classroom as one who must be taught its set curriculum (Egan 1986: 104). Egan is critical of such educational practices:

The most powerful and energetic intellectual tools children bring to school are largely ignored and excluded when research is conducted on childrens' learning, intelligence, development and so on (1986: 18).

In short, the imagination and memory are suppressed by contemporary teaching practices, claims Egan (1986: 6). At the primary-school age, children live and breathe oral narratives. Vivian Gussin Paley, an experienced primary-level educator writes, "A myth-making curriculum is sensible because the children (at this age) have been practicing the technique [of storytelling]" (1995:95). Children entering the set social structures of the classroom "leav[e] behind much that is exciting and deeply loved in the earlier oral world" (Ong 1982:15). Children thus become disassociated from oral knowledge, the imagination and memory as they cross over the threshold of primary education.

Postman responds to the focus of current educational curriculum, articulating the need to recognize that "all subjects are forms of discourse and that therefore almost all education is a form of language education" (1995: 123). In effect, he directs educator's attention to a

different ordering of knowledge embedded in an oral discourse and dialogue (speech and language). His viewpoint parallels Bakhtin's notion of linguistic consciousness and Said's notion of critical consciousness, leading educators to view oral discourse as key to the development of a hybrid consciousness. This complex consciousness can be cultivated and articulated in children through the practice of oral narrative.

The difficulties prompting both Egan and Postman to reason for an alternate approach to curriculum are not new. American educator John Dewey (*The Child and the Curriculum*, 1956) and French educator Jean Piaget (*The Language and Thought of the Child*, 1959 and *The Origins of Intelligence in Children*, 1967) likewise resisted their contemporary dominant educational practices. Dewey viewed education from his self-described *psychological stance*. His primary interest was "the need to begin a topic with students directly experiencing some aspect of it in a way that is meaningful in their lives" (Egan 1986: 105). He viewed curricula as needing to accommodate the child rather than the child needing to accommodate the curriculum. Egan categorizes this view of educating the child as *progressivism* and correlates Dewey's to Piaget's work.

Postman in reference to the work of William James writes: "There is nothing more human than the stories of our errors" (Postman 1995: 124). Piaget and Dewey observed the errors children made in their educational practices as their focus of study (Egan 1990: 105). These thinkers remind contemporary, technologically focused educators of the importance of remembering that children are humans and humans make mistakes. Recognition of the essential humanity of children in curriculum is an act of return to the collective cultural

essential humanity of children in curriculum is an act of return to the collective cultural authority present in the Aboriginal oral narrative tradition (Morrow in Morrow and Schneider 1995:32-33).

With Morrow and Schneider (1995: 1-7), we can experience *how words return*, and also how the contemporary storytelling event space rekindles traditional oral narrative in relation to a place investigation. The storytelling event is a site of cultural agency. The Yukon's oral narrative tradition provides a model of social interaction where another kind of speech and another kind of language are engaged. Toronto storyteller Dan Yashinsky writes of the trickster Crow and Raven cycles of the Yukon in response to students' questions of ethnological translation of oral narrative across cultures (*Tales for an Unknown City*, 1990; "A Long Tale About Crow," 1994).

Yashinsky observes the ambiguity of human behaviour in his response, recollecting Crow's actions as a trickster creator, showing this authority figure to have human attributes: he tricks and makes mistakes (1994: 2). Essentially Yashinsky illustrates how this "God" figure in the Yukon's oral tradition is as equally faulted as humanity. Crow teaches Dan Yashinsky something. Rationalising the assimilation of the Crow cycle into his own oral tradition, Yashinsky illustrates the on-going evolution of language and speech through an oral tradition and how the contemporary storytelling event is a site of hybridity, dialogue and fusion of culture.

Nora and Richard Dauenhauer comment, "all people have a system of some kind. To readers of all cultures living in an age of fragmentation, these stories offer examples of how

such connecting systems operate" (1988: x). In oral education, the language we use to communicate with is the valuable, foundational tool with which to commence educating children (Howarth, 1997):

... for the 'dynamic of mysteries of language', as Wilson Harris puts it, becomes a groping step into the reality of place, not simply reflecting or representing it, but in some mysterious sense intimately involved in the process of its creation, of its 'coming of being' (Ashcroft 1995:392).

It is in the immediacy of "the moment" when the collaboration of an oral discourse (speech and language) is evident. "The gift of language is perpetuated through sharing and use" (Morrow and Schneider 1995:1). Oral narrative provides an agency and discourse to introduce ways of addressing cultural diversity in the primary classroom curriculum.

Egan outlines the mediation process offered by storytelling: "the educational purpose of this [storytelling] unit is to show that holding different value priorities leads to different social structures" (1986: 75). Kulchyski describes Dominic LaCapra's notion of *working through*, which is similar to Egan's mediation process. The concept of working through involves "repetition, though in a manner which offers 'a measure of critical purchase on problems and responsible control in action which would permit desirable change'" (LaCapra 1994: 209 in Kulchyski 1996:5). Kulchyski discusses this critical concept in relation to the reconsideration of traditional oral narrative, drawing a storytelling discourse into the academic and critical realm. He asks, "... [what] is the place of storytelling itself, of narrative, in the process of working through?" (Kulchyski 1996: 34).

The classroom becomes a field for play where identity and culture interact and

communication in the classroom culture specifies its community of listeners and tellers. With a plurality of different voices present, storytelling builds community in the classroom. The members of a classroom community develop an attachment and sense of belonging to the classroom culture and to the identity *they* have created by *working through* their cultural difference.

Teaching children to be open to cultural diversity requires the development and use of the imagination. The classroom is a perfect place to begin this:

... unlike other media ... which celebrate individual response and are experienced in private, the classroom is intended to tame the ego, to connect the individual with others, to demonstrate the value and necessity of group cohesion (Postman 1995: 45)

Storytelling in such a classroom teaches and generates meaning through the very conditions of oral narrative. The contemporary storytelling event offers a venue for communicating and understanding the dialogue between listener and teller, self and other. Perceptions and relationships are established in and through the storytelling practice and, when repeated, the event begins to build a patterned cultural memory responsive of place. In turn the community of listeners' sense of place is held together by their shared threads of an oral narrative tradition.

In the shared experience of the contemporary storytelling event space the imagination is actively engaged and developed through the repetition of oral narratives. It is a skill to listen and by listening to show respect. Wendell Berry writes: "Respect, I think, always

implies imagination - the ability to see one another, across our inevitable differences, as living souls" (Berry 1993: 173). Respect demands an awareness and sensitivity that can only be cultivated over time. Aboriginal traditional oral narrative stresses respect as one of its most fundamental beliefs. This respect is enacted in the contemporary storytelling event space.

The successful use of oral narrative in addressing cultural diversity in the contemporary classroom is documented in the project, "Family Portraits" (*Cornell Chronicle* 1992:1-7). This storytelling curriculum model project was initiated by the Family Life Development Center at Cornell University after a decade of varied storytelling projects in the New York region. It stresses the idea of family and increased intergenerational, parental and community involvement in the schools (*Cornell Chronicle* 1992:2).²⁶ This project was

26 We have come to experience the dissolution of the family and private institution that has been the focus and foundation of our civil society in North America. Our educational classrooms represent the place and expectations the home and family used to represent: structure, support and stability. Children spend more conscious time at school with their teachers and classmates in a week than with their own family. John Gatto reasons the need to call to order a new definition of what *family* means in the late twentieth century (1992: 74). The private place of home and family and public place of community and school dissolve into one another. Both teachers involved in the storytelling project stated that they view the educational classroom and school as everything: "It's life in a little microcosm. With some [children] I know that's the structure in their lives. They get it at school. They don't get it elsewhere. I don't even know if they have someone who really cares about what they're doing. I have kids whose parents can't spend ten minutes a night to listen to them and read a little story. That says something" (Millar, Appendix One). Fern Johnstone further comments in reference to a definition of family, from her own Yukon First Nations perspective, confirms the hybrid reality of the Whitehorse community: "To First Nations children this means extended family, to others (non-Native) this means a single mom or dad. Society's vision of family has changed. School is providing everything. It meets whatever needs which are not met anywhere else. It is their family, it is their structure" (Johnstone, Appendix One). Fern's opinion reinforces the transfer of responsibility already taken on by the teacher and school; not yet fully recognized by larger society.

developed in order to bring personal life stories and cultural or ethnic oral narratives of the larger community into the school and classroom (*Cornell Chronicle* 1992:3). Rosaleen Mazur, a key organizer, explains the project's aim in this way: "to lessen [the] isolation" between the community and the school (1992:3). This project focuses therefore on collaboration between its communities of listeners.

Family portraits concentrates on developing and teaching children and adults how to listen to one another. As Mazur contends, "if children feel safe and nurtured, and if they feel they are entire individuals rather than simply students, they become interested in learning" (*Cornell Chronicle* 1992:4). The project's success is astounding. It has led to the development of a Storytelling Research Center and training for schools in other communities in storytelling-related curriculum. In such a place as New York City the hybridity of culture is phenomenal, a living example of Bakhtinian polyglossia. This project successfully recounts the eagerness and curiosity of children and their school's community to learn more of other ethnicities, cultural concerns and dilemmas that arise out of (cultural) confrontation through an oral narrative discourse.

A more localized Canadian site of the cultural *work through* oral narrative is found in Toronto where Yashinsky's role as a storyteller has become part of a growing oral tradition. Yashinsky is one of the founders of the Toronto Storytelling School and the 1001 Nights of Storytelling. His work with the Metropolitan public school system today awakens educators' awareness to the educational value of oral narrative. He has designed a program he calls a "telling bee," playing on the traditional notion and educational value of a spelling

bee (Yashinsky, 1996). In this program, he teaches children the value of telling their own ethnic stories and aids classroom communities in documentating their oral narratives. Yashinsky reflects in relation to children expressing an understanding of their ethnicities through oral narrative: "Children want to be close, within proximity" (Yashinsky, 1996).

Yashinsky works as a translator. He begins by telling stories of his own ethnicity, familial and personal. He then draws the children into the excitement of telling their own stories. "Telling bees" culminate with Yashinsky helping the children to record and document their narratives and create their own book and anthology of their oral literature.

David Sobel, educator and author of *Children's Special Places* (1993), writes of the importance of keeping children's education in the primary years grounded in what they know. In contrast, teaching a curriculum of dissociation results in children who are "ecophobic" with the "fear of just being outside" (Sobel 1995: 12). Children need to become comfortable with what surrounds them so that they remain open-minded when confronted with the inevitable fragmentary realities of globalization. Wendell Berry is similarly critical of the universalist focus in contemporary education:

The school system takes our young people, prepares them for the world of tomorrow, which it does not expect to take place in any rural area, and gives back expert (that is, extremely generalized) ideas (in Willers 1991: 153).

He considers the way technology renegotiates our perceptions of place and community into the global context. Accordingly, he suggests we place our energies, "on how to care for each of the planet's millions of human and natural neighborhoods" (Berry in Willers 1991:153).

This localized concern can be initiated by listening to and telling the stories of our own communities, as evident with the Cornell project and Yashinsky's work in Toronto.

Contemporary schools embrace new technological-based learning, inviting educators to reapproach their whole relationship with children and their role as educators.²⁷ The teacher's voice communicates an authority within the classroom and expresses "boundaries" for children. Yet our technological narratives allow children to cross their educators' authority "on-line." Access to information destroys the teacher's voice and their constructed sense of authority within the classroom. Whatever they say, their speech is meaningless within the global context.

This emphasis on new information technologies is mirrored in the classroom curriculum, leaving little to no space for reflection, while working against the learning of what are called social values. In relation to real community, the technological, cyber community dishevels the places where we live and the social aspects of community that are a fundamental part of the experience of school and the classroom (Postman 1995: 46). Television technology presents narratives in the ever-present moment (Gatto 1992: 27). Consequently, children's imagination is not brought into being for imagination is developed in due course of having had time to reflect.

The development of critical thought accompanies the development of the imagination. Children nurtured on television absorb too many possibilities, resulting in what Barry Duncan,

27 "In our time, the argument has shifted from the effects of machinery to the effects of electronic impulses. Because the argument is relatively new, some of the questions are not yet well formulated" (Postman 1995:140).

founder of the Association for Media Literacy and author of *Mass Media and Popular Culture* (1988), observes as the condition that "only *certain* stories can be told" to children (Duncan in Hume 1997:J2, italics mine). From this observation, I conclude that this state of limitation will increase as technology and virtual realities evolve. Children of the first information generation will be less able to distinguish between the real and the imagined. They will come to interpret television stories as unimaginatively as fantasy:

We have liberated fantasy but killed imagination, and so sealed ourselves in selfishness and loneliness. Fantasy is of the solitary self, and it cannot lead us away from ourselves. It is by imagination that we cross over the differences between ourselves and other beings and thus learn compassion (Berry 1993: 143).²⁸

The technological educational experience redefines children's relationship with self that in turn renegotiates their relationship with their community, and an integrated experience of place. There is a gap between fundamental understandings of reality, time and space when children exist in "virtual reality" and "cyber space," similar to the "gap" Cruikshank described of southern researchers in the Northern laboratory. The formative understanding of a "relationship" takes on new meaning in the technological context. There need not be a "relation" between two subjects. In cyber space: you can "click" on your mouse or flip from one world to another with the aid of your remote-control device. This understanding of relationship is removed from the context of an exchange across boundaries into the

28 By fantasy, I mean an individually constructed world of power and authority with the self at the center, like the video arcade context of game-boy or virtual reality games.

"distanced" manipulation of entities constructed by technology. The word "relation" literally means "the act of telling" or "to narrate" (Webster 1963:546). We can say, then, that in the fragmentariness of the global educational context and climate, there is a reality without a story:

In order to appreciate the contribution that oral literatures make to learning, one has to think differently about what is substantial. One has to think differently about educational outcomes - to look beyond the 'facts' and operations so typical of curricula to a consideration of the character of human memory - to the emergence of models in learner memory as the fundamental product of learning. Learning "story" and learning "to story" involves learning a way of thinking, a way of organizing events and information, a way of knowing. An oral literature represents a cosmology, something which cannot be taught as a collection of "facts," but as something that can be "known" through inductive experience with a body of stories (Reitz 1988: 164).

Sandra Reitz suggests reconsidering a different model of education founded on traditional oral narrative. The segregating and uniformly privatizing process of educational technology, especially the computer and television as a regular part of the curriculum and classroom experience, acts as a deterrent to the development of an oral narrative tradition in primary education. Technological mediated learning impedes the growth of human memory, imagination and learning through experience. The previous development of the human memory is renegotiated through the technological meta-narrative becoming now like a skill we need to educate children how to use again. Reitz's *human memory* model of learning based on an oral literature has greater urgency in relation to technology's restructuring of human memory. Is it possible to (re)awaken oral memory in children if educators structure

learning within a different framework? An oral education model requires the children's active participation in their curriculum's construction.

Chapter Four: A Storytelling Curriculum Model Project

Whitehorse in Winter

The unexpected cold snap of minus forty temperatures causes day-to-day activities to *almost* come to a stop. The flap of a raven's wing in the cold stillness. The ice fog forming on the Yukon River settles over town like a thick heavy smoke. Stopping to watch the length of your shadow as the sun sets in the early afternoon, before darkness returns. Weather talk truly reflecting people and their winter attitude. Cars stopping for people walking across the street. People take time, make time to stop. Moments such as these are valuable in creating a sense of a place, and the people of that place.

The Yukon Territory fosters a distinct sense of human community. Lindsay Staples, a long-time Whitehorse resident, stated at an open community forum calling for more sustainable forestry practices that the Whitehorse community is a place where "the human scale still has value in light of globalization" (Staples, 1997). This is true in the territorial capital though its human population exceeds 22,000. The sense of community in Whitehorse involves human reliance on one another in a landscape that is extreme, at times devastating.

Beyond Whitehorse City Limits

The distinction between Whitehorse and the Territory is marked by a boundary of the urban and the rural, somewhat like where a parking lot ends and a forest begins. If you drive any distance beyond Whitehorse city limits you realize you are no longer in an urban place but out

"in the bush." The wide tree-covered valleys reach up the side of mountains like a deep, green-black fur. The fur breaks at the tree line. From there the eye travels to jagged snow-peaked mountains intermingled with rock, slate gray, black and brown. The red and yellow of the willow and sun-dried grasses along a stretch of the Alaska Highway are intensified against the white of winter snow and ice. This place has been described by many as one of the last "pristine wilderness" sites in Canada.

The height and ragged-rawness of the mountains and thin wind-blown trees reminds me of youth. Yet the truth of this landscape is very old, bone-like and fragile. The need for careful stewardship of this environment is extraordinarily obvious to a southerner who grew up in a highly urbanized landscape where connection to the natural environment was not always at the end of the parking lot.

The Whitehorse First Nations Community

To initiate the collaboration of a "method of place," I consulted with members of the Whitehorse First Nations Community in the development and execution of the storytelling project. Sharon Jacobs is a First Nations educational consultant for the Department of Education in Whitehorse. She recommended I consult with Emma Shorty and Louise Profeit-Leblanc. She provided documentation of the existing Yukon First Nations curriculum for the territorial primary classroom, such as the "Yukon First Nations Curriculum Integration" (Yukon Ministry of Education, 1996). This document outlines the curriculum requirements and resources available for all grades (K-12).

She explained, from a Yukon First Nations perspective, how the themes of self, family and community are the most integral to develop in the Whitehorse child's kindergarten-to-grade three primary education experience. These themes act as the foundations of the Yukon First Nations curriculum integration model. She also provided a bibliography of Aboriginal stories and of recorded Yukon traditional oral narratives used in primary curriculum that specifically address these themes.

Emma Shorty is an Elder and Community Liaison Education Coordinator for Elijah Smith Public School in Whitehorse. Her role is to provide on going facilitation between the school community and Kwanlin Dun First Nation. She strongly recommended the collected stories of Angela Sidney. She advised: "Read them just as they are, read them, then tell them" (Shorty, 1996). Morrow and Schneider stress this question of fidelity with regard to retelling Alaskan and Yukon traditional oral narratives, "... only if oral traditions are told faithfully and respectfully will they be preserved for future generations" (1995:1). Emma's advice was simple, stressing the importance of retelling traditional oral narratives "properly," as cultural anthropologists have done in their interpretive strategies in the North of Canada.

Louise Profeit-Leblanc is a storyteller of Northern Tutchone descent. She works as the Native Heritage Advisor for the Heritage Branch of the Yukon Territorial Government in Whitehorse. She assisted during the project, showing how oral narrative (traditional and contemporary) should be introduced, related and taught to Whitehorse primary-school aged children, reflecting on her perspective of place and knowledge of what she terms "Yukon

Mythology" (Profeit-Leblanc, 1996).²⁹ She told most of the traditional oral narratives during the first phase of the project, allowing myself *time* to observe the children in their initial encounter with the material in the narrative space created in their classroom. These particular "moments" provided the classroom teachers to equally act as listeners and learners. The educators' role as a listener involved the children in the collaborative, communal authority of the storytelling event.

Two Whitehorse Primary Classrooms

The project took place in two specific Whitehorse primary classrooms: Fern Johnstone's Whitehorse Elementary Public School classroom and Kathryn Millar's Elijah Smith Public School classroom.³⁰ Fern Johnstone, a Yukon First Nations teacher, was one of the first graduates of the Yukon Teachers Native Education Program offered at the Ayamdigut campus of Yukon College.³¹ During an interview, she explained her reasons for agreeing to the project:

29 Louise defined "Yukon Mythology" during a lecture reflecting on her experience with Elders from various regions of the Territory and their (Yukon) traditional oral narratives.

30 Both primary classrooms were grade-two classrooms.

31 Anne Tayler, professor of Native Literature at Yukon College and one of the co-founders of the Yukon International Storytelling Festival, observes: "In 1988, she [Angela Sidney] named the Whitehorse campus of Yukon College, giving it the name *Ayamdigut*, believing that the College at last offered Yukon Native youth an opportunity to gain an education in their own Territory"(1994:7).

I agreed to this project because of a belief I have in storytelling with respect to identity and identifying with it. I have an interest in First Nations methods of teaching and learning (Johnstone, Appendix One).

Her practicum as a student teacher was with Kathryn Millar. This prior working relationship assisted in a greater cohesion between the two separate classrooms while the project was conducted.

Kathryn Millar has been a primary school teacher for the last twenty-five years. She has lived and worked in remote communities in both the North West and Yukon Territories. Her interest in education spans the areas of special needs and Aboriginal curriculum development. She, like Fern, identifies with the need especially in a hybrid community like Whitehorse:

... [to] validate Native culture and the identity and heritage of Native students. The non-Native students need to know that First Nations history and culture is part of Canada's history. I think both cultures have something to learn from the other (Millar, Appendix One).

Millar acknowledges the cultural hybridity of her classroom, stressing the need to renegotiate and work through the Aboriginal cultural and historical narratives in the Whitehorse primary curriculum.

In both classrooms of approximately twenty students, half the children in each classroom were of Yukon First Nations descent. The other fifty percent of students were of varied ethnic heritage, mostly caucasian, born in Canada and speaking English as their first

language. The ethnographic representation of the two classrooms reflects the ethnography of the Territory. The priority both these educators give to Yukon First Nations content confirms the hybrid reality of Whitehorse and the need to properly identify and address the issue of double-voicedness in the local child's foundational experience.

Elijah Smith Public School is a recently built school near the village of the Kwanlin Dan First Nation (*People of the Rapids* in Southern Tutchone). This First Nation acts as the "umbrella" band representing fourteen Yukon First Nations cultural groups who traditionally hunted, subsisted, and seasonally inhabited regions of the Yukon River basin which today are part of the contemporary Whitehorse community. The school is named after Elijah Smith, an influential Native leader whose life-work symbolizes leadership and self-determination for Yukon First Nations youth today.³²

The school's mission statement is to provide an educational experience that is cross-cultural built on "a model of culture, cooperation and education through a true partnership of students, staff, parents and community" (Elijah Smith Public School, 1996). It is the most progressively hybrid conscious territorial primary school in Whitehorse today. The school places great effort in developing a community school atmosphere in association with the Kwanlin Dan First Nation and Whitehorse First Nations Community.

Whitehorse Elementary Public School opened in 1953 and is one of the oldest and

³² Elijah Smith was elected as the first Chief of the Yukon Native Brotherhood (today the Council for Yukon Indians) and was responsible for bringing *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* to the Canadian Government, Canada's first extensive land claim in 1973 (Coates 1991: 231).

largest territorial primary schools in Whitehorse. It is one of two schools that offers a French immersion program. In my experience, Whitehorse Elementary has an atmosphere similar to that of a public school in a large southern urban centre like Vancouver or Toronto.

The strength of community in Whitehorse was strongly reflected in the two case-study classrooms. Fern and Kathryn had worked together in the past and knew one other socially. Many of the children in the two classrooms also knew one another socially, from religious, familial, neighbourhood, or recreational affiliation.³³

Third Degree of Orality

Walter Ong identifies degrees of orality (1982: 11). The primary degree of orality, by his definition, belongs to a group who live in a purely oral culture. He defines a secondary degree of orality as those belonging to:

... present-day high-technology culture, in which a new orality is sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print (1982: 11).

Accordingly, the two Whitehorse primary classrooms involved in the project belong to a hybridisation grouping of those belonging to the second and third degree of orality.³⁴

33 Only children of Yukon First Nations descent were related.

34 I, following Ong, define a third degree of orality as those who are highly technological, describable as post-literate. Their reliance on literary skill dwindles as their culture advances toward technology and electronically mediated modes of communication consisting of computer-generated imagery and icons, as Rowan contends (1997 :A16).

A Storytelling Curriculum Model Project for the Whitehorse Primary Classroom

The storytelling project aspired to illuminate an understanding of the hybrid reality of the Whitehorse primary classroom through the situated practice of oral narrative (traditional and contemporary). To this end, the project was divided into three, four-week phases: place, community and the personal. The first phase introduced the children to the idea of the project and developed an understanding of place in relation to the Aboriginal historical perspective of the Yukon Territory. The second phase, community, reflected the cultural diversity of the contemporary Whitehorse community as shown in the classroom community and curriculum. The discourse and dialogue of the storytelling event space illustrated a method for working through cultural difference by developing a hybrid, double-voiced community identity. The third and final phase of the project, the personal, emphasised the classroom community and the experience of exchange during the activity of listening and telling stories of personal experience.

Place

The first phase of the project introduced a storytelling discourse as a subject like "math" to the children. This context suggested that storytelling has a place in the educational curriculum. We (the educators in the context of the project, the Whitehorse storytellers, classroom teachers and myself) discussed with the children how Aboriginal people in Canada

and, specifically in the Yukon Territory, "traditionally" used oral narrative or spoken stories to educate children. Storytelling was their equivalent of "school."

During the first phase of the project the children were assigned the task of "listening carefully."³⁵ They were encouraged to retell the stories again to someone, their family or friends, and then the following week retell them back to their classroom community. The affective grasp of an oral tradition is achieved through repetition and is measurable by memory, by what a listener remembers. The objective of the first phase of the project was to develop an affective grasp of an oral narrative sub-tradition and to cultivate an oral memory.

The oral narratives chosen for the first "place" phase of the project reflected the traditional oral history of the Whitehorse First Nations community (Kwanlin Dun First Nation). The narratives of the Whitehorse First Nations community are predominantly Southern Tutchone but historically and culturally reflective of the larger ethnography of the Yukon First Nations. The contemporary Whitehorse First Nations community is a fusion of Yukon First Nations cultures as many who are members of the Whitehorse community also maintain strong affiliation to their community of origin, other than Whitehorse and the Kwanlin Dun First Nation. The sense of "belonging" to more than one community makes it

35 Tom Heidlebaugh is an Amercian Aboriginal storyteller and educator who uses oral narrative in curriculum today in the state of Washington. He reflects on the traditional practice of "listening carefully" during the storytelling event: "Traditionally, Native American children were asked to respond ... to show their alertness. Then they were expected to practice telling on their own, so they could better hear the next time the words were told" (1992:4).

difficult to clearly define the "mythologies" of the Whitehorse First Nations community.³⁶ The hybridity within the Yukon First Nations communities presents a difficulty in clear definition. This difficulty is also manifested in the ethnographic representation of the First Nations children in the two case-study classrooms.³⁷

Retelling Yukon Traditional Oral Narrative: Louise's Sense of Place

There are many factors at play in the narrative event space of a storytelling-based curriculum. The storyteller's place in the Whitehorse primary classroom is weighted with a social responsibility of guiding how children perceive "other" (Cook, 1997, Heidlebaugh, 1995).³⁸ For example, retelling Yukon traditional oral narrative should end in an "Athabaskan Full Stop," leaving the narrative open to the listener's interpretation.³⁹ Louise Profeit-Leblanc

36 A similar difficulty as discussed in reference to defining Yukon First Nations.

37 The forty Yukon First Nations children involved in the project had ancestral ties to the Yukon First Nations' communities of Teslin (Teslin First Nations), Atlin (Taku-Tlingit), Carcross, Tagish (Southern Tutchone, Tagish), Carmacks, Mayo (Northern Tutchone, Selkirk First Nation), Dawson (Han), and Haines Junction (Champagne Aishihik First Nations). I hoped the oral narratives of the first phase of the project to also reflect the cultural backgrounds of the Yukon First Nations children in the two classrooms. There is such a fusion of Yukon First Nations in the Territory today that it was difficult to establish clear heritage boundaries since often the children did not know their or their parents communities of origin. In some instances these children, as well as the other students in the classroom, lived with foster parents. Yet when they did find out their community of origins, they had little sense of connection or identification to it as it being *their* place of cultural history.

38 I define "other" here as an other experience and other culture different than that of the listener's.

39 Athabaskan refers to the dominant linguistic group that inhabits the Yukon Territory.

articulates the meaning of an "Athabaskan Full Stop," as she ends retelling a Yukon traditional oral narrative during a lecture for the Elderhostel program of the 1996 Yukon International Storytelling Festival:

That's the story ... I end the story in what they call an Athabaskan Full Stop. They [the non-Native audience] did not realize the story was over. In the English stories you have to go down [to draw a conclusion] and when we [Yukon First Nations] tell the story, we stay here, that's it. We keep you here (Profeit-Leblanc, 1996).⁴⁰

The Yukon traditional oral narrative has a specific meaning and lesson for each listener to find within themselves. Members of the Whitehorse First Nations community collectively stressed the importance of respecting the traditional oral narrative when retelling it. Morrow also stresses this respect in reference to beginning or opening a contemporary storytelling event:

... it invokes the collective authority of many storytellers. Part of what makes a tale traditional is the way it reflects a timeless past and many retellings, rather than any individual's experience or authority (1995: 32-33).

Louise structures her storytelling event with repetition. Her storytelling method of educating Whitehorse children legitimises the (oral) collective authority of the Yukon oral narrative tradition in the territorial school system today. And so, she begins in a traditional way, repeating words her Elders gave to her. She reflects:

40 Louise gestured to her heart when explaining how a Yukon traditional oral narrative ends "here." "Here" refers to the emotional and personal place of a person, where definitions are difficult. It evokes ideas of openness.

When you're speaking to people you must remember you're an instrument; remember there are many hearts there, they are all in different *places* and you might be in another *place*. It's really important when you're speaking to people to bring them to a common spirit. And the way you do that is you spiritualise the group, so that what you have to say is heard in a good way. And what the people have to hear they hear, and they go away with a good feeling (Profeit-Leblanc 1990:111 and Profeit-Leblanc, 1996, italics mine).

Her remarks illustrate the integrated and complex understanding of place conveyed during the storytelling event, including the spiritual and emotional dimension. She explains the sense of "belonging" that is cultivated in the contemporary storytelling event space, describing it as "that place in your heart." The contemporary Whitehorse storyteller should simultaneously have an awareness of his or her place and the place of their listeners as the event unfolds.

Louise's view of place and opening an event resolved my concern with my own identity and culture during the project. Her sense of place and approach to retelling Yukon traditional oral narrative, like Emma's advice, stresses the telling of oral narrative "in a good manner," with respect as the most important issue to consider. Her explanation grounded in place contextualised my position during the project and the retelling of traditional stories from another culture. This awareness of place - geographical, historical, personal, physical and spiritual - that comes with the experience of oral narrative (traditional and contemporary) can enrich the Whitehorse primary curriculum.

Community

The second phase of the project focused on the development of a hybrid, double-voiced community identity within the context of the Whitehorse classroom community. The objective of the second phase of the project was to develop a hybrid consciousness reflective of the cultural diversity of the contemporary Whitehorse community. This was accomplished through the telling of contemporary Whitehorse oral narratives. I was hopeful during the second phase that a new sense of community identity rooted in a contemporary and localised oral tradition would evolve.

Many Whitehorse storytellers were introduced to the classroom communities during the second phase of the project. They told oral narratives involving aspects of their personal and cultural experiences in the Whitehorse community. Each community teller had varied ways of telling but their narratives collectively articulated a double-voicedness reflecting the hybridity of the contemporary Whitehorse community.

Storytelling Relationships: A Shift in My Position

Technology permeates the social fabric of a localised community and the perceptions of community identity in the classroom. It educates children to the "boundless" nature of the cyber-community, defeating their capacity as social listeners, making them what Joe Sheridan has described as "global village idiots" (1996: 11). Within the context of a technological community one no longer needs to engage in direct human communication. The primary-school aged child educated in such an abstract technological space and sense of time becomes

preoccupied with living in the here and now, whereas the contemporary oral narratives of their local community create an intricate, hybrid and double-voiced, web of understanding. This technological context precludes the forgetfulness of the time continuum (the past reflective of the present and essential to the comprehension of the future) as children experience reality as an ever-present moment (Gatto 1992:27).

Postman articulates how learning foundational knowledge and the concept of a relationship is fostered through time. He writes, "we help students to see that knowledge is a stage in human development, with a past and a future" (Postman 1995: 125). Different from the internet and television, an oral narrative tradition creates an educational space for children in the real present where they are asked to participate in direct human communication. During the storytelling event space they create relationships with one another as tellers and listeners. The experience of a "*moment*" is committed to memory and reflected on. An oral narrative tradition is given a new and relevant "home" within the Whitehorse primary classroom as the event is respected by its community of listeners as a habitual part and subject in their curriculum.⁴¹

As the second phase of the project commenced, I noted a *shift* in my position and in the nature of my relationships I shared with the two classroom communities. I was now an active member of the classroom communities included in the exchange and sharing of day-to-

41 Sean Kane reflects in *Wisdom of the Mythtellers*, on "... the storytelling act that is the seed-bed for new stories"(1994:200).

day oral narratives.⁴² This less formal storytelling discourse and exchange represented the establishment of an embodied relationship reflective of my ethnomethodology of place and the activity of being a member of a community (Said 1978:10). It also signified a different sense of time established in the storytelling event space, a time for exchange and listening. We, the two classroom communities, were collectively identifying and building the foundations of a hybrid community identity within the Whitehorse primary curriculum.

The Personal

The third phase of the project, the personal, focused on the two Whitehorse primary classroom communities' oral narratives. During the personal phase the children were asked to become the storytellers. They were encouraged to develop and share their personal oral narratives. This transfer to the role of teller allowed the childrens' voice to be enacted within the actual curriculum. The objective of the third phase was to cultivate the childrens' hybrid consciousness and to have them recognise their personal oral narrative as an integral and valued part of their primary educational experience.

42 Kane notes in relation to day-to-day oral narrative: "... one can appreciate some of its [the storytelling acts] resilience by studying the oral traditions of popular culture, and schoolyard" (1994:186).

Bringing Meaning: The Personal Exchange

The personal oral narrative is a "crucial learning resource" (Plumwood in Jickling 1995:81). Its inclusion in the Whitehorse primary classroom curriculum represents a *shift* in Yukon primary curriculum development. As the classroom community came to utilise the contemporary storytelling event space in its curriculum, it represented a site of exchange through an oral narrative discourse and renegotiation of the authority of the classroom. Postman stresses that *we* are the "word weavers," that *we* create our own educational realities (1995:87). An oral narrative discourse restructures our perceptions of curriculum and authority in the classroom, and "moves away from questions about social structure and social behaviour and toward questions of symbols and meaning" (Cruikshank in Dyck 1993:137).

Personal oral narrative provided the opportunity for a hybrid, double-voiced exchange in that "moment" and space created in the Whitehorse classroom. The cultivation of hybrid consciousness involves recognition and understanding of the complicated patterning and learning present during the contemporary storytelling event. First, it involves recognition of the exchange and dialogue through a storytelling as a mediation discourse of authority and culture. Secondly, then it involves "learning to pay attention to participate deeply on a continuous level of *personal awareness*" (Heidlebaugh, 1995, italics mine). The personal phase's objective was to encourage the children as tellers and to attempt to create and generate an integrated awareness of self and other in taking on the role of teller. This, as Postman says, "may be the greatest story untold. In school" (1995:87).

The experience of relating personal oral narrative brings to children a true

understanding of what it means to create a "cultural cosmology" (Reitz 1988: 183-4). The children's personal oral narratives were accented by their identities and cultures. The personal oral narrative once uttered, brings a new understanding of each participating, "other" showing how the personal life story is an embodied expression of self. The storytelling project creates a new and contemporary oral narrative tradition teaching the skill of how to imagine other worlds. The experience of relating personal oral narrative during a "storytelling festival," which marked the end of the storytelling project, offered a time and space for the children to voice their own sense of hybrid consciousness.

Chapter Five: Analysis and Reflections of a Storytelling Curriculum Model Project

A mythology, therefore, is the guiding force behind each culture. It is the dynamic core of its life. Societies like those of the twentieth century lack the cohesion and fulfilment of earlier times ... (Broadhurst 1995:13).

Place: Kwaday Dan Kenji

The dominant society, still firmly in control of the political and administrative apparatus, the education system, and the economy, has yet to reach a consensus on the value of sharing power with the Yukon Indian population (Coates 1991: 248).

Retelling Yukon traditional oral narrative sets the tone for a learning model reflective of place. To generate an affective grasp of the educational value of Yukon traditional oral narrative with the children during the first phase of the project we took them out into the very environment the retellings portrayed. Accordingly, the two classrooms went on a day trip to a place called Kwaday Dan Kenji (*Long Ago People's Place* in Southern Tutchone) at the end of the first place phase of the project. Kwaday Dan Kenji is located two kilometres south of Champagne off the Old Alaska Highway (Km 1565.5). As we drove beyond Whitehorse city limits in late October the weather changed. The Coastal Mountains that run parallel to the old Alaska Highway were covered in snow.

Meta Gage, Harold Johnson and their family have been living and working at Kwaday Dan Kenji creating an experience of how people lived long ago, "... prior to the arrival of European influences, before explorers, fur traders, missionaries, and the gold rush" ("Yukon

Anniversaries Commission Newsletter," 1996). Harold Johnson describes the traditional camp:

With the help of Elders and relatives the family has worked to create a traditional camp setting from thousands of years ago, prior to non-Native contact. The camp is designed to share with guests a small portion of the rich history and culture of the First Nations people of the Yukon. The camp was recreated to go back in time and represent a traditional summer and winter shelter used by First Nations people while hunting and gathering. Southern Tutchone people were nomadic and moved with the seasons and animal patterns. Camps were established for fishing, hunting, trapping and fall berry gathering. The harshness of the Yukon mandated the survival skills needed by the first peoples to survive the harsh and unkind winters. Native people learned to use the gifts given by the Earth for shelter, clothing and food (YACN,1996).

When I initially met with Harold and Meta to discuss the day trip with the children involved in the project, it became evident all students of the Whitehorse territorial school system would benefit from the experience of Kwaday Dan Kenji. The experience of this traditional camp is vital to understanding an "other" historical perspective of the Territory when the Yukon oral tradition thrived as an essential method for educating. *The Long Ago People's Place* provides a context of that particular way of life. Kwaday Dan Kenji is located where the Coastal Mountains meet the Saint Elias range, and sits at the entrance of the world heritage Kluane National Park. Meta reflected on the camp's geography, describing it as "a place of activity" (Gage, 1996). Sixty mile meadows (mile sixty, Old Alaska Highway) is a place where the trails and pathways of rabbit, caribou and moose converge. It was traditionally and historically known as the "meeting place," a place where people gathered and exchanged in times of need

(for example during times of low food supply). Today, it is a site of negotiation between Aboriginal and non-Native world-views and, of the historical renegotiation of Yukon First Nations traditional culture and knowledge.

Children raised in the contemporary Whitehorse urban community are presented with a tangible encounter with the way of life that Aboriginal people of the Yukon, southeast Alaska and northwest British Columbia endured for centuries. Their way of life was radically altered by the "second rush," the construction of the Alaska Highway in 1942-43 (Cruikshank 1990: 11). Mrs. Sidney describes the second wave or rush:

After the Alaska Highway came, everything stopped - kids go to school ... they don't talk Indian anymore ... Everyone bought cars after the highway came (Sidney in Cruikshank 1990: 135).

Kwaday Dan Kenji also provides the Whitehorse student with a context for understanding the hybrid reality that people of Yukon First Nations descent have historically experienced.

The Cold

Meta's greatest concern with the day trip involved the cold and its consequences. From her perspective, Whitehorse is a very different place from the *Long Ago People's Place*. She repeated more than once, "I know what it means to be cold" (Gage, 1996). The children on the day trip were physically removed from their urban educational frame of reference. Many were dressed improperly for a day in the bush, wearing city street shoes, suggesting the reality of the Yukon winter is not fully realised inside the boundaries of the Whitehorse community and primary classroom.

Seeing the children with wet, cold feet sitting by the stove reminded Meta of the cold she knew growing up in the bush, where people spend much of their time and energy just trying to stay warm. Children who live in a place where it is winter most of the year should be educated with the skills to survive in a cold reality. This knowledge is remembered in the traditional stories. Meta and Harold both felt that aside from the cold factor the day trip was very successful. They explained, "When children are cold, they are uncomfortable and you cannot expect them to learn things in a new way" (Gage and Johnson, 1996). We initially discussed the possibility of Meta and Harold coming into the classroom at the end of the first phase and bringing articles from camp along with a slide presentation. But the meeting place is an experience in itself. The children could not have had this experience unless they crossed the boundary of Whitehorse into the bush and the cold. Kwaday Dan Kenji is an example of what Native Alaskan, Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley describes as "clearly *shifting* toward an emphasis on providing education in the culture, rather than education about the culture" (1997: 20, italics mine). His suggestion of a shifting echoes Cruikshank.

Kathryn Millar described the shift in educational methods she observed during the day trip to Kwaday Dan Kenji. Her reflection affirms the childrens' affective grasp of Yukon traditional oral narrative with the experience of the traditional camp. The day trip initiated a fusing of traditional and contemporary educational cultures:

Did you know that on our field trip there was an example of it? These kids sort of have a foot in both cultures [Yukon First Nations and non-Native]. There was the grandmother, Rachel, building a dog shelter. The kids wanted to help her but she wouldn't let them. She said, "No, you watch while I do it and you will learn how to do it." And some of them couldn't wait till the end. I figured they thought they had it. They knew how to do it and being independent, adventuresome guys ... [they were] a mixture of Native and non-Native. They were off and they were making their shelter. It was great. They couldn't wait. They had to start (Millar, Appendix One).

Kwaday Dan Kenji contextualised the storytelling event as a discursive site for crossing boundaries (educational, gender and cultural).⁴³ An integrated understanding of place and an open-mindedness to encounters of difference (landscapes, educational environments and cultures) resulted from Yukon traditional oral narrative retellings and the day trip. An historically double-voiced perspective of place was acknowledged in the Whitehorse primary classroom during the first phase of the project.

Curious Transformation

Tololwa Mollel, the Governor-General's Award-winning children's author and storyteller, comments:

I consider ... curiosity a weakness and strength. So if there's any message, its that it is a human ... strength to be curious and to cross boundaries (1996: 29).

43 Millar's reflection also touches on the traditional Aboriginal woman's role as educator and transmitter of historical and cultural knowledge of place (Coates 1991: 6)

The children involved in the project were given the opportunity to cross their urban-educational boundary into an experiential- educational environment out in the bush. "They are so curious!", Fern Johnstone exclaimed after the day trip to Kwaday Dan Kenji, surprised by her students' curiosity. Meta and Harold were impressed by the number of questions generated by this particular day trip. They reflected:

... in the past, while we have had many school visits, we did not realize the potential of how these visits are a way to generate in children a greater connection to the Territory (Gage and Johnson, 1996).

The questions revealed there to be an excitement toward learning about Yukon First Nations history and its traditional perspective of place. Kwaday Dan Kenji is in effect an oral narrative educational site. Everyone who visits the meeting place comes away with something different, like a story working over a listener's memory.

Meta explained, "by engaging Whitehorse city children at *A Long Ago People's Place* they experience a transformation"(Gage, 1996). She believes children undergo a transition at Kwaday Dan Kenji from one world and way of thinking to another hybrid way of thinking. Harold and Meta see the project as a progressive step *away* from the current presentation and integration of Yukon First Nations curriculum in the Whitehorse primary classroom, toward a holistic approach grounded in place. They described it as, "something growing in the landscape, it emerges and will continue to as time goes by"(Gage and Johnson, 1996).

Meta commented, "children of this generation raised on the internet, will differ from others in that they have not, will not, develop the faculty of reflection" (Gage,1996).

Consequently, she fears children educated within the technological meta-narrative will have little comprehension of afterthought, remorse or guilt. She worries the reflection capabilities will be lost. Meta calls this "a loss in focus" (Gage, 1996). There is a loss of focus as to what is fundamental in primary education. We move in primary education toward a virtual place with little reflective connection to the close and real places around us.

Kwaday Dan Kenji contextualised the children's traditional oral narrative understanding of place. Objects described in the traditional oral narratives were there to be seen, held, and used in their traditional context. The shelters and tents described in story could be entered and fully experienced. Upon entering the moose-skin tent, one could immediately feel a barrier from the cold, snow, and wind. We all watched the smoke rising from the central fireplace and felt the warmth penetrate our cold bodies. The scent of freshly-laid spruce bows mixed with the wood-fire smoke still lingers in my memory.

Many of the children did not want to leave the smells and warmth of the tent. Some had never been inside a structure of such workmanship, made with such care, respect and attention to detail. It thoroughly captured the home *Tha dah dii vah* (phonetic spelling) the midget-boy lived in. This image comes from Louise Profeit-Leblanc's retelling of *The Boy Who Went to the Moon*.⁴⁴ This traditional narrative traces the life of a mythical moon-boy born to a Gwich'in family. He brings the caribou to his people when they face starvation, conceivably possible to imagine taking place at the "meeting place." Harold had also

44 As retold to her by Mary Vittrekwa, an Elder of the Takudh Gwich'in of the Blackstone Region, from Fort McPherson (Appendix One).

reconstructed a corralled fence structure - much like one described during the hunt sequence in this story. The camp provided a rich, tangible layer to the listeners' perspective of place. Sean Kane suggests that mythic discourse reminds its listeners of the customs of boundary (*Wisdom of the Mythtellers*, 1994). He compares mythic boundary to boundary in biological nature (Kane 1994: 103). Kane's elucidation of boundary acknowledges the existence of a mutual balancing between realities or worlds, requiring a give and a take. Harold spoke of how the camp attempts to re-enact a place lived in by nomadic peoples. To nomadic peoples, hunters and gathers the concept of boundary often marked " a sacred site where the being of power dwells" (Kane 1994: 102).

The smoke-hole is a significant boundary site traditionally observed by Yukon First Nations. *The Boy Who Stayed With the Fish* describes the smoke-hole as a site of transformation (Sidney in Cruikshank 1990:75-78). This traditional oral narrative recounts the experience of a human boy and his family learning how to properly respect the fish. The boy disrespects the fish and is then taken by them to their world, to learn what it means to be a fish. When the boy returns to his parents' fishing camp the following summer as a fish-boy and is captured by them, the shaman, "Indian doctor" in their community, instructs his parents to: put the fish-boy in "a nice clean white skin" (Sidney in Cruikshank 1990: 78). After eight days of fasting the fish-boy is transformed back to his human form carrying with him the knowledge of how to respect the fish.

American anthropologist Frederica de Laguna has extensively researched the Aboriginal oral histories of Yukon and Alaska (*Under Mount Saint Elias*, 1972; *The Tlingit*

Indians, 1991; *Tales of the Dena*, 1995). She recounts the passage and transformation at the site of the smoke-hole and how traditionally it signified respect for the animal spirit world (de Laguna 1995: 38). The children witnessed an actual smoke-hole within the traditional oral narrative context at Kwaday Dan Kenji during the first phase of the project.

In the story *The Boy Who Stayed with the Fish*, the child's bodily transformation accompanies his parents' respecting and honouring of the smoke-hole boundary. The notion of boundary reflects the bounded ecological relationship Yukon First Nations traditionally felt with the animal spirit world. Yukon First Nations were reliant on the animal world for sustenance in order to survive. Their cosmology required them to pause and reflect upon their place in the world and their relationship with the animals of the "other" realm. The need to honour and fulfil promises to the moon-boy or to respect the fish are required in these narratives in order - to maintain the balance of life. In *The Boy Who Went to the Moon*, the people do not fulfil their promise to the moon-boy who is representative of the caribou spirit, and so he leaves their village, taking the knowledge of the caribou with him. The parents of the fish-boy pay homage and fast to help transform their son back into his human form.

Both narratives are examples of the traditional oral narratives of the nomadic peoples of the Territory. In bringing the children to a place that re-enacts this way of life, we engage them in an experience which fully begins to round out the spiritual history and heritage of place and an understanding of a traditional oral community.

Yukon Reality

When we move beyond Whitehorse city limits we must remember we are in bear country.

Kane warns us that in myth generally:

Beyond this point is a zone where ordinary human thinking cannot go. You must shift to another kind of thinking. You must think like an animal now. Enter at your peril (Kane 1994: 113).

One need only recall the incident during the summer of 1996 when a woman was mauled to death by a bear in Kluane National Park, or the housing incident in the community of Mayo the fall of 1996 where two bears completely destroyed a human structure in search of food. We must be prepared for the truth of the Yukon reality. We should remember the risk we take as humans encroaching on the Territory that has been the bears' since the distant "myth time"(de Laguna 1995: 39). They are as unpredictable a set of beings as ourselves.

The nature of human and bear unpredictability is described well in *The Girl Who Married The Grizzly Bear* (Sidney, 1977). The girl in this narrative is tricked, and then stolen by a bear. Thus she is not required to be respectful of the bear in his world. Traditional oral narrative continually returns to the importance of respect (Morrow and Schneider 1995:1-7).

The traditional stories honour the value of respecting "other," mythic worlds (i.e. the animal spirit world), we, in contemporary society have forgotten. Traditional oral narratives, therefore, are at once boundaries and sites of negotiation between these worlds and the Aboriginal and non-Native world-views. Their retellings in the classroom educate listeners to place and how to locate oneself as a listener on the boundary and see both human and extra-human sides. This is one of the power of perspectives made conscious in and through

a storytelling discourse that uses indigenous material, even in translation.

Whitehorse is often referred to as "little Vancouver." This naming acts as another reminder of place. Too quickly we forget where we are. Dillard's mindlessness is different from the forgetfulness that results in urban dwelling. We are at a loss, in Meta's words "a loss in focus."

Meta recollects the mediation process between two world-views (Aboriginal and Non-Native) in her own oral narrative and memory of the day trip. It is a narrative of a pine tree. The little tree kept getting covered by feet. She asked the children:

How would you feel if you got run over? What are the trees' feelings? By association one can understand how the tree would feel (Gage, 1996).

This is her way and evidence of her shifting into a critical and hybrid consciousness embodying an integrated knowledge of place. Kwaday Dan Kenji provides an affective grasp of place creating a common culture that can be shared by its community of listeners. To answer the question - what will draw our children back "home?" (Moore 1995:8).

Zichan answered: When spiritual beings have a place to return to, they need not become malicious. I have allowed them a place to return (Zuoqiu Ming in Bringhurst 1995: 26).

Harold and Meta have made a place to return to, for all us, Yukon First Nations and other.

Community: Beyond Technology

The contemporary oral narratives of a community reveal its social fabric - the web of relationships that bind and hold its listeners together. They, collectively, are a tradition, the combined expression of their intellectual thought and cultural knowledge. The sense of identity nurtured in the contemporary Whitehorse community asserts hybrid consciousness. The contemporary storytelling event lends something to the continual recreation of a localised community identity in light of a technological cyber-community. It cultivates listeners and knowledge of respect as it relies on direct human communication. Listeners must take the time and make an effort to listen respectfully in order to comprehend a community's collective utterances through a storytelling discourse. The hybrid reality of the Whitehorse community is evident in its contemporary oral tradition.

As members of contemporary society, we, are only beginning to comprehend the vast shifts in human interaction renegotiated by the new information technologies. Do educators stop to question the amount of attention given to the computer and television in primary education? Technology has moved beyond a "tool" classification within the classroom to become an "expectation." Technological expectations assimilate children into what I consider a remote place, "beyond technology." ⁴⁵ The second phase of the project involved the development of hybrid consciousness and a local community identity in the two Whitehorse primary classrooms through the contemporary oral narratives of the Whitehorse community.

⁴⁵ Remote is derived from *remotus*, meaning to remove, slight, aloof - not friendly (*American College Dictionary* 1951:1025).

The first phase of the project, "Place:Kwaday Dan Kenji," suggests the structure of learning introduced with a storytelling discourse and traditional oral narrative as integrative of place, experiential and transforming. The technological meta-narrative deters this simultaneous kind of learning. The transmission of information in technological-framed learning is premised by a risky illusion that the individual learner possesses the *personal power* to access all knowledge. Knowledge acquisition and comprehension within an oral narrative-framed learning is not readily attainable "at the end of your finger tips." Rather its comprehension requires patience for its method of educating occurs over time, through repetition. Oral narrative-framed learning happens slowly when the listener is ready to comprehend. Unlike the television or internet, you cannot surf an oral narrative.

The Television/Technological Window

Children in the primary classroom are educated in the social dynamics of a "technological monoculture" (Berry 1993: 148). In an editorial on literacy and technology, Robyn Sarah articulates how television teaches a *certain* set of habits and how "as a society we have chosen *our habit*" (1996: A26, italics mine). Evidence of this, our habit, was reflected in the language and speech of the storytelling used by the children during the community phase of the project. The majority of their social interactions were inspired by the technological meta-narrative reflecting the initial formation of a cyber-community identity. The oral narratives they communally shared centered on what they watched on television. This community identity stresses who and what you watch, not who and where you are.

Technology's influences over the Whitehorse primary classroom present a difficulty I had as a listener and researcher during the second phase of the project, attempting to trace the childrens' cultural distinctions reflective of a localised community identity. Television culture is "boundless." It transcends boundaries of place and community (age, culture and geography). Like most others across Canada, the childrens' window of perception in the primary classroom is in front of a screen. Television culture in Whitehorse and elsewhere transcends the government's mandate of Multiculturalism and erases regional and local difference.

The childrens' voiced disinterest during the second phase of the project reinforced the importance of remembering their perception of a social, communal reality fostered through technology. Both teachers offered the following critical advice with regard to the project. Fern reasoned: "You must consider the childrens' situation." And Kathryn urged: "I think less time. It's too long a span all morning" (Appendix One).⁴⁶

American educator and author John Taylor Gatto articulates how educators actuate the mentality of techno-culture in the classroom (*Dumbing Us Down*, 1992). Like Said's *personal dimension* and development of a critical consciousness, Gatto is also critical of his role as an educator in the contemporary North American classroom. He writes: "I teach the unrelating of everything, an infinite fragmentation, the opposite of cohesion"(1992: 4). He identifies there to be little to no continuity tying subjects and disciplines together, likening

46 The contemporary storytelling event during the project in the two Whitehorse primary classrooms intially were a three hour morning session. But as the project progressed these events lessened in length, varying from one and half to two hour sessions.

curricula to a television sitcom. Children are asked to sit for half-hour periods of time and then respond quickly to what they have just learned. Then, they move onto something completely different and repeat a similar pattern. The narratives that are most often repeated in the classroom are technological. This repeated patterning conditions children to a *certain* educational community meta-narrative. As such, the technological meta-narrative dictates the patterned authority of the classroom community.

Question: For teaching kids, you need all day, schools are not like that. Your time is all cut up. As a teacher, should I fight this "cutting up" of school time? Is it better to have the whole day than to teach reading at nine, then math at ten?

Elder, Marge Jackson of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nation was asked this question at the conference, "Environment, Ethics and Education," held at Yukon College in Whitehorse, the summer of 1995. She responded:

You should use one day to learn one thing, not too many things. They cannot learn that way. If you teach five different kinds in one day. What way are they going to learn more? If you want to teach kids, teach just one thing on one day and not too many things, then they can learn that way (Jackson in Jickling 1996: 38).

Her perspective on teaching and learning is grounded in Yukon First Nations traditional oral methods of educating. This model of education stresses focus and concentration on one narrative at a time. Her commentary on the current educational community's meta-narrative implies a universal disrespect of children by trying to teach them too much in too a short time. Children exposed to the stories of their locale begin to identify and feel a connection to it as

they come to know members of their community. Telling these oral narratives habitually in the classroom introduces another language and speech into the classroom discourse.

The contemporary storytelling space works through the "loss of one kind of truth ... [which is] larger and more comprehensive of mind" (Reitz 1988: 183-4). An authentic human encounter and method of communication is preserved with a contemporary oral tradition in the classroom, focusing childrens' sense of community identity on their local culture. This experience *shifts* the community of listeners' consciousness to a hybrid understanding of themselves both on a communal and personal level.

Collective Voice Encounter

The Whitehorse community was the focus of the second phase of the project. During the community phase, we moved from concepts of place (looking behind us and developing a knowledge and understanding of Yukon oral tradition as a model of education) to the present (looking at ourselves and concentration on the contemporary community, the people and voices of Whitehorse). What are their stories? How do their voices contribute to the development of hybrid consciousness of community?

Louise Profeit-Leblanc's traditional narrative expertise sets the precedent for all further pedagogical storytelling-related research and work in the Territory today (Cruikshank 1988: 5). She believes the storyteller in the classroom provides more than just an educational experience: "A storyteller is like a guest you invite over to your home"(Profeit-Leblanc, 1996). He or she is a whole person and that whole person should be recognized within the

classroom context. Wendell Berry compares community to a household. He writes, "it is the household of its place" (Berry 1993: 155). His household analogy translated well to the storytelling event space created during the second phase of the project. The children were asked to respect their guests, the Whitehorse storytellers, who told their contemporary Whitehorse oral narratives.

Luc Laferte has been telling stories since he was a young child. He was the second Whitehorse storyteller invited into the two classrooms during the second phase of the project. In the contemporary Whitehorse community he represents the collective voice of "les francophones Yukonnaises."⁴⁷ He explains his role as a Whitehorse storyteller:

The role I'm trying to fulfil is to explain ... teach people and tell people about the French Canadian in Canada, especially French Canadians from Quebec. That's where I'm from ... There are historical reasons for this and they are very well explained through story. And also [to] explain how peoples' character is formed through history and through the nature. So the people in my stories are always influenced by nature and by the political setting from Quebec (Laferte, Appendix One).

Laferte reveals the hybrid consciousness he has developed as a storyteller, reflecting on his integrated definition of place that includes elements of the historical, political and geographical. As well, he is aware how the French language and Yukon French identity in

47 An interesting feature of the contemporary Whitehorse community is its growing francophone community. They have a community centre and thriving population. École Emilie Tremblay, the first completely francophone school in Whitehorse, is evidence of this healthy and prospering French-Canadian community.

Whitehorse maintains a political component. His presence as a storyteller in the Whitehorse school system renegotiates the perceptions of *les francophones Yukonnaises* in relation to the larger Canadian historical memory. The potential for a heated political discourse between the Whitehorse First Nations community and *les francophones Yukonnaises* is possible.⁴⁸

Laferte told the children a narrative of French-Canadian origin entitled, *La Bête à Sept Tête, The Seven-Headed Dragon* (Legaré 1981: 211-216). The narrative follows 'Ti Jean (Petit Jean), the classic French-Canadian folklore hero, on his quest to defeat a seven headed dragon. 'Ti Jean uses his wit to overcome the beast. Luc repeatedly revealed his hybrid consciousness when reflecting why he chose this particular story. He explained:

I think children who are *smaller* can respect him ['Ti Jean and how he uses his brain to solve his problems] for this. Half of these kids were from First Nations. We don't hear every day on the media that First Nations are supers and excellent people. They are sometimes in a bad situation, and I think they [Yukon First Nations children] feel good hearing somebody who's small and not too strong, you know, winning against all odds (Laferte, Appendix One).

Laferte refers to the historical and cultural authority construct of the colonial narrative. His choice of phrasing is perceptive.

48 I have heard many conversations from both members of these communities relating their views and prejudiced opinions with regard to the treatment and favouritism they believe given to the respective other culture and identity group by way of federal transfer payments in the Yukon. L'Association Francophones Yukonnaises' community centre and école Emilie Tremblay have both received federal funding. There has been some controversy surrounding this issue in the Whitehorse community. As well members of the francophone community have openly expressed their prejudice against members of the Whitehorse First Nations community, especially in relation to the on-going land claim negotiation process.

Laferte's contemplations on community identity and the role he plays in the contemporary Whitehorse community as a storyteller leads him to define community as "people who have values in common" (Appendix One). His definition includes people of other cultures but they must be engaged in shared activities. His notion of a community experience is reflective of the collaborative, communal authority fostered in the contemporary storytelling event. Laferte is actively engaged in the contemporary Whitehorse community by creating double-voiced (English/French), communal and shared activities for children (Aboriginal, Francophone-Yukonnaises and non-Native) in the Whitehorse territorial school system.

Mary Sloan is a high school Dramatic Arts and English teacher at F.H. Collins High School in Whitehorse. She has developed a course in storytelling/oral narrative in conjunction with the MAD (Music, Art and Dance) program she also coordinates. Her course examines storytelling as a performance art in relation to the Yukon oral tradition. The storytelling course's development stems from Ms. Sloan's interest in theatre. She states:

I think all playwrights are storytellers [and that] ... storytelling is an original form of art. Storytelling is the most basic form of theatre. So it's a really good place to start with kids who are interested in doing some kind of theatre but are maybe afraid of using lines or having to be a character - you just sit and tell a story (Sloan, Appendix One).

The course developed out of her students expressed interest with storytelling as performance. Louise Profeit-Leblanc assisted Ms. Sloan in the course's development the fall of 1996. I collaborated with Ms. Sloan and her highschool storytelling students during the second phase of the project.

The stories the high school storytellers told during the community phase related to

their experience and perception of the Whitehorse community. The high-school storytellers visited the case-study classrooms on two occasions. During the first they told their contemporary oral narratives as community storytellers. Their narratives were incorporated into the curriculum of their high-school storytelling course as an assignment to be "performed." Their second visit to the case-study classrooms took place during the third phase of the project. Their oral narratives embodied elements of their experience, culture and identity. These oral narratives exhibit how a community experience and identity is formed when members exchange their stories. Mary Sloan and her high-school students' involvement demonstrate how a storytelling discourse may be used to dissolve the authority of "technological monoculture" in the Whitehorse primary classroom (Berry 1993:148). Both the Whitehorse primary classroom and Whitehorse high-school classroom experienced the creation of a contemporary oral tradition reflective of their community.

The visits of the high-school storytellers illustrate a way to have primary and high-school classrooms come alive with community involvement and local identity formation. Mary Sloan expresses how the high-school storytellers experience was different than "school," saying that it achieved true *education*:

I hadn't realized what *education* was. I've gone to a lot of in-services [professional development workshops] and heard a lot of people talk about experiential education and tried to do thematic units in my English class that would be relevant to the kids. And it wasn't until I got out of the school that I realized what relevance is. Doing a unit on race relations, as well intentioned, and as good as that is for opening up kids' minds, isn't experiential at all. It's a whole different thing that maybe makes school a little more interesting. But this [in reference to the community experience of her high school students], rather than just school, this is an *education* (Sloan, Appendix One, italics mine).

She believes the experience of the second phase of the project to be reflective of shifted educators' perceptions of oral narrative use in the Whitehorse primary classroom toward hybrid consciousness. It created a learning space for both tellers and listeners, teachers and students.

The Bird in a Cage

The evolution of a contemporary oral tradition through a storytelling discourse was evident during the second phase of the project reflective of the local community. One of the community high-school storytellers from Mary Sloan's class had been a primary student of Kathryn Millar's in Ross River.⁴⁹ His presence and experience in the Whitehorse primary classroom, and his contemporary oral narrative, led to Kathryn recollecting an oral narrative

⁴⁹ Ross River is an outer community in the Territory predominantly Selkirk First Nations (Northern Tutchone), situated where the Pelly River meets the Ross River.

involving this teller. She described him as "a bird in a cage."⁵⁰ His role as a community storyteller in her Elijah Smith primary classroom involved memory and an emotional element revealing her concern for him. This particular storyteller also related a story of his memory and experiences as a student in Millar's primary classroom. He described the same big oversized chair she now had in her Whitehorse classroom up in Ross River: "It was the same chair I can remember Mrs. Millar sitting in when she told me stories," Jackson reflected. And now, he sat in it while he told his story to her primary classroom of students. The circulation of these narratives is evidence of the possibility of a localised, caring educational community expressed within the oral tradition.

This community storyteller's oral narrative was entitled, "*Why dogs smell each other's butts*"(Jackson, Appendix One). He explained he had heard a joke about this canine custom and thought it would be a good story. When he first presented his idea for his oral narrative to Ms. Sloan and myself, we were unsure of its relevance to the objective of the second phase of the project and questioned its appropriateness in the curriculum. But his narrative proved us wrong. Mary Sloan commented: "It was so obviously a story that he hadn't just made it up to be crude. It was funny and it made sense" (Sloan, Appendix One).

Charlie Jackson's voice and telling captures an understanding of double-voicedness.

⁵⁰ Kathryn remembers seeing this community high-school storyteller as a child "suffocating and losing his voice because of the quality of the shaft he had been sent down"(Millar, 1996). She is referring to a canary sent down a mine shaft to judge air quality. Her comments were made in reference to the child's family and home life that led to the certain upheaval of his school life.

His telling was reminiscent in style to that of the Elder Stanley Jonathan of the Selkirk First Nation, whom I heard tell at the 1995 Yukon International Storytelling Festival. The voice of this Elder was hybridly uttered by Jackson. Ms. Sloan reflected: "when people tell stories it allows a different kind of voice to come through" (Sloan, Appendix One). Her comments exhibit the Bakhtinian notion of hybrid utterance. Jackson's narrative illustrates a transference of oral cultural knowledge contained in Yukon traditional oral narrative. He translated it into his contemporary educational situation and the relating of a contemporary oral narrative in the Whitehorse classroom. Jackson's experience as a community storyteller provided a vehicle for him to gain self-confidence in himself in relation to his heritage and culture. In the spirit of exchange in the contemporary storytelling event space, his narrative also provided a way for Yukon First Nations children to have confidence in their heritage and culture through identification with his contemporary oral narrative.

Cruikshank elaborates regarding how an audience in the context of the contemporary storytelling event signifies the "traditional" role of the community of listeners. They initiate the exchange and development today of hybrid consciousness:

It involves not simply a narrator but also an audience, and that narrator and audience both change at different points in time and in different circumstances, giving any one story the potential range of meanings that all good stories have (Cruikshank in Morrow and Schneider 1995: 57).

Sloan's commentary during the second phase enforces the development and *shifting* into hybrid consciousness when she describes how the audience changed the whole dynamics of the high-school storytellers' presentations. It was not until their oral narratives were given an

audience that they truly came alive:

The stories really came alive and the kids came alive and showed a degree of self-confidence that just amazed me - in those kids in particular. To give them an audience was just giving them the responsibility to keep that audience interested and it worked really well (Sloan, Appendix One).

The experience Mary Sloan had as an educator, teller and listener during the community phase of the project brought her to conclude: "I'm going to incorporate it [this type of oral narrative encounter] in the programs that I do next year" (Appendix One). The community phase of the storytelling project brought the community of Whitehorse into the Whitehorse primary classroom. The Whitehorse storytellers exchanged oral knowledge with the children creating a localised, contemporary oral tradition.

Personal: Bringing Story Into Being

How a culture conceives of imaginary beings is a clear indication of its conception of life, because it sets off the limits of what is imaginable (Varela 1992: 53).

At a conference in Whitehorse in the spring of 1997, Julie Cruikshank delivered a paper to the American Anthropological Association related to her current and on-going research in the Soviet Union. She posed the question: "Do people always want to tell their own story?" (Cruikshank, 1997). The focus of her inquiry is the contemporary and personal stories people tell. She locates personal oral narrative within a methodological framework of what these

stories tell us: who are we as a people in relation to where we come from (place, community and self). The third phase of the project recognized the personal oral narrative as instrumental to the Whitehorse primary-school aged child's development of place, community and self. Personal oral narrative invites children to become engaged in hybrid consciousness as they cross the boundary from listener to teller within the contemporary storytelling event.

As Varela suggests, perceptions of social reality for children are imaginable by what they communally share and derive meaning from, their *stories*. The formulation of a perception of self for the Whitehorse primary-school aged child is readily connected to the stories they hear, forming and shaping their identity as they come to tell their own. The personal stories invite children to utter their impressions of the world, in their own voice. Children, as students of a classroom, become consciously aware in this instance that their stories contribute to their own curriculum. This is the process of constructing personal hybrid consciousness. In taking on the role of storyteller, the children were given equal authority within their classroom community. As well they were engaged in an understanding of how the cultural dialogue and exchange process functions during the storytelling act. The children learned through their own storytelling discourse the relevance of listening and respect.

Emphasis was placed on the personal process of creating their own narratives rather than the end result of performing a "perfect" oral narrative. This stress on process was especially relevant in comparison to the flawless presentation of most technological narratives. The children's personal oral narratives, unlike technological narratives, reflect their tellers being, nuanced with a human quality of error.

The oral narratives and visits during the first two phases of the storytelling project established a tradition of oral narrative, a personalised and localised anthology of oral literature for the children (Reitz 1988:164). Their oral tradition prepared them for the third phase and the shift in knowledge construction similarly experienced by students of oral narrative and myth at the academic level (Cruikshank, 1990).

In the process of understanding a storytelling discourse and the hybrid consciousness it cultivates, it is essential to recognise the sacrifice of time and the personal self that is involved in the activity.⁵¹ This practice requires focus. Alice Carlick, a Yukon First Nations teacher in Lower Post, incorporates oral narrative, especially Yukon traditional oral narrative, into her elementary classroom curriculum. She defines the contemporary oral narrative as closely related to myth. Like Cruikshank's *shift*, Carlick expresses a similar shift in consciousness experienced by students of oral narrative (Cruikshank 1990:x). She writes in relation to oral narrative as myth: "... it has a sacred quality [where] ... messages are conveyed in symbolic form" (Carlick 1995:34). There is a keen sense of awareness and sensitivity in knowing how to listen and respect personal oral narrative. This practice teaches children the skill of how to negotiate cultural difference towards a personal acceptance of others.

The cognition of personal oral narrative is complex. The storytelling event presents listeners with a narrative that must be actively listened to and actively thought through in order to be made sense of. Louise Profeit-Leblanc explains how children bring themselves into

51 Time is commodified within the contemporary, "technological" context. As such, it is this researcher's opinion that personal time is perceived as a commodity which we negotiate.

being through oral narrative:

This is the wonderful thing too of a story. You can tell them [children] the story and just leave it. And they become the *beings* in the story. Then you let it come to them and settle in them and let them think and contemplate on the story (Profeit-Leblanc, 1996, italics mine).

As children come to tell and retell their personal oral narratives in their classroom community, the evolution of a contemporary personalised oral tradition is perceived. In the dialogue and exchange of personal oral narrative, childrens' personal frames of reference are accommodated within the curriculum.

The knowledge of self remains closely tied to the telling of story. If and when children do not bring themselves into being through their own oral narratives, then we witness the cultivation of a generation who do not know themselves or each other.⁵² The authoritative context created for children in the Whitehorse primary classroom by the colonial narrative and the social structuring of the technological meta-narrative must be challenged in primary curriculum in order to remember who we are as individual selves, having voices capable of creating our own sense of history, community and identity. To know one self and accept one self is detrimental to these narratives of authority's survival.

Children are taught in the formal classroom to sit in their desks, remain quiet, and not speak until spoken to. We can observe from this physical construct how the educational institution ossifies an archaic understanding: children are meant to be seen and not heard. The

52 "People who have no stories to tell, like stories that have no people to tell them, don't survive" (Bringhurst in Nyman 1995:xii).

storytelling event took place outside of the traditional desk formation. The children and storytellers would sit in a circle formation mirroring the traditional storytelling circle (Caduto and Bruchac 1985: 12). During the third phase, one of the two case-study classrooms needed to return to the desk formation. This spatial shift and return illustrated a resistance to the storytelling event space that we attempted to cultivate in their classroom.

In effect, the project removed the children from their familiar authoritative frame of reference, and asked them to consider and identify what it is that constructs their identity in the classroom. The existing curriculum in the Whitehorse primary classroom is a representation of its civil society, reflective of the authority maintained by the dominant political society. It cultivates hierarchies in facets of its civil society, like the classroom, dominated by a power relation of teacher as authoritarian figure to students. Thus, a respecting experience, like that introduced and nurtured during the contemporary storytelling event is not so easily cultivated within the "confines" of the Whitehorse primary classroom curriculum.

Constructing personal oral narrative engages children in the reflection process, delving deeper into identity formation and contributing to "life education." The storytelling event provides a space where the voiced expression of self can be uttered, without judgement or a bias of authority. There is no right or wrong "storyframe" complicating this learning experience. The praxis for learning is a continually emerging one and recognized in the relationships that arise as the stories are told, one after the other. Stories in this way become an intimate personal experience. Cruikshank refers to this social ambience as a "kind of cultural scaffolding" that needs to be put in place during the storytelling act, before intelligent

questions can be raised regarding oral narrative (in Morrow and Schneider 1995: 57). Her remarks remind me of the critical self-conscious process I have experienced over the course of writing this thesis and with the activity of becoming a member of a community (Said 1978:10). Keynote speaker at the Shepherd Lecture at Trent University in 1997, Professor William Howarth, enlightened his listeners as he outlined the disregard for the human element in the humanities today (Howarth, 1997). I believe we, as academic researchers, maintain the notion in our research that short periods of time allow us to understand an isolated group. I am afraid, though, that "my method of place" resulted in a paradox of place. The more time I spent with my case-study groups, the more I realized I was just beginning to know and understand them. Time, within the academic research time context, did not, nor could not, permit a proper completion of "my method of place" within the context of the project. By placing value on listening and respecting each other in primary education we can erect Cruikshank's "cultural scaffolding." Personal stories begin to impose a personal human pattern for understanding one another in a curriculum.

Hybrid Consciousness

Fern Johnstone stressed: "You should ask the children, do they really understand what you are trying to do. Story is it real?" (Appendix One). Kathryn Millar also isolated her concern with regard to the project, wondering if the stories were truly being heard by the children with the intent to develop hybrid consciousness. Millar said that the only way to judge if the children were getting something out of the stories was by observing their exchanges later. She

reflected:

I really expect to see some concrete transfer. I'd want to hear the child say, "Remember in that story when he said this is the way you should act?" I think kids are trained today to take things a *certain* way. I remember when Louise was telling a story and a woman had given birth to a child, and she had to go out to urinate and while she was out a man came in and stabbed the child to death. The kids just took it in. I know at my age, and maybe not being exposed to what kids are exposed to today, it would have been shocking and terrible to me. These kids were just looking and nodding their head and listening. They took it all in stride as if, yes these things happen. They seemed more excited when the hero of the story was on a big swing and he could have smashed into that cliff. That sort of touched a different cord to them. A different kind of violence. One that was more exciting. They were used to seeing, on TV (Millar, Appendix One, italics mine).

The third phase of the project examined the childrens' stories and how they reflect a perception of their identities. The personal phase provided the opportunity to listen to the children within the context of the storytelling ambience. Would their stories reveal a meaningful shift in perception, as both Carlick and Cruikshank suggest from their experience? Millar speaks of the difficulty of trying to answer this question affectively: " I think it would take longer than what we [she and I] are thinking of" (Appendix One).

During the second phase of the project I realised the childrens' window of perception was technologically mediated. This reality was important to remember as I proceeded during the third phase to listen to the childrens' personal oral narratives. The key to understanding and interpreting the childrens' oral narratives must be grounded in their context and setting (Finnegan 1992:28).

A participatory education was truly actualised during the third phase of the project when the children became engaged in the process of developing their personal oral narrative. This process commenced with each child developing a "storyframe." The "storyframe" is a concrete, physical object the children designed and created to "place" their personal stories in. It worked symbolically as a reference point: while telling, the child-teller could refer to it as she or he need to, like a narrative-map. The children brainstormed their "storyframes" with the high-school storytellers during their second visit to the two case study classrooms. The high-school storytellers worked with the children in small groups to develop each child's key ideas for their "storyframe."

Postman questions, "Is it unrealistic for older students to teach younger ones?" (1995: 100). The high-school storytellers' involvement during the second and third phase of the project contributed to the childrens' sense of a contemporary oral tradition, when and where the tellers are socially responsible for communicating through oral narrative educational knowledge. Their visits as community storytellers to the Whitehorse primary classroom contributed to the childrens' *shift away* from the familiar educational experience, like the experience of Kwaday Dan Kenji. Their collective involvement proved the value of having younger children learn from older students, and vice versa.

The third phase of the project engaged the children and taught them through the personal oral narrative experience the relevant importance of caring for their own educational experience. When children realise they are as responsible for their education as their fellow students and teachers, they demonstrate a concrete transfer of learning through oral

narrative. This model of education requires attentiveness and critical consciousness of the discourse, speech and language used. The children in the two Whitehorse primary classrooms created a space to locate the contemporary storytelling event in. They came to know this space as a part of their educational experience and as a place where they were respected and listened to. Likewise, in the reciprocation of a dialogue and exchange across the boundary of story, they came to respect and listen to others.

By the commencement of third phase of the project and with the childrens' familiarity with the storytelling space, the question of holding a storytelling festival in each classroom was considered. The decision-making process of the storytelling event space cannot be set, but arises as tellers and listeners interact. The storytelling act nurtures a collaborative, communal authority that mirrors the Aboriginal traditional decision-making process: "Only when action begins do the real learnings take place" (Alexander Band Enterprises in Cassidy and Bish 1989: 77). This is the true nature of learning during storytelling.

The ultimate goal of the project was for the children to work through the process of creating, then telling their personal oral narratives at a storytelling festival. One classroom was not prepared to do this. The series of incidents which led to this inevitable decision left me feeling very discouraged and hopeless for a time.⁵³ Yet this goal and my hopes of the research developed as expected through the other classroom and we accomplished a presentation of the childrens' personal storytelling at a festival to an audience of peers,

53 Again for reasons of respect these incidents are not included as a necessary part of the thesis' discussion because they are factors extrinsic to education.

teachers, administrators and parents. The failure and success of the storytelling festival in two separate classrooms leads me to conclude that each classroom community determines within itself, its community of listeners, the nature of the experiences they will have with storytelling as a curriculum component. I step away from this failure and success with the knowledge of my experience and the difficulties in introducing and cultivating a storytelling discourse within the formal construct of the classroom.

The Storytelling Festival

What happens when we mediate the classroom community with the child's voice? The following discussion elaborates on the storytelling festival encounter in one contemporary Whitehorse primary classroom during the third phase of the project. Many of the children were familiar with the idea of a storytelling festival from their experiences at the annual Yukon International Storytelling Festival. The children were encouraged to participate in the organization and performance of their storytelling festival. Some children, for various reasons, did not want to tell a story, so they helped with the organization of the festival instead, designing a program, "mc-ing," preparing refreshments for the presentation, handing out invitations, all the various production tasks crucial to making even a mini-storytelling festival happen. With these other tasks, emphasis was placed on their part in making the whole event happen.

The storytelling festival marked that time and place when Whitehorse primary children were creating their own cultural cosmology (Reitz 1988:183-4). In this situation the authority

of the classroom was reversed, with educators and parents becoming listeners.

Educators could unlearn, relearn and become critical of their educating environments. Personal oral narrative disrupts the authority of the classroom common language and culture. A storytelling festival can be perceived as a subversive activity challenging the social authority of the classroom construct with the teacher as the hierarchical representation of the parent and voice of authority within civil society.

When I tell stories to the children, I am taking on the social responsibility of the parent as educator. I prefer to tell stories to the parents, so that they can tell the stories to their children (Cook, 1997).

Objiway storyteller, Walter Cook's comments are problematic yet truthful because they illustrate the complicated nature of educating within the confines of our educational system and society. Parents do not have the time to parent and educate their children. As committed members of the educating community, we are left to examine the educational problems and find solutions.

When childrens' personal oral narratives are treated as something important and given a place in curriculum, then children feel important. They feel pride and value because what they have to say, their narrative and voice, are valued. Cruikshank furthers an understanding of the relevance of having children telling their personal oral narratives in the context of a formalised event:

The relationship between stories and social life is not a simple one: stories with a range of plots and outcomes provide narrators with a way to ... discuss troubling contemporary issues ... As well, stories provide narrators with ways to talk about and interpret their own actions on various occasions in the past (Cruikshank in Dyck 1993: 140).

During the storytelling of the third phase of the project, the child-teller spoke with an active voice of subjective inquiry, communicating something innately connected to their perception of identity and culture (Mahoney 1996:3).

Storyteller Louise Profeit-Leblanc believes everything has a voice - a tree, a child, a mountain, a glacier. Children learn through personal oral narrative construction to recognize the difference between the learning of information and the learning of self-actuated knowledge. This kind of learning involves qualities of emotion, reflection and memory.

There is a vulnerability in oral narrative education. This sensitivity articulates what is missing in current educational practices. Gatto criticises the school system, isolating what is wrong with it and presents a critique within the system. When he moves us as readers in this direction, we recognise his activity as a form of critical deconstruction. He uses a subversive voice inside his traditional role and social responsibility of "teacher." He uses this voice ostensibly to communicate the ideals of civil society. The stories we teach become our childrens' guiding narratives. When we engage children in a storytelling discourse in the classroom they recognize the vital place of another speech and language. This results in a learning that is grounded, real and authentic. These are moments when we find our own voice and the voices of others, recognizing them as distinct.

Chapter Six: A Conclusion of Experience

In a postmodern society of surfaces, our children suffer the loss of histories and traditions, oral and literary. The technological meta-narrative extinguishes a local community framework of association for the knowledge of how to be a child within civil society. Our civil society reflects a *transitory* attitude in its mediated modes of expression (speech and language).

Children of today's technological monoculture live in the instant exchange of information and over-exposure (Berry 1993:148). Their experience of a social reality leaves no rite of passage, marking that transition from child to adulthood: "In providing total access, television, the ultimate visual medium has dissolved the hierarchies of knowledge and experience, of age and youth" (Hume 1997: J1). Children educated within this meta-narrative miss a key part of human development because their parents and educators have forgotten the boundary of childhood. I can recall the children during the project repeatedly asking: "Is it real?" (in relation to traditional and contemporary oral narrative). This common question revealed that their sense of boundary between the imaginary and the real has dissolved. The loss of this boundary, like the boundary of story, indicates a disregard and disrespect, of children in childhood. Oral narrative reminds its community of listeners how to cross boundaries respectfully and how to listen. Storytelling re-enacts a tradition where children are children and where the imagination is the means for a rite of passage.

Age, nor literacy skill, prevents children of the third degree of orality from the experience of the technologically-constructed social reality. Christopher Hume writes: "There's nothing in the structure of the medium that restricts understanding of the message"

(Hume 1997: J1). The technological meta-narrative teaches children not to pause and question (Postman 1993:8). This educational construct numbs hybrid consciousness, "... inevitably mean[ing] that only certain stories can be told. A kind of dumbing down occurs..."(Hume 1997: J2, Gatto, 1992).

The North of Canada is a political place where children, Aboriginal and non-Native, are taught to work through their perceptions of other culture and identity in their civil society, and in the classroom. The hybridity of the North is reproduced in Whitehorse through the new oral narrative tradition of the Yukon International Storytelling Festival. The festival and storytelling curriculum model project are two oral discursive sites of historical, cultural and educational renegotiation. The experiential educational spaces created during classroom storytelling allow an "other" understanding of the history of place to be enunciated. These two sites cultivate communities of listeners who use another form of speech and language (a storytelling discourse) to communicate their experiences (life, historical, cultural). Louise Profeit-Leblanc enunciates how a hybrid consciousness is developed by listening with a third ear. She explains it is activated when listening to traditional oral narrative:

Every set of ears that hears a story hears it with their own heart. I always ask the children how many ears do you have? Two physical ears, but the most important ear when you are listening to stories is the ear in here [the ear in your heart]. This is the little ear you ask to open so that whatever meaning you get from the story stays with you. We have three ears (Profeit-Leblanc, 1996).

Her metaphorical third ear refers to a cultural distinction of Yukon oral tradition and the Athabaskan Full Stop. Listeners of this oral tradition are encouraged to interpret for

themselves and to connect the narratives to their own personal experience. This, as I have personally experienced, leads to a shift in educational perspectives.

I am hopeful the discussion of the storytelling curriculum model project will lead Whitehorse educators to look and listen to oral narrative. Storytelling activity allows us to utter and speak of the other worlds contained in our mind's eye, when we look through the oral window of our imagination. A sense of belonging results from a primary curriculum immersed in story. An intentional form of oral education in the two Whitehorse primary classrooms allowed a new pattern of direct human communication and dialogue to take place. This is evidence of what may be called sustainable education.

As I draw this thesis to a close, I am faced with a personal dilemma, and with a renewed sense of social responsibility that *my words will return*. Will I return to the Yukon to continue oral-related curriculum development? If so, environment is an essential factor to consider. The physical space construct of the classroom made the project difficult. The environment children listen to story in is as crucial as the telling of story. The setting of this new oral narrative tradition must involve the integrated experience of "place," similar to the experience of Kwaday Dan Kenji.

Oral narrative results in new levels of understanding. This thesis and the stories it traces have taken me on a *shifted* journey. Listening to the children tell their stories reminds me how all things connect in a beautiful complex patterning, like frost produced on a pane of glass. The cold outside close to the warmth inside produces a complex pattern on this reflective boundary. This patterning draws for the listener the connective quality present

when story is told.

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Appendix One: Stories and Interviews

Stories:

Place Phase

Week One: Introductory Story of Place: Baba Yaga

When my grandmother, my Baba, was a little girl, she was asked by her mother to go out into the forest to find the Baba Yaga. When she found the Baba Yaga she was to ask her for a needle and thread to mend her father's shirts. She walked out into the forest not knowing where to find the Baba Yaga's hut. She searched endlessly until it began to get dark. She heard a strange noise far off in the distance and it became louder and louder and it got closer and closer. It was the sound of horses hooves pounding against the earth. As the sound got closer, the sky became dark. And suddenly through the forest rode a big black horseman, dressed in black from head to foot. His horse was black too. When he came trailing by the young girl, he brought with him the darkness of Night, like the darkness of December in the Yukon ~ black, dark.

My grandmother was completely surrounded by darkness. She was scared and nervous. She stumbled and fell on the tree roots. The shadows of the trees were long and monstrous. She could not even see her own hand in front of her face. She became lost, trapped in a labyrinth of shadows and dark images.

Then, she heard that same noise far off and as it got closer and closer, it got louder and louder. She closed her eyes and when she opened them - she caught a glimpse of a second horseman dressed all in white riding on a big white horse. He was so bright. It blinded my Baba ~ like looking directly at the sun. The forest was a light and she could see the trees and make her way through them. She came to a clearing in the forest and before her there appeared the strangest thing, a hut walking around on the legs of a gigantic chicken. It was alive.

The sound of hooves on the earth was heard for a third time. Another horse appeared with such brilliance as the colour of the sun before it descends behind the earth at sunset - red. The man upon the horse was dressed all in red.

My Baba was astonished to find herself at the Baba Yaga's hut. The hut aimlessly walked about a

clearing, fenced in by BONES. Bones made the fences and skulls sat a top as fenceposts. This must be Baba Yaga's hut and the bones belonged to those unfortunate ones, who the Baba Yaga had eaten for dinner! My grandmother had heard stories about the Baba Yaga and she knew that if she wasn't careful the Yaga might just eat her too ~ for dinner!

From inside the hut- my grandmother could hear screeches and howls- part bird, part human. This must be the Baba Yaga's hut. My grandmother remembered why she had come - and so she took a deep breathe and gathered all her strength and bravery and slowly approached the clearing. The hut turned and faced her - like it wasn't a hut, but a chicken. But it wasn't a chicken, but a hut. My grandmother called out and the hut turned, faced her and sat down.

The Baba Yaga could be heard howling and muttering to herself. Then the door opened and the Yaga called out from inside, "I smell a child, a human child! Show thyself that smells of such scent!" The Baba Yaga, a large angry woman with sharp metal teeth, appeared in the doorway. She was alone in her hut, pray for the rats, mice and spiders that lived there too. She stood in the doorway wearing rags and dirt and she was gnashing her shiny teeth and chewin' on a bone. Her hair was big and messy and she looked like she had not washed or cut it for a long time. She wore the rags of peasants. The metal of her teeth flashed when she smiled. Her eyes were large and dark and shiny like metal too. They were flashy and caught the light.

My grandmother presented herself to the Yaga. She called out in a sweet and polite voice, " Good day to you Auntie, it is I your niece and servant. I have come to ask you for a needle and thread." "Good day to you niece. A needle and thread could be yours, but first you must perform these tasks I ask of you," the Baba Yaga howled back. "Yes of course Auntie," my grandmother agreed (for she remembered what she had heard others say about the Baba Yaga). The Baba Yaga commanded, "You must prepare my meals, clean this mess of a hut. Sort all the poppy seeds clean from this wheat and grains. I will be gone until the black horseman of Night rides again. If you have completed the tasks - I will give you what you ask of me, and if not, then we shall see..."

And with that the Yaga began to laugh and howl and screech like a bird of prey. She screeched and

howled her way out of that hut like the wind in her mortar and pestle trailing behind to sweep her tracks away. Off she went into the forest and only the echoes of her could be heard, far off.

My grandmother set herself to work, quickly sweeping and mopping the floor, washing the walls and ceiling clean of all the dirt. She found some onions and rotting potatoes that she threw into a pot with some bones she found in the Baba Yaga's pantry. She set it upon the wood stove and lit a fire. It began to brew and boil into a delicious smelling stew.

All the while she looked to the window and watched the light of day begin to change and fade into what she knew would become the darkness of night. She knew that soon the dark horseman would come riding through the forest bringing with him Night and the Baba Yaga's return. She moved more quickly to get the tasks completed. She realised that she could not finish, and broke down, and cried. The birds in the trees outside of the hut could hear her weeping. They flew to it and peered in to see a small girl-child heaped upon the floor with the scattered grains and poppy seeds all around her. They moved onto the window ledge of the hut. They started to twitter and sing a beautiful melody. It hushed my Baba's weeping and she looked towards them with tears upon her face and brightness in her eyes. The birds moved within the hut and sorted the scattered wheat, separating the poppy seeds and placing them in a pile all the while singing a beautiful melody that hushed my grandmothers' cries and lulled her fears for a time.

As the last poppy seed dropped from a bird's beak onto the pile, the hooves of the black horseman of Night were heard as he rode quickly through the forest, bringing darkness and the returning shrieks and howls of the Baba Yaga. She stormed into the hut and stood before the girl. The floor was swept, the odours of a meal filled the hut, and the poppy seeds sat in a large pile separate from the other wheat and grains. All was in order. The Yaga looked towards my grandmother and reached with one large, bony hand inside her rags to draw out a sharp, bright needle and with her other large bony hand she reached to draw a spool of fine black thread. She thrust them into the hands of my grandmother and screamed, "OUT OF HERE!!!" My Baba hurried herself out of the hut but upon the doorstep, the Baba Yaga shrieked from behind, "How is it possible that you were able to perform all the tasks, I asked of you?!" My grandmother responded, "I have the

blessing of my mother and the birds helped me with a sweet song." Baba Yaga cried again, "Out of here, out with you, you blessed creature, I wish no blessed here in my a hut." And then, my Baba returned to the forest and found her way very easily back home to her parents - who were overjoyed in her return with the needle and thread as they had asked her.

The Girl Who Married the Grizzly Bear, See Sidney, 1979, pg. 62-66.

Week Two: Animal Stories

How Raven Stole Light or The Story of Crow, See Sidney in Cruikshank 1990,pg 42-44.

Porcupine and Beaver, See de Laguna, 1995,pg 220.

The Boy Who Stayed with the Fish, Moldy Head, See Sidney in Cruikshank, 1990, pg 75-78.

Week Three: Louise Profeit-Leblanc, Yukon Mythology

The Sun Story, See Sidney, 1979, pg 67-72.

The Boy Who Went to the Moon, retold by Louise Profeit-Leblanc

Many years ago, when people depended totally on the land, the Gwichin people remember this story. It's the story about the boy who went to the moon.

There was a couple who had only one child. He was only a few months old and was fussing, so his mother took him out of their tent to show him the moon on a warm spring night. The little boy became very happy. he smiled and pointed to the moon and said the word for moon in his mother's language. He settled right down after this. His parents realized then that he must be special and in fact his father said, "I think he comes from the moon people. He has a moon spirit. We must be good to him all his life."

Time passed until the year that the people were suffering from famine. That was the year that the caribou had taken another trail in their migration. The snow and cold weather had come too quick and the people hadn't got enough to last them the winter. They didn't know how they were going to get through the winter and the whole village was worried. Some even cried because they knew that there was going to be

great suffering.

This boy was about fourteen years old now. Although he was this age, he was still as small as a young child. He never grew. He was a midget. His mother took pity on him and sewed him little marten skin pants to keep his legs warm and when they moved across country she would carry him on her back, as walking over the tundra was very difficult. His parents treated him very well.

"Mom, I know how to make the caribou come to this place. I will make medicine for the people and bring caribou back from their trail." His mother was very surprised when her son told her what he could do to help the people.

The little guy went out of the skin-tent and pulled a little clump of willows in the snow. It turned into a small calf caribou right before his parent's eyes! They killed that little caribou.

"Now take some of that meat and attach it to the fringes on my jacket. I'm going to make a song and dance for the bull caribou, to change his mind." His mother did as her son instructed and attached strips of the caribou meat to the fringes of his jacket. The young boy went outside the tent again. This time he plucked some willows and peeled the bark off of them. He was going to use these for dancing sticks.

"Now before I make my medicine to bring that chief caribou back, go tell all the people what I'm going to do. Tell them that the only thing I want for my work is the stomach fat, around the caribou's stomach. That's all I want. Now go and tell them quick, while I make a song for them."

His mother went to tell the people. Meanwhile, the boy came outside of the tent and with those dancing sticks in each hand, proceeded to sing a special caribou song, a song which even the oldest of the Elders, no longer remember the words to. He danced, clacking the sticks together to make the same sound that caribou horns make when they are in a large herd moving across the land. Pretty soon, on the top of the nearest rise, the young man saw a silhouette of a bull caribou. The chief for the caribou people. He knew that there were thousands more behind him.

The people ran around frantically, herding the caribou into the caribou corrals, spearing and shooting them with arrows. They were in a state of frenzy. Many caribou were taken that day, and the young boy

waited patiently in his tent, with his mother. Nobody came.

"What's the matter with my people? How can they forget what their promise was so quickly?" His mother insisted that he wait a little longer. "They are busy with the meat, my son. Be patient, they won't forget you."

The boy waited until nightfall. He became very upset. He cried. He cried over this condition of the people. "I want to go back to my people. Back to the moon, for these people here have no more respect. They forget their promises. I don't want to live among such people anymore."

His parents begged the boy not to leave them. In fact that night when they went to bed, they put the child between them so he could not leave. In spite of their attempts however, in the morning he was not there. They awakened to discover only his little marten skin pants hanging from the smoke-hole in the middle of their tent. Their son had returned to the moon!

Now to this day, if you look closely at the moon, you will see a young boy holding something in his hand - something that looks like lace fat from around a caribou's stomach. And this boy is still controlling the caribou. On the first full moon in the fall and the first full moon in the spring the caribou begin their migration as they have done since the beginning of time.

Week Four: Yukon Mythology continued

The Story of the Camp Robber or the Good Wife as retold by Louise Profeit-Leblanc. There is not a recorded version of this story to my knowledge. This narrative traces the life of a very old couple who have no children, and how they care for one another. The couple are starving to death. Then they find a camp robber to eat. The wife gives up her food, the meat of the camp robber (Whiskey Jack or Canadian Jay) for her husband, so he will have strength to go and hunt.

Community Phase:

Week One: Introductory Story of Community Visitors

The Story of Kaax'achgook, See Sidney in Cruikshank 1990, pg 139-145.

Week Two: Les Francophones Yukonnaises

Luc Laferte's French-Canadian Story of La Bête à Sept Tête, The Seven-Headed Dragon, See Legaré, 1981, 211-216.

Week Three and Four: Mary Sloan's High-school Storytellers stories, recorded on October 28, 1996.

These stories were recorded after their presentation in the two Whitehorse classrooms, more in an interview-style format. The high-school tellers were asked to also explain why they chose their particular story.

The Big Animal

My name is Brian Miller. I told my story to Miss Fern's class. I got it from a book that I rented from the library. I looked in to all these books in the library and I couldn't find any other stories besides this was one that I was really interested in. It's called *The Big Animal*. It all starts out way back at Frenchman Lake by Carmacks. There was this family: a father, a mother, a brother-in-law and two little brothers. One day the father and brother-in-law went across the lake to cut wood. This was during the winter time. They were cutting wood and the two children and the mother were looking across the lake. and they saw a faint figure coming across the lake. and they thought it was their brother-in-law. so they ran to greet him and the two brothers ran as fast as they could. When they got about ten feet away from the figure it turned out not to be their brother-in-law but a great huge woolly Mammoth. And then, the woolly Mammoth killed them and ate them and the sister ran as fast as she could around the lake over to where the brother-in-law and the father were cutting wood. They ran around back over across the trail, back to their house because the house was on the trail. The house was covered in water at the beginning of the year. It formed ice around it to keep the house warm inside. The brother sat on top of the house with a huge club, and the father sat in the bush whittling away at a spear. They waited for the animal to come along the trail. The brother-in-law started yelling at it getting the animal all mad. The animal came after him and tried to get up onto the house but it was too slippery because the house was covered in ice. The brother-in-law kept hitting it with his club over and over again, and then the father came running out of the bush and stabbed the animal a whole bunch of

times until it died. They cut its stomach open and took all the bones out and made a huge fire and burned all the bones so that the spirits would be reborn in the afterlife. They say that you can still see the animal's bones in the bottom of Frenchman's Lake.

Why dogs smell each others butts

My name is Charlie Jackson. I was telling this story at Kathryn Miller's classroom. I chose this story because it was funny. This is a story *why dogs sniff each others butts*. Did you ever think of that? Dogs sniff each others butts because one day ... there were mountains. So Sam called all his friends together because he knew lots of people all over the place. They all played. They were all playing for five hours. They all played all day long at the beach, and they had hot dogs, and potato salad, and little bowls of chips everywhere for everybody. They were all eating and having fun. And they were wet too. So they hung up their tails to dry. They all gathered around the fire. It was getting sort of late and they started telling stories and eating marshmallows and drinking hot coco. So they all went to bed and when they woke up in the morning they were so tired and they had to get home. They worked for their masters. They all grabbed the first tail they saw. That's why dogs sniff each others butts.

Why the Moon isn't seen on certain nights of the Month

Hi my name is Tracey Eldridge. I told my story at Whitehorse Elementary and I chose this story because it's based on a book that my sister gave me. This is a story about *why the moon isn't seen on certain nights of the month*. One night not too long ago there was a young girl with blonde hair and green eyes hanging up the laundry outside her cabin, which was just by the Takhini Hotsprings. And the moon looked down on her and saw how happy she was. She was wearing this new flannel nightgown stitched with stars. And he thought, " You know what, I'd like to get a nightgown." So he floated down onto the highway and went down the highway into town passed the Sternwheeler, passed the library, passed Main Street, passed Rumours, passed Food Fair and finally the moon got to Saans. And he just got there just in time before they were

closing, so they let him in. The first nightgown he tried on was this huge, huge black nightgown with this big ugly pink string right around the neck. And he started to put it on but you see since he didn't have any arms or legs he started to drown in it, it was so big. He said, " Help me, help me, help me!" Finally the clerk ran to him and helped him out of this big huge nightgown. Then he tried on these little tiny pyjamas that didn't fit him at all. They were white with all these little, little fuzzy animals all over it. They must have been for some kid. And then the moon tried on a nightgown with a silver moon all over it. The moon thought, "Well the silver moon is kind of cool." He tried on every nightgown and every pair of pyjamas in the whole store. The moon pleadingly asked, "Not even one more pair is left?" The clerk said to the moon, "In the back of the store in a really tiny drawer there is a blue flannel nightgown with stars." And the moon tried it on and it fit perfectly, and it looked just like the sky at night. So he paid for it right away and flew up into the sky and happily played and danced in this nightgown. He liked it so much he wore it every single night. The problem with that is the people down on earth couldn't see the moon when he was wearing this nightgown and the mothers began to forget the words to the lullabies and the owls began to lose their way. The sun decided something has to be done about this. So he decided he was going to go visit the moon which really didn't happen very often. So the next day there was an eclipse. And the sun said to the moon, "Moon, you must take off your nightgown. People are losing their way and they don't know what to do for they have lost you. They cannot see you with your nightgown on." So the moon reluctantly took off his nightgown, folded it up and put it into a drawer in the back of the sky. So whenever you see that the moon is not out you can imagine he is wearing his nightgown. And that is the end of the story. I changed it a bit because it was for kids and everything, and it had to be related to the Yukon.

Story of Canyon City

Hi my name is Mary Jane and I did my story at Elijah Smith School. My story is about Whitehorse and Canyon City. I chose this story to tell the kids about the history of Whitehorse. *Mary Jane did not want to be recorded, she explained what she told during her story presentation. Her presentation of the story in the*

classroom involved her historical perspective as a Yukon First Nations youth growing up in the community of Whitehorse.

Julie's Story

My name is Julie Hutchinson. I told my story at Whitehorse Elementary. I chose this story because it really happened to me. I didn't want to tell one that I didn't really know about or was out of a book. I wanted a true story. I thought it would be original. If you've ever noticed someone sitting off in the corner of a room. Well, Deb was just that type of person. I've always tried to make friends with those types of people because I figure they can use a chance and they are probably a really nice person. And I thought Deb was no different. She was really shy. You would throw the ball at her in gym and she would duck away from it. You would look over at her and she would be hiding behind her hair in the corner and not talking much. We had some good times. I talked to her at school and we went shopping once. She went to my birthday when I turned fifteen. She was one of the bravest people there. She was wearing a cool get-up. It was like a placemat in the back of her dress and a tea cosy on her head, and we were just having a lot of fun with it. But after a while people started to realize that Deb wasn't who we thought she was. People studied really hard for exams. Sometimes people wouldn't sleep the whole weekend just to be ready for one. Deb prank called people the night before an exam and a lot of people came to school the next day and they were not able to concentrate. They would be very mad at her. She did a couple of other things. She stole things from people. The worst thing she did to me was we went to the movies and she wanted to look just like me, so she borrowed some of my jewellery and she was wearing two of my green shirts. She was wearing my favourite green shirt. After we had left the movie my mom was giving us a ride home, I couldn't really ask her for the shirt she was wearing. I was counting on her to give me the other shirt back. I called her a couple of times and after a month she finally gave me my shirt back. And when I got it I was just so glad to have it. She left pretty quick from my house. It wasn't until I was putting it in the dryer later that I noticed a really gross green stain on it and I tried to get it out. I couldn't bleach the shirt because it was tie dyed. So that shirt was wrecked and I was really mad at

her. She wasn't even honest about it. She didn't even tell me about the stain or anything. So sometimes you can make friends with people that are in the corner but, from my experience, they're not always the nicest people. I chose it because at the time it made me really mad and telling the story kind of resolves it for me. I find telling it helps me.

Taylepo

My name is Tess Hardey and I told my story at Elijah Smith. I chose the story because my grandma told it to me. This old man is really old and he lives in Whitehorse but during the winter he likes to go up to Little Grey Mountain where there is a hunting cabin and great big hunting dogs. They're really big and vicious but they're kind of old. He goes up there one year and he doesn't take enough food so he is stuck up there and it's getting towards spring but he's snowed in and there are bad blizzards. All he has left to eat is a carrot, a potato and a rotten onion. And he really doesn't want to eat rotten onion soup again. So he goes outside, he gets some snow, he melts it and he cuts up his carrot and his potato and onion. He begins to eat his soup and then he hears a scratching sound outside. He looks over and there is this animal. It jumps into his cabin because there is this little hole in the wall. He looks at the animal. It looks like a fox but it has really big yellow eyes and his tail is about three metres long. It sits down and wraps its tail around itself a whole bunch of times. It has a big hairless worm-like tail. So it looks like a big black worm. So he picks up his gun and he shoots at the animal but it jumps up and runs out of the cabin. All he gets is his tail. He shot his tail off. His tail is wiggling around on the ground. The tail just kept wiggling. He didn't want to touch it because it was really gross and he waited until it stopped wiggling. He chopped it up and put it into his soup and he mixed it all up and he thought, it wasn't very good. He gave a little bit to each of his dogs. So he was happy and he got into bed and he was lying in bed and he heard a scratching sound and a voice that said " Taylepo, taylepo give me back my taylepo, you've got it, that I know, give me back my taylepo." The old man was really scared. Screaming, he manages to get up and open the door and he sends out his three dogs and they go out and he hears some barking and the cat screeching. He gets back into bed. An hour later he lets his

dogs in because he hears some scratching but only two of his dogs come in. He calls and he calls but the third one won't come. So he gets back into bed and he hears scratching again. And he hears the voice again "Taylepo, taylepo give me back my taylepo, you've got it, that I know, give me back my taylepo." And he is really scared. The dogs didn't want to go but he sent them out again. He heard barking and screeching again. An hour later he heard scratching at his door again and he let his dogs in. But only one dog came in this time. He called and called for the other two but they didn't come. So he crawled back into bed again, but he heard the scratching again. And he heard the voice, "Taylepo, taylepo give me back my taylepo, you've got it, that I know, give me back my taylepo." And the old man is really scared now. His dog is hungry again but he really doesn't want to be sent out but he grabs him and chucks him out the door anyway. He sits by the door whining until finally he hears a barking and the creature screeching and he waits for his dog to come back. He hears the scratching again and it's getting closer and closer to him and finally he hears it at the end of the bed. The creature jumps onto the bed and the old man is leaning back in the bed and he is scrunched up against the wall and he is clutching his blankets and the creature is stalking towards him and says, "Give me my taylepo, if you just give it to me I will go in peace." The old man says, "I don't have it, I don't know what you are talking about." And all of a sudden the creature jumps on him. And two months later his son, who lives in Whitehorse was really worried about his dad. He said, "My dad is usually in like a month ago." So he gets up to the cabin. He opens the cabin door and it's really smelly. He looks over and his dad is lying in bed with his stomach ripped wide open. His son is like, "Where are his dogs?" They found them floating in a pond. Sometimes at night we can hear a voice in the mountains saying, "Taylepo, taylepo now I have my taylepo."

Personal Phase:

Week One: Brainstorming with High-school storytellers.

Week Two: Individual brainstorming continues and storyframe construction.

Week Three: Preparation for Mini-Storytelling Festival

Week Four: Mini-Storytelling Festival

Storytelling Festival Program:

Stories Retold

Three children retold Yukon traditional oral narratives, Porcupine and Beaver, The Sun Story and The Girl Who Married The Grizzly Bear. These were especially interesting, as the children who chose to retell these narratives were all of Yukon First Nations descent.

Our Own Stories

This selection of stories were stories the children created themselves based on their life experiences. They incorporated imaginative elements and harsh realities. One story discussed the death of a family member, another of a hunting camp experience with his family and a combined narrative by two boys that explained the childrens' birth and experiences moving to the Yukon.

Pet Stories

There were three pet narratives. They varied again from dealing with the death of a pet to getting a pet for a birthday present. The pet narratives marked significant moments of the children's lives and ownership or responsibility for an other being in the world.

Other Interesting Stories

These narratives involved humorous stories, scary stories and adventurous stories of moving to the Yukon. All these narratives shared a common element of each child-teller's life experience turned into a narrative. The children comprehended the boundary between the real and the imaginary through this process of the storyframe and telling their story.

Interviews:

Fern Johnstone Interview conducted on October 28, 1996.

WHY DID YOU AGREE TO THIS PROJECT? I agreed to this project because of a belief I have in storytelling with respect to identity and identifying to it. I have an interest in First Nations methods of teaching and learning. It seems like something good and something I believe in.

WHY ARE YOU INVOLVED IN TEACHING? I am involved in teaching because I have been involved in education in the past, with past work. It seemed right for me. It is my place.

HOW DO YOU THINK THE PROJECT IS GOING? The project is interesting. It started rather questionably. It was rough with its ups and downs but it has proven to be beneficial to the children. They enjoy and like when you come into the classroom. The children have a greater awareness of storytelling, they like it and they know, even if they do not practice, its rules. I like your flexibility and cooperative nature.

DO YOU THINK STORYTELLING SHOULD BECOME PART OF A REGULAR CURRICULUM? Not every teacher is a born storyteller and to ask a teacher to be a "storyteller" is yet another task for us to take on, amongst the many others we already have.

DOES IT HAVE A PLACE IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM? If storytelling were to be part of the curriculum it would fit well in with the language arts program, this is where it belongs.

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD YOU MAKE TO ME TO IMPROVE THE PROJECT? Less time, three hours is too long. We should have built up to the three hours. You should give them more breaks. You

should tell a story to the children every time you are here in the classroom, this would be more impacting. There should be more First Nations content too and you should ask the children, do they really understand what you are trying to do. Story is it real? I agree with it needing more continuity in the curriculum. When you are only here once a week for three hours, how can you expect them to listen to you? You must consider the children' situation and the fact that they see so many teachers and adults already - you are just another adult. It is very important to consider the children's position and situation in this undertaking.

WHAT DOES PRIMARY EDUCATION MEAN TO YOU? Primary school is about teaching children to enjoy school, to learn to love school and to learn to love learning. It is a place where they are taught everything.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING PHRASE, CHILDREN'S DEFINITION OF FAMILY IS ? To First Nations children this means extended family, to others this means a single mom or dad. Society's vision of "family" has changed.

WHAT IS SCHOOL PROVIDING CHILDREN? School is providing everything. It meets whatever needs which are not met anywhere else. It is their family, it is their structure.

Kathryn Millar interview conducted on October 26, 1996.

WHY DID YOU AGREE TO THIS PROJECT? I thought it sounded exciting. I was very flattered to be recommended. You gave me the impression there would be some Native orientation in this and that was exciting too. That is a big part of our curriculum. And just anything new for the kids that gets away from the hum drum straight academic stuff is good.

WHY ARE YOU INVOLVED IN TEACHING? HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING? It's all I do. It's really all I feel comfortable doing. It's the most exciting thing to me. Even when I'm at home and other people are reading the best seller I am reading teachers magazines and teacher books and anything on education. That's my big interest. Even on my holidays I go and visit schools and talk to teachers. I'm just really interested in it. And I think I'm a good teacher. I found my niche so to speak. I work well with little kids and Native kids in particular. If they have to have a non-Native teacher it's me. I'm going to say twenty years. I graduated from Ottawa Teacher's College. Since then I've gone back. I got my degree and then I went back again and got Special Education because they were main streaming and putting kids with all kinds of learning disabilities into the classroom.

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF FIRST NATIONS CONTENT IN YOUR CLASSROOM? I really think it's important that we validate Native culture and the identity and heritage of Native students. The non-Native students need to know that First Nations history and culture is part of Canada's history. I think both cultures have something to learn from the other. Well before I was up here I was in the Northwest Territories and culture is very strong there. That is the Inuit culture. And then I worked on Vancouver Island for two years doing curriculum development and it was a project on the Native people and the Chinook people down there and although it was the school district that hired me it was Elders that approved or disapproved of the curriculum.

WHAT ROLE DOES A TEACHER PLAY IN CHILDREN' LIVES? I think we meet the needs of the children. We are supposedly judicious parents away from the child's home. More and more our hands are being tied on things we can do and can't do. We're not to touch children and that's something I find really natural. You want to hug them or hold hands with them and do things. I think especially in the younger grades or in the older grades I've seen teachers who can really relate to children and I can see men becoming surrogate fathers. I think its an important role even though a lot of kids might say, "Oh God I hate school." But there is a lot

of stability we are providing for kids that don't have it, up here in particular. But probably more and more so down south a lot of dysfunctional homes and kids come to school looking for basic needs to be filled. With some I know that's the structure in their lives. They get it at school. They don't have it elsewhere. I don't even know if they have someone who really cares about what they're doing. I have kids whose parents can't spend ten minutes a night to listen to them and read a little story. That says something. Or parents who get a form, a permission slip, to go swimming and they lose the form, they forget to give the money and the school ends up finding a bathing suit, paying the money and getting the parents' verbal permission. It's really sad. I think it's an obligation of parental duties. The teachers are there for those kids. As advocates of the child we don't want to see the child lose out.

HOW DO YOU THINK THE PROJECT IS GOING? I think it's going great. You always look at me with this look of fear. You really want to know my answer. It's like kids coming out of a test saying "How did you do?" I think we're doing really wonderful. The kids love it. They look forward to it. They're always happy when they see you. They're hearing some great stories, and now since we've had the high-school students come in, they're seeing people of different ages and we're not done yet. I think it's going great and who knows the impact we're having. I think it's wonderful.

DO YOU THINK STORYTELLING SHOULD BECOME A PART OF THE REGULAR CURRICULUM?

I think so. But you know I've also been thinking about it and I think it probably exists more to a greater degree than you or I even realize. We do a lot of role-playing through all the subjects and interviewing and imaginative things, creative things. It might be in the form of poetry, a story that way, or feelings. It's sort of there but you mean to formalize it, call it storytelling. Definitely. Definitely. And then, follow through as they get older and older. This I think would help on communication and self-expression. We're mandated to teach listening, writing, reading and speaking. Maybe speaking is one of the areas now that we don't do as much. I can remember when I was in school having to stand and give speeches. Now you don't see that

any more. Not that I'm aware of.

WHAT RECOMMENDATION WOULD YOU MAKE TO ME TO IMPROVE THE PROJECT? I think less time. It's too long a span all morning. And personally, I'm not someone who lives rigidly to a schedule, but I do have other teachers who come. They teach French, they teach gym, they teach music, and these are all in the afternoon and when I have a switch to accommodate someone else I'm really taking something away from the kids. They're getting the storytelling but it would be better if it were during my Language Arts time in the morning. That's probably the biggest thing there. Other than that I don't feel that I am being unaccommodated. I feel it's fitting in pretty well. I like all the work you're putting into it. Arranging these field trips and speakers. I think it's great. I know that takes a lot of time to coordinate all this.

WHAT DOES PRIMARY SCHOOL MEAN TO YOU? It's laying ground work. It's for life. You're learning all kinds of social skills when you're interacting with each another. You're learning cooperative work. Problem solving in a larger context whether it be through a story in a book or in a fight on the schoolyard. It's life in a little microcosm. There is the school and then the classroom. This is the way our culture does it.

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ROLE COULD STORYTELLING PLAY IN THE CLASSROOM? I think it could be integrated just like we are asked to integrate our whole day. I've already given you the little example of math problems but I can see it even with Social Studies. Right now we're talking about early Native people, Kwaday Unit, which means "long ago" (in Southern Tutchone). The struggles they had and what they went through. Tonight I just typed up in my day plan that we are going to look at band politics and how things are solved. "Long ago," they had hereditary chiefs and how they would come to consensus and the people would give advice to the Chief. I can see role-playing all of this and acting it out or having someone talk about their story of how they see it because of something that happened. It could go through all the subjects.

It would fit in nicely. Someone just has to write the curriculum. We have some teachers that are set in their ways and they need it laid out for them.

Did you know that on our field trip there was an example of it? These kids sort of have a foot in both cultures. There was the grandmother, Rachel, building the dog shelter. The kids wanted to help her but she wouldn't let them. She said "No, you watch while I do it and you will learn how to do it." And some of them couldn't wait till the end. I figured they thought they had it. They knew how to do it and being independent, adventuresome guys ... It was all boys by the way. A mixture of Native and non-Native. They were off and they were making their shelter. It was great. They couldn't wait. They had to start. She wouldn't let them [build the shelter she's building]. She let the other group. She handed them the spruce boughs. But that was it.

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS PHRASE. CHILDREN'S SENSE OF FAMILY IS ? I don't know. It is different for every child. And I can almost predict what the family will mean to one child and what it is to another. For one little girl that I teach family it is extended grandparents, her mom and dad, when they are sober, and there for her. And lots of promises but not a lot of follow through. And I think it means a lot of disappointment. And other kids it's people that are there for them no matter what, to protect them from the world and everything bad that would ever happen, and to take them to new experiences. For different kids it means different things. I don't think you'd ever get a consensus in my room. Not having taught in southern communities for a long time but doing reading, yes I would say that was a trend today. There are some very protective parents and parents who are certainly charged with the commitment they have taken on. And others it's, I really believe, an inconvenience. I don't know how planned it was and what the level of commitment is. And they say things like, "You were cute when you were little but right now I don't have time for you."

WHAT IS SCHOOL PROVIDING FOR CHILDREN? I think it is helping formulate the child's view of the

world and life and how we function in this world or in our community and in our school with our friends. I don't know how much input we have because they are with their friends, their peers, in the community and there is a lot of input there that is pretty powerful.

DO YOU THINK THE CHILDREN ARE MAKING AN AFFECTIVE GRASP WITH STORY? I really expect to see some concrete transfer. I'd want to hear the child say, "Remember in that story when he said this is the way you should act." I think kids are trained today to take things a certain way. I remember when Louise was telling a story and a woman had given birth to a child, and she had to go out to urinate and while she was out a man came in and stabbed the child to death. The kids just took it in. I know at my age, and maybe not being exposed to what kids are exposed to today, it would have been shocking and terrible to me. These kids were just looking and nodding their head and listening. They took it all in stride as if, yes, these things happen. They seemed more excited when the hero of the story was on a big swing and he could have smashed into that cliff. That sort of touched a different cord to them. A different kind of violence. One that was more exciting. That they were used to seeing, I think, on T.V. Like I said, other than direct transfer here to verbalize it or connect it to something else that they see in the classroom, I wouldn't know. I really wouldn't know. And I think it would take longer than what we are thinking of.

Teachers have so much on their plate now and we're dealing with individual kids that don't fit the grade two or grade seven package that you have to present. You are individualizing. You have so many things. You're dealing with irate parents. You're dealing with superintendents that are saying this. You're dealing with the public that is demanding that. It's unbelievable. And if something is laid out in a clear, concise package, or sparks the teachers imagination, or gathers the material, or says these are the titles for you to read some good stories, or this is how you go about getting guests in. Go for it. That needs to be done too. If you really believe in it. You can't just say, "Teachers you really should include storytelling or school boards have you ever thought." I would really like a person like you to come in and work with me with my class. Have someone who has some expertise and is doing some research and has ideas. I would try and pull

my share of the load too but if we worked together it wouldn't seem so difficult. Like if someone told me next year you were going to a pilot storytelling project by yourself I would be overwhelmed. Even though I do believe in it. I really do. Just to have that support would be great!

Mary Sloan interview conducted on April 23, 1997.

DO YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS AN EDUCATOR AND/OR STORYTELLER? I've been teaching 23 years and I've taught every grade from K to 12. My interest in storytelling stemmed probably from my interest in theatre and to me it's the most basic form of theatre. So it's a really good place to start with kids who are interested in doing some kind of theatre but are maybe afraid of using lines or having to be a character - you just sit and tell a story which for some people is intimidating but it seems for kids, people tell stories all the time. They tell their own life stories and this was an opportunity for them to tell stories that they had heard from somebody else.

WHEN DID YOU DEVELOP THE COURSE THAT YOU TAUGHT LAST FALL IN STORYTELLING? I developed it the year before last fall (1996). It's about a two-year-old course. It was because we had to have a fine arts half credit course. I thought storytelling because I had been using storytelling in my English classes before and bringing Louise Profeit-Leblanc in my classes to talk about storytelling and kids were really interested in it. There were no other courses like that being offered in the Whitehorse area or anywhere else that I'm aware of. It was my and Louise's idea.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF STORYTELLER IN PRESENT-DAY COMMUNITY? I think they have a role. I think all playwrights are storytellers. They just get other people to tell their stories. I think that storytelling is an original form of art and I think it's important to pass that on as well. I think storytelling too is a chance to get back to one-on-one communication. We've come away from that with television and movies. But it

seems like we're getting back to it again with the Storytelling Festival that comes here, and just sit and watch children as entranced by a storyteller as they are by television, except to know that this is an immediate interaction that they're having - you know between them and another person. To me it is a really neat thing to see. And kids love stories. As long as there are kids there's going to be a need for storytellers. Because they want to sit on somebody's lap or at somebody else's feet and have them told a story.

WHAT IS YOUR PERCEPTION OF YOUR HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE CHILDREN' CLASSROOM? Everything was so much better in the class then when it was just the kids telling their stories to each other. When we told the stories to each other it was like, "ooh just another sort of English thing we're doing but thank God we don't have to write it down." There stories were dead and they were repetitious and they were really boring, but when they got with these kids sitting there really excited about them being there and anxious to be entertained, they entertained them. I thought the stories really came alive and the kids came alive and showed a degree of self-confidence that just amazed me - in those kids in particular. They were not drama students. They'd never had drama. Probably most of them had never spoken in front of an audience before. To give them an audience was just giving them the responsibility to keep that audience interested and it worked really well.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR STUDENTS GAINED FROM THAT EXPERIENCE? A lot of self-confidence. I think a lot of self-knowledge that they could do this and that it requires an effort to do. I think a lot of times in school kids kind of float along. They write notes. They write tests. That requires a bit of effort, but this really requires thinking, and making yourself a little bit bigger than reality. And that forced them right there into the forefront and gave them the wonderful feeling that comes with knowing that everybody's paying attention to you because what you have to say is interesting. And that's really good for them. I think, too, it gave them, some of them, a connection with their past because some of them brought out stories their parents had told them.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE CHILDREN GAINED FROM THAT EXPERIENCE? My kids learned was how hard it is to be a teacher. When we were doing the brainstorming they found you have to keep the kids engaged. They don't just stay engaged on their own. They don't just go, "Oh, let's work now." And then I think when younger children work with older students there's sort of an openness that they have with them and an eagerness to be accepted that maybe they don't have necessarily with adults. So I think that they saw these high-school students who are a little bit intimidating to them at first and then they realized that what they had to say was interesting enough. And that it's not just their teachers that want them to do things, but these students did as well. And they brought out some good ideas in the kids. My kids were amazed by the stories that the little kids told - the fact that they tell stories almost spontaneously. Whereas my kids would think, "You have to think. You have to think about the story, because that's what we teach them in school. You know you've got to have a plan. You've got to write it down."

WOULD YOU COMMENT ON STORYTELLING AS A DOORWAY INTO THE COMMUNITY? Yes, I think that when people tell stories it allows a different kind of voice to come through. My first impulse was to censor that story [Charlie's story] and say, "Oh, think of a different story," but it was so genuine to him and it was such a lovely story. And it was so obviously a story that he hadn't just made it up to be crude. He had heard it from somebody else. And it was funny and it made sense. The kids loved it - they just loved that. I can see in any society that's made up of different groups, stories are a way of bringing all of those groups into the classroom, and that way the classroom develops an appreciation for all these other groups that are outside, or people that are different from them. I see that at Elijah Smith school because my son goes there. And that's really neat. That's the thing I like the best about that school because it brings in a lot of people. You know they're hearing all different ways of people talking.

DO YOU THINK STORYTELLING IN THE CLASSROOM HELPS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT? I think it lets kids see other people in the community and also older people as well. Because I know when we

were doing the storytelling class Louise brought Elders. Before they came in we talked about respect and, you know, sometimes they're going to be hard to understand. And sometimes maybe their stories aren't going to make sense to you. And some of them, like, they'd talk for an hour, but the kids were respectful and patient and interested. I think it's great. I think the school needs to open up and get into the community.

SHOULD MORE STORYTELLING BE GOING ON IN THE SCHOOL? It is. It should. To me that's education. I hadn't realized what education was. I've gone to a lot of in-services and heard a lot of people talk about experiential education and tried to do thematic units in my English class that would be relevant to the kids. And it wasn't until I got out of the school that I realized what relevance is. Like, this is experiential. Doing a unit on race relations, as well intentioned, and as good as that is for opening up kids' minds, isn't experiential at all. It's a whole different thing that maybe makes school a little more interesting. But this, rather than just school, this is an education. I think we need to bring a lot more oral work into the classroom. We need to talk and listen.

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO ADD? Well, I really enjoyed doing it. And, like I say, I'm going to incorporate it in the programs that I do next year. I was so nervous about going out into the schools. I thought, "Oh man, these stories are so boring...." And then we went and I was so glad we did it. And I can't wait to do it again.

Luc Laferte interview conducted on April 21, 1997.

HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS AN EDUCATOR AND/OR STORYTELLER? Well I'm both, but I start as an educator because I teach. I teach and the training I've had helps me to relate with children. I basically tell stories to children, but also to adults. I'm a storyteller because of the cultural aspect of all this, but it's all intertwined for me. I consider myself both.

WHEN DID YOU START TO TELL STORIES? The first story I heard marked me because it was so neat. I was 12. I started telling stories when I was 14 and I joined the boy scouts. I joined a little bit late. The pioneer boy scouts from 14 to 16 years old. We each had to take a turn during those long 4 day expeditions when we had to tell a story. And I would make them up and I would really enjoy making them up and see my friends kind of surprised by my imagination. And I would be really surprised at their reaction. I worked in a summer camp where we had to tell stories, and I would be the first one in line always. And I just started like this when I was at that age, I guess 18 or 19. And then when I worked in a daycare that's where everything got fine tuned because the kids were really drinking my stories, just like water.

WHAT DID THE CHILDREN GET FROM YOUR STORY? I think they got something. And I can tell this by the way they were listening. It's a story about explaining how somebody who's an underdog will compete against animals that are bigger than him. Just using his brain, he would get over the obstacles. And I think children who are smaller can respect him for this. Half of these kids were from First Nations. We don't hear every day on the media that First Nations are supers and excellent people. They are sometimes in a bad situation, and I think they felt good at hearing somebody who's small and not too strong, you know, winning against all odds. I think they liked it. Just by the size of their eyes too. They were really attentive.

WHAT ROLE ARE YOU TRYING TO PLAY IN THE WHITEHORSE COMMUNITY? The role I'm trying to fulfil is to explain, well, teach people and tell people about French-Canadians in Canada, especially French-Canadians from Quebec. That's where I'm from. And sometimes I just want to tell them about the beauty of our culture: songs and stories, different spots in Quebec that are really beautiful. And sometimes I'm going into political stuff trying to explain to mainly older audiences why Quebec wants to separate. There are historical reasons for this and they are very well explained through story. And also explain how peoples' character is formed through history and through the nature. So the people in my stories are always influenced

by nature and by the political setting from Quebec.

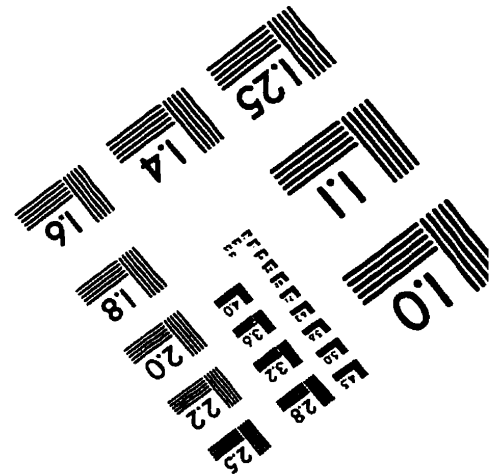
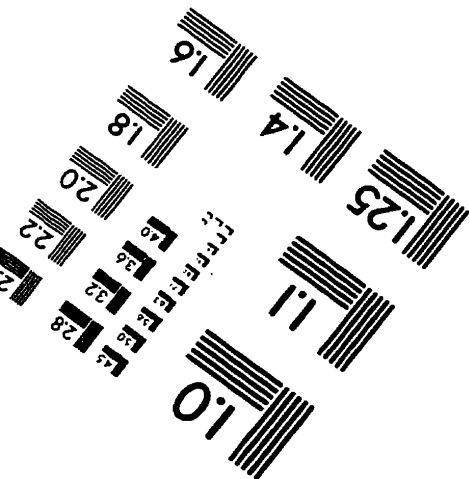
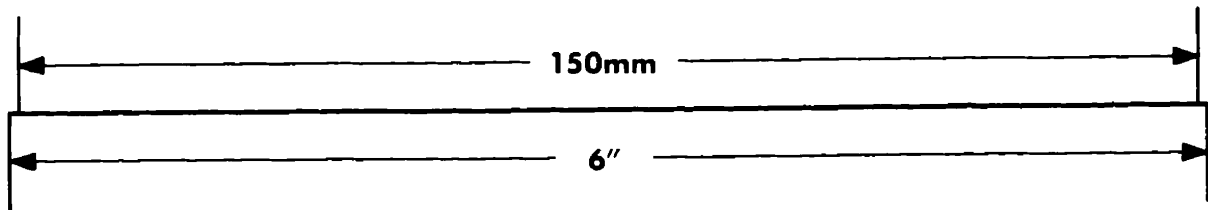
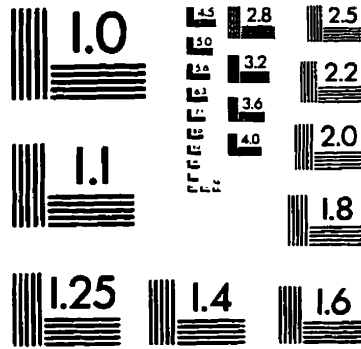
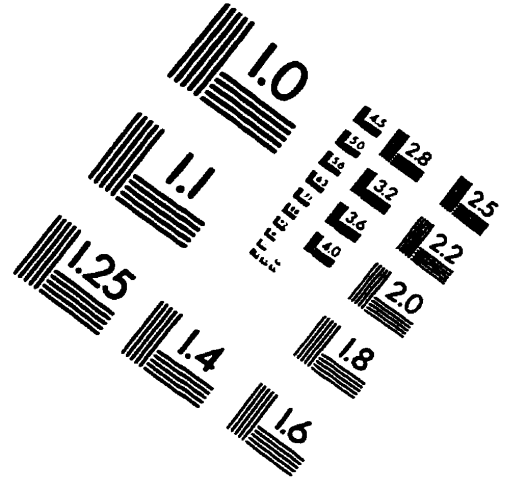
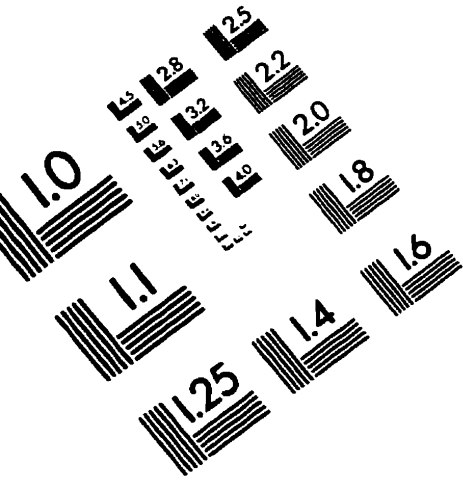
COULD YOU COMMENT ON TRANSLATION OF STORY THROUGH LANGUAGE? If I ever adapt a story from another country. If I take it, I'm not going to put it into a setting of French-Canadians. I'm going to tell people it's from somewhere else. But stuff that's from my place, I find it very important to put it into the situation, the context. For me, it's a way to explain who I am so people know me better. That's what I like.

DO YOU THINK STORY CONNECTS LISTENERS TO LANDSCAPE? I think it works for me. I would probably be able to put myself in some of my stories easily. Take a character in there. I was raised until I was 10 years old near the river where most of my stories take place: St. Maurice. They were set on the banks of the Mauricie River. The images I'm going to use sometimes, those images I'm using in my stories, very often I'm trying to remember how I would have seen this beast or this animal when I was a kid. The actual geographical features, well, I didn't see them all when I was a kid, but when I was a teenager and young adult, I would travel here by bicycle or by motorcycle through Quebec, and do lots of mileage and take pictures of things that would remind me of stories I've heard.

WHAT DOES COMMUNITY MEAN TO YOU? Well, it's a word that's been used a lot. I've heard it a lot in the last 12, 13 years since I've been out of Quebec. And it's started to be in peoples' language and vocabulary when I was still living here. I'm always asking questions about how do we define a community: is it a geographical thing, a cultural identity, or something? It's pretty hard for me to say because they talk about the community here and there and lots of people use it in every political discourse. I'm still not sure what it is because there are some people who are using community, this term, for their own advantage and

I don't really like this. I think when I talk about community it's people who have some values in common. That's probably the most important thing. But more than values, maybe activities, maybe a regional setting, like environment, like the community at Mount Lorne. This is probably the most active community in the Yukon that I know. There is children in a nice natural setting, and that's what they want. As far as community like Edmonton or Vancouver is concerned, I don't think there is only one community in there. There is many communities. I think you have to have the same values and live in the same place. And if you're from another culture, well sure, if you have the same community, you can share lots of values. That's probably the best thing, but do you actually share the same activities. If you do, that's called a community. And even if they're not in the same colour, if they live in the same place, and do basically the same thing, well, they should be in the same community.

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