

**COYOTE LEARNS TO MAKE A STORYBASKET:  
THE PLACE OF FIRST NATIONS STORIES IN EDUCATION**

by

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# ABSTRACT

First Nations stories about Coyote the Trickster often place him in a journeying mode, learning lessons the “hard” way. I followed Coyote’s lead and took a four year journey to learn about the “core” of First Nations stories from Elders and to find a respectful place for stories and storytelling in education, and especially in curricula. I travelled on the pathway of ethnography and then moved to critical ethnography as ethical issues of representation, authority, power, and appropriation arose about First Nations stories. I turned to the Elders for help and realized that my methodology had to center on story research with Elders. I worked intensively with three Coast Salish Elders and ten Sto:lo Elders who either were storytellers or were versed in the oral traditions. They shared traditional and personal life experience stories about traditional ways of becoming a storyteller, cultural ways to use stories with children and adults, and ways to help people think, feel, and “be” through the power of stories.

The Elders taught me about what I came to call the principles of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, wholism, inter-relatedness, and synergy related to using stories and storytelling for educational purposes—storywork. Some of these storywork principles were applied to a kindergarten to grade seven provincial curriculum: *First Nations Journeys of Justice*. My understanding of these seven principles may form a Sto:lo and Coast Salish framework in which to begin a process of making meaning from stories. I learned that stories can “take on their own life” and “become the teacher” if

these principles are used. Coyote and I learned that these principles are like strands of a cedar basket. They have distinct shape in themselves, but, when they are combined to create story meaning, they are transformed into new designs and they also create the background which shows the beauty of the designs. My learning and the stories contained in this thesis become a “storybasket” for others to use. Following Sto:lo tradition, I give away my first basket and I give back what I have learned.



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I raise my hands in thanks and respect to my family for their love and caring, to the family of the First Nations House of Learning for encouragement, feedback, and nourishment when I needed it. A special thank you to Corry, my daughter, who helped me do this work with love for the younger generations.

# CHAPTER ONE: THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Stories were very important to the Native people. Stories go back perhaps thousands of years ago. We always ask, 'Why were these stories made?' .... It was the only way that the old people can teach us. The story we are about to hear is part of these stories that are told to little bit older people (Elder Ellen White, July 28, 1993 transcript).

## *Introduction*

Early this morning I asked for guidance from the Creator (February 21, 1993). These days the spiritual practice of prayer begins my day and work. I have learned that this spiritual way is an essential part of my academic work, and I must share its importance with others, but not in an evangelical manner. The late Elder Louis Sunchild of the Cree Nation, Alberta,<sup>1</sup> talked about the important relationship between prayer, humility and spirituality<sup>2</sup>:

Equally important in this pursuit of a good life is to have a strong spiritual life. To involve oneself in prayer and ceremony. However to pursue spirituality through a humble means, to exercise humility and compassionate mind. Not to act or behave as if one is in possession of supernatural abilities. It is better (to act) from the humble state of knowing nothing which really and truly benefits (is useful to) a person, rather than to possess supernatural abilities....Elders say that what counts is the sincere prayer that is said from the heart (Lightning quoting Elder Sunchild, 1992, p.226).

I have learned from First Nations Elders that beginning with a humble prayer creates a cultural learning process which promotes the principles of respect, reverence,

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<sup>1</sup> When making reference to what other First Nations people have said, it is customary to acknowledge the person's cultural group and place/territory of origin. The term 'Nation' is used to imply tribal recognition of shared customs, history, language, values, and territory. I have noted information on culture and place as it was written in the original source document.

<sup>2</sup> A capital case letter "S" will be used for the terms Spirituality and Spirit when their meaning connotes a proper noun and utmost respect.

responsibility, and reciprocity. These particular principles are inter-woven into my thesis and their meaning in relation to First Nations stories and storytelling will recur in each chapter, taking on meaning with each use. Sharing what one has learned is another important First Nations tradition. This type of sharing can take the form of a personal life experience story, and is told with a compassionate mind and love for others. Lightning (1992) of the Samson Cree Nation learned that the compassionate mind combines physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual learning with humility, truth, and love.

During 1990, when I was beginning to formulate my thesis topic, I experienced a dream. Traditionally Sto:lo people had dreams/visions while on an important "quest." I told a good friend about this dream which gave me courage and direction for my research:

I was in a canoe and approaching land. There was a Longhouse close to the water. As the canoe reached shore, many of the Old People came out to greet me. The Old Ones were those who had 'passed on' or as we say travelled to the Spirit World. I recognized many — Ed Leon, Teresa Michele, Susan Peters, Francis Kelly, Jean Silver, and some I did not know. As I walked closer to them, I started to cry. I cried because I realized at that moment how much I missed them and told them that it was so hard living in the city and working at the university: living and working in a place where it was a constant struggle to be First Nations, to think and feel in a cultural way and to be understood by others — the outsiders. I told them that I wanted to leave that cold place, that I wanted to stay with them. They put a woven blanket around me, like the one a Spokesperson wears in our cultural gatherings and brought me into the Longhouse. Inside, each one started talking to me. All I could see was each one talking; it was as if I was watching them with me, like a scene on television, but with the volume turned off. The talk went on for a long, long time. When it was finished, they brought me outside and put me back in the canoe. They said I had to go back, that I wouldn't be lonely anymore and that I had important work to do yet.

In my dream, I returned to the city, to the university, with a new understanding of my purpose in life, and more specifically, what my thesis was to be about, and how I was to do it. I was given an opportunity to learn more about the oral tradition<sup>3</sup> of storytelling. More importantly, I was directed to go on a "journey of learning," to meet and learn from those who use the oral traditions, especially Elders. After the learning experience, I was expected to use the knowledge, and share it with others, thereby ensuring its continuation. Some teachings from my Nation, the Sto:lo, are about responsibility and reciprocity and go like this: Important knowledge and wisdom contain power. If one comes to understand this power, then one must be ready to share and teach it to others<sup>4</sup> in order for this knowledge, this power, to continue. My personal experiences of learning about First Nations stories and their application to education—storywork<sup>5</sup>—and lessons about researching with Elders are what I have to give back. At the outset, in recognition of other academic approaches, I want to establish the validity of my more self-referential approach. Monture-Angus (1995) of the Mohawk people gives an explanation that is similar to the teachings I was also given:

As I have come to understand it from listening to the Elders and traditional teachers, the only person I can speak about is myself. That is how the Creator made all of us....All I have to share with you is myself, my

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<sup>3</sup> The terms orality and oral tradition in my thesis will refer to First Nations traditional cultural and life experience stories. Oral tradition includes much more such as speechmaking, verbal instruction, song, and dance. For a while, I was interested in speechmaking but found that this topic needed more attention devoted to it than I was able to give in this thesis.

<sup>4</sup> In Sto:lo tradition, we teach our cultural knowledge to those who ask to be taught. The learner though must be "ready" to learn and spend time with the cultural teacher. Chapters Three and Four discuss the process of learning from Elders. Non-First Nations people are often included in this learning process, although they should be aware of the issues concerning cultural appropriation of knowledge.

<sup>5</sup> The term "storywork" will be used throughout the thesis to mean using stories for teaching and learning purposes. Sto:lo people use the word "work" in reference to activities that are of a cultural nature and carried out in gatherings. I follow the Sto:lo cultural use of the word "work."

experience and how I have come to understand that experience....In my culture, not speaking from the 'me' is a violation. The only true knowledge that I can have is that which is learned from what I have experienced (pp.44-45).

I agree that I have a responsibility to speak about what I have learned and that much of that learning comes from experiences; however, much of what I have learned also comes from others. Even though I speak from "me," the circles of influence from my family, community, and Nation also shape "me." To provide some further context for understanding my approach, I will provide some personal background which brought me to the dream with the Elders. From 1976-83, I worked in my home area, the Sto:lo Nation, with the Coqualeetza Cultural Centre, the Coqualeetza Elders, and the Sto:lo Sitel curriculum project. I was employed as an elementary school teacher with the Chilliwack School District and as curriculum consultant for Coqualeetza. The Sto:lo geographical area encompasses the Fraser Valley of British Columbia. The estimated Sto:lo population is 5,700 (Carlson, 1997). The Halq'emeylem word Sto:lo means river. We are the River People. My relationship to the river, the land, and its resources has significantly influenced my identity. The name *Coqualeetza* means a gathering and cleansing place where people met to wash their blankets. Today, the Coqualeetza complex is still a gathering place where the cultural, social, political, and educational affairs of the Sto:lo are administered. The Coqualeetza Elders' group was formally established in 1970. They continue to meet regularly to document cultural knowledge, the Halq'emeylem language, to discuss any matter brought before them, and to give counsel to elected Chiefs, educators, and students. The Elders' group and the Coqualeetza staff were instrumental in



planning, developing, and implementing an elementary level social studies curriculum called the *Sto:lo Sitel*. *Sitel* is the name given to a basket used to store treasures.

An important aspect of the curriculum work focused on First Nations cultural stories. During the seven year period of this work, I was fortunate to hear many traditional and life experience stories told at Elders' meetings, cultural gatherings like the summer fish camp, funerals, feasts, and in personal conversations. These stories created good memories of feeling loved by the Elders and started a beginning appreciation of the intellectual and emotional teachings that were embedded in the stories. Some of these beginning teachings were introduced in the *Sto:lo Sitel* lessons.

I left the Sto:lo area in 1985 and moved to Vancouver to work at the University of British Columbia with the Native Indian Teacher Education Program. In 1989, I enrolled in a Ph.D program at Simon Fraser University. One goal I had was to find a way to explore First Nations epistemology within the course work and thesis. Along the way, I decided to focus on the topic of First Nations orality. The experience of working with the Elders and the Sto:lo Sitel curriculum project greatly influenced my choice. Along the way I also found Coyote.

### ***Finding Coyote***

On this research journey I met many gifted and caring storytellers who readily shared their stories and understandings of the oral traditions. Many whom I talked to became new friends. With "old" friends, a new dynamic to our friendship emerged as we shared story experiences. One of the new friends was Coyote. Amongst many First Nations,

Coyote and his/her/its many manifestations is considered a Trickster character who has lots to learn and teach while travelling the world. The English word “Trickster” is a poor one because it cannot portray the diverse range of metaphorical meanings Trickster has to First Nations. Sometimes the Trickster is like a magician, an enchanter, an absurd prankster, like a Shaman, sometimes a shape shifter, and often takes on human characteristics. Trickster is a transformer figure, one whose transformations can carry good lessons using humour, satire, self-mocking, and absurdity. Other well known Trickster characters include Raven, Wesakejac, Nanabozo, and Glooscap. Each First Nations culture has particular attributes and types of teachings connected to the Trickster. Trickster often gets into trouble by ignoring cultural rules and practices or by letting the negative side of “humanness” rule such as vanity, greed, selfishness, and foolishness. Trickster seems to learn lessons the hard way, and sometimes not at all. On the other hand, Trickster has the ability to do good things for others and is sometimes like a powerful Spiritual Being and given much respect.

Trickster characters like Coyote have existed in our stories since “time immemorial” as our people say. Tribal tricksters seem to live and nearly die or die and then are resurrected. Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the tribal trickster related to my storytelling research is Gerald Vizenor’s (1987) notion that he/she/it needs communal connections.

...[T]he trickster is in a comic world, surviving by his wits, prevailing in good humor. He’s in a collective, hardly ever in isolation. When he is in isolation, he’s almost always in trouble, in a life-threatening situation he has to get out of through ritual or symbolic acts. Through reversals he has to get back to connections to imagination, to people, to places (p.295).

Vizenor of the Minnesota Chippewa Nation, believes that the trickster is a “doing, not an essence, not a museum being, not an aesthetic presence” (p.13). The notion of trickster as a “doing” rather than a “being” fits with how I have come to appreciate the process of learning through trickster stories. Trickster as a doing can change and live on through time as people interact with trickster through stories; one does not have to be too concerned about what the trickster looks like if he/she/it is a doing rather than a being. This notion of the tribal trickster lets me interact with him/her/it. Coyote then, helps me to reflect and to gain understandings, challenges and comforts me, just like a friend.

Contemporary Aboriginal storytellers and writers relate to the characteristics and roles of the tribal trickster in various ways. Sherman Alexie (1995) of the Spokane/Coeur d’Alene people of Western Washington uses analogies to define a Coyote trickster that intersect with North American popular culture:

*From Thomas Builds-the-Fire's Journal:*

**Coyote:** A small canid (*Canis latrans*) native to western North America that is closely related to the American wolf and whose cry has often been compared to that of Sippie Wallace and Janis Joplin, among others.

**Coyote:** A traditional figure in Native American mythology, alternately responsible for the creation of the earth and for some of the more ignorant acts after the fact.

**Coyote:** A trickster whose bag of tricks contains permutations of love, hate, weather, chance, laughter, and tears, e.g. Lucille Ball (p.48).

Tomson Highway, of the Cree Nation, said that without the Trickster “the core of Indian culture would be gone forever” (cited in Acoose, 1993, p.37). He notes that the role of the Trickster “is to teach us about the nature and the meaning of existence on the planet

Earth” (ibid, p.38). Lenore Keeshig-Tobias points out the paradoxical role of Trickster as teacher: “....Christ-like in a way. Except that from our Teacher, we learn through the Teacher’s mistakes as well as the [T]eacher’s virtues” (ibid, p. 38).

In this thesis, Coyote stories will appear sometimes upon invitation, sometimes unexpectedly. How Coyote sees the world and comes to make sense of it through his inter-relationships is critical to understanding the lessons I learned about First Nations storytelling and the research process.

When I began to delve into the topic of First Nations orality, the first contradiction that I faced focused on the fact that I had to complete a Ph.D thesis, academic work steeped in literacy and analysis, on the topic of First Nations orality, presumably based on aural/oral delivery. First Nations stories have lost educational and social value as a result of weak translations from Aboriginal languages to English. The translations lose much of the original humour and meaning and are misinterpreted and/or appropriated, often by non-Native academics, and denigrated as they become simple etiological myths told by those who misunderstand their epistemological value (Blaeser, 1993). I did not want to perpetuate this loss. Instead, I wanted to find a way to honour First Nations orality within an academic framework, to find a way to create a meeting place for orality and academic literacy to co-exist, and to create a discourse where First Nations storytellers and university academics could inter-relate and learn from one another. The tensions created from this coming together of two seemingly different cultures is a constant theme of this thesis which surfaces with issues of academic explicitness and critical analysis and First

Nations implicitness and subtlety. However, when one understands First Nations ways of knowing through story, the subtleties become explicit with critical thinking.

The story of *Coyote's Eyes* told and written by Terry Tafoya <sup>6</sup> (1982) from the Taos Pueblo and Warm Springs Reservation helped me see these contradictions in various ways. This story was put into a written version for an educational journal. Tafoya's way of bringing together the oral tradition and academe created a pathway for me to follow. The way that Terry shared some cultural understandings and discussed issues related to learning from story, indicated that he too has grappled with differences between First Nations story implicitness and academic explicitness: "It would be most appropriate in terms of Native American cognitive development that I relate this story and simply close. However, due to the linear and discursive nature of conventional American education...let me attempt to explicate one of the meanings of the story" (p.22). His explications helped me to unfold metaphoric meaning, as I was unfamiliar with some of the cultural symbolic meanings in this story. But once started, a traditional principle of making one's own story meaning took over and has not stopped. My beginning ponderings of the story focused on the tensions between orality and literacy. Over the years this story has become important to my teaching and learning, as other meanings unfold in various contexts. Throughout this thesis some of the understandings I've gained about this story will appear. The tensions between honouring a listener/learner's ability to make meaning and the demands of academe to "say what you mean" will be constantly on these pages. This text can never

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<sup>6</sup> This story is reprinted with permission from the *Journal of American Indian Education* (JAIE) in the same paragraphing format as the original version. The JAIE is published by the Center for Indian Education, College of Education, Arizona State University, Tempe AZ, 85287-1311.

totally represent First Nations orality and it can never totally encompass the explicitness demanded of academe. There will be times when the eye of First Nations orality will open and other times when the eye of academe will take over. One of Tafoya's lessons for this story is "...one must be flexible enough to be able to switch worldviews when appropriate"<sup>7</sup> (p.32). Many stories are represented in the following chapters. To prepare you the reader/listener to learn from them, I quote the need for patience and trust as told by Leslie Marmon Silko, (1996) of the Laguna Pueblo Nation, New Mexico:

For those of you accustomed to being taken from point A to point B to point C, this presentation may be somewhat difficult to follow. Pueblo expression resembles something like a spider's web—with many little threads radiating from the center, crisscrossing one another. As with the web, the structure emerges as it is made, and you must simply listen and trust, as the Pueblo people do, that meaning will be made (pp.48-49).

Patience and trust are essential for preparing to listen to stories. Listening involves more than just using the auditory sense. Listening encompasses visualizing the characters and their actions and letting the emotions surface. Some say one should listen with three ears: "two on our head and one in our heart."

Long time ago, when mountains were the size of salmon eggs, Coyote was going along, and saw that Rabbit was doing something. Now, this Rabbit was a *Twati*, an Indian doctor, and as Coyote watched, Rabbit sang his spirit song, and the Rabbit's eyes flew out of his head and perched on a tree branch. Rabbit called out, 'Whee-num, come here,' and his eyes returned to their empty sockets.

This greatly impressed Coyote, who immediately begged Rabbit to teach him how to do this.

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<sup>7</sup> The term "appropriate" raises critical questions: What is appropriate? When are appropriate times to tell a story? How and to whom should the story be told? How is appropriateness determined? Throughout this thesis, this term and these questions arise. The answers are not straight forward and not generalizable to all First Nations cultures. The answers are determined within a cultural context.

Rabbit said no.

Coyote begged.

Rabbit said no.

‘Oh, please,’ cried Coyote.

‘No,’ replied Rabbit.

‘But it’s such a wonderful trick! Teach me.’

‘No.’

‘But I’ll do exactly as you say!’

‘I will teach you,’ said Rabbit, ‘but you must never do this more than four times in one day, or something terrible will happen to you.’ And so Rabbit taught Coyote his spirit song, and soon Coyote’s eyes flew up and perched on a tree.

‘Whee-num! Come here!’ called Coyote, and his eyes returned to him.

Now Rabbit left, and Coyote kept practicing. He sent his eyes back and forth to the tree four times. Then he thought, ‘I should show off this new trick to the Human People, instead of just doing it for myself.’

So Coyote went to the nearest Indian village, and yelled out for all the people to gather around him. With his new audience, Coyote sang the Rabbit’s song, and the crowd was very impressed to see his eyes fly out of his head and perch on the branch of a tree.

‘Whee-num!’ Coyote called out. His eyes just sat on the tree and looked down at him. The Indian people started to laugh.

‘Come here!’ shouted Coyote. His eyes just looked at him.

‘Whee-num!’ Just then a crow flew by, and spotting the eyes, thought they were berries. The crow swooped down and ate them.

Now Coyote was blind, and staggered out of the village, hoping to find new eyes. He heard the sounds of running water, and felt around, trying to find the stream. Now, around flowing water, one finds bubbles, and Coyote tried to take these bubbles and use them for eyes. But bubbles soon pop, and that’s what Coyote discovered.

Now Coyote felt around and discovered huckleberries, so he took those and used them for eyes. But huckleberries are so dark, everything looked black. Now Coyote was really feeling sorry for himself.

‘Eenee snawai, I’m just pitiful,’ Coyote cried.

‘Why are you so sad?’ asked a small voice, for little mouse had heard him.

‘My dear Cousin,’ said Coyote, ‘I’ve lost my eyes...I’m blind, and I don’t know what to do.’

‘Snawai Yunwai,’ replied Mouse. ‘You poor thing. I have two eyes, so I will share one with you.’ Having said this, Mouse removed one of his eyes and handed it to Coyote. Now Coyotes are much larger than mice, and when Coyote dropped Mouse’s eye into his socket, it just rolled around in the big empty space. The new eye was so small it only let in a tiny amount of light. It was like looking at the world through a little hole.

Coyote walked on, still feeling sorry for himself, just barely able to get around with Mouse’s eye. ‘Eenee snawai, I’m just pitiful,’ he sobbed.

‘Why are you crying, Coyote?’ asked Buffalo in his deep voice.

‘Oh Cousin,’ began Coyote, ‘all I have to see with is this tiny eye of Mouse. It’s so small it only lets in a little bit of light, so I can barely see.’

‘Snawai Yunwai,’ replied Buffalo. ‘You poor thing, I have two eyes, so I will share one with you.’ Then Buffalo took out one of his eyes and handed it to Coyote. Now Buffaloes are much larger than Coyotes, and when Coyote tried to squeeze Buffalo’s eye into his other socket, it hung over into the rest of his face. So large was Buffalo’s eye that it let in so much light, Coyote was nearly blinded by the glare...everything looked twice as large as it ordinarily did. And so, Coyote was forced to continue his journey, staggering about with his mismatched eyes (1982, pp.21-22).

Terry Tafoya shares one of many meanings from this story. He says, "Coyote, in his normal state represents a bit of everything. He must not be understood by knowing only one legend, but in the context of the many legends in which he and his counterparts in other tribes appear" (p.22). Throughout this study other Coyote stories and other First Nations stories and views about oral tradition will be shared to build the kind of context



Tafoya implies. At the end of the story, Coyote staggers because he has only "accommodated the elements of Mouse and Buffalo into his strategies; he is not very successful because he has not learned balance. To be a whole human being (one might say, a complete Coyote), one must learn to switch back and forth between the eyes of not only Mouse and Buffalo, but ...all the other animals of legend"(p.24). The other animals have cultural symbolic meanings too and their relationships with Coyote must be understood. Thomas King (1990) of Cherokee descent describes the positive effect of Trickster's learning in bringing about balance: "The trickster is an important figure...it allows us to create a particular kind of world in which the Judeo-Christian concern with good and evil and order and disorder is replaced with the more Native concern for balance and harmony" (p. xiii). The balance and harmony discussed by Tafoya and King depends upon understanding the concept of First Nations wholism, sometimes symbolized by the Medicine Wheel (Pepper & Henry, 1991; Cajete, 1994; Calliou, 1995), or the Sacred Circle of Life (Sioui, 1992).

### ***Wholism: Creating A Context For Orality***

The First Nations philosophical concept of wholism often refers to the inter-relatedness between the intellectual, spiritual (metaphysical values and beliefs and the Creator), emotional, and physical (body and behaviour/action) realms to form a whole healthy person. The development of wholism extends to and is mutually influenced by one's family, community, Band and Nation. The image of a circle is used by many First Nations peoples to symbolize wholeness, completeness, and ultimately wellness. The never ending circle also forms concentric circles to show the synergistic influence and

responsibility to the generations of Ancestors, the generations of today, and the generations yet to come. The animal/human kingdoms, the elements of Nature/land, and the Spirit World are an integral part of the concentric circles.

Each First Nations group has developed its own cultural content for the wholistic circle symbol<sup>8</sup>. However, the common goal has been to attain a mutual balance and harmony among animals, people, elements of nature, and the Spirit World. To attain this goal, ways of acquiring knowledge and codes of behaviour, are of course essential and are embedded in cultural practices; one which plays a key role in the oral tradition is storytelling. Some stories remind us about being whole and healthy and remind us of traditional teachings that have relevance in our lives. When we lose a part of ourselves, we lose balance and harmony, and we may feel like Coyote with the mismatched eyes.

Coyote's situation could also be a metaphor for the relationship between orality and literacy, or it could be about the relationship between First Nations storytellers and academic researchers. At first, I likened the small eye to our oral tradition which has been denigrated and diminished through Western literate influences. The larger eye representing the literate Western traditions has often assumed an overpowering position, especially in educational contexts. Coyote was given the challenge to make his eyes work together in order to have a clearer view of the world. I was challenged to bring together a First Nations epistemology and academic research methodology. In Coyote stories, he

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<sup>8</sup> Wholism and the circle symbol as discussed here are placed within a philosophical educational context as it relates to First Nations traditional principles of teaching and learning. I am not saying that we only saw or continue to see everything as a circle. We walk along lines too.

keeps journeying and learns lessons along the way. I followed Coyote's lead and went on a journey to learn about orality, and in particular, about storytelling. This thesis will also share some Coyote lessons about researching this topic. On this journey Coyote and I decided to ask those who travelled on story pathways<sup>9</sup> about the nature of stories, how they were traditionally used for teaching and learning purposes, and what place First Nations stories could have in education today. I have been taught that Elders who have "tried to live their life right, just like a story" to borrow the phrase from Yukon Elder, Mrs. Smith, (1990, p.1) are respected teachers because they have tried to be "good" human beings by being guided by the traditional teachings embedded and implied in First Nations stories. Gregory Cajete, a Tewa Indian, from the Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico, provides a definition of the goodness that I am referring to:

The Indigenous ideal of living 'a good life' in Indian traditions is at times referred to by Indian people as striving 'to always think the highest thought.' ....Thinking the highest thought means thinking of one's self, one's community, and one's environment richly. This thinking in the highest, most respectful, and compassionate way systematically influences the actions of both individuals and the community. It is a way to perpetuate 'a good life,' a respectful and spiritual life, a wholesome life (1994, p.46).

Not all Elders are storytellers, and not all Elders have lived their lives like stories. But to learn the highest degree of cultural knowledge, one would go to an Elder or someone not yet an Elder, who understands and who lives the "good" cultural traditions. Lightning (1992) describes the authority Elders use to teach: "...when [Elders] teach others they very often begin by quoting the authority of Elders who have gone before. They do not

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<sup>9</sup> I use Greg Cayete's (1994) Navajo definition of pathways: "path" symbolizes a journey and a process; "way" is a cultural, philosophical framework.

state the authority as coming from themselves. They will say things like ‘This is what they used to say,’ or ‘This is what they said” (p.242). Following this teaching and type of authority, this thesis is about what Elders and others who tried to live their life right, just like a story, told me.

Chapter Two will start by coming to terms with the oral and written ways, then present an argument for hearing what First Nations have to say. An examination of literature from First Nations perspectives about the nature of stories and storytelling will identify seven principles which provide the beginnings of a theoretical framework for making story-meaning: wholism, inter-relatedness, synergy, respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and reverence.

Chapter Three serves as the methodology chapter which traces the move from ethnography to critical ethnography through the lens of First Nations cultural contexts, to story research with Elders. Establishing respectful research relationships will be portrayed through my experiences with three Elders: *Khot-la-cha* Chief Dr. Simon Baker, *Tsimlano* Dr. Vincent Stogan, and *Kwulasulwut* Ellen White. Tracing respect from cultural protocol, appreciating the significance and reverence for Spirituality, honouring teacher and learner responsibilities, and practicing a cyclical type of reciprocity are important lessons documented here.

Chapter Four starts with my story of learning to become a beginning storyteller and beginning to appreciate the nature and concept of power embedded in some stories. It is as if the story “comes alive” and becomes the teacher.

Chapter Five presents the teachings of the (Sto:lo) Coqualeetza Elders. I return “home” to talk with Elders to learn more about traditional aspects of becoming a storyteller, cultural contexts for storytelling, and together we identify issues about storywork.

Chapter Six is presented as a curriculum story about the *First Nations Journeys of Justice* project which has a strong storywork component to it. Talks with the curriculum developers highlight issues of preparing teachers who know little about First Nations storytelling, putting First Nations stories into print format, and working with community storytellers in a respectful way.

Chapter Seven serves as a story summary of the seven theoretical principles of respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity, wholism, inter-relatedness, and synergy.

Implications for education, in particular for curriculum and pedagogy are discussed through two teaching experiences. Coyote comes back in one last story with reminders of how culture can heal. Coming back to the teachings of the Elders helped me present—share “back”—and “give away” my learning through the metaphor of a storybasket.

## CHAPTER TWO: COYOTE KEEPS LOOKING

It is important to note that the oral tradition still lives, and the written tradition is growing within it, not exempt from it. The one will never replace the other. The elements of old stories, of the spoken language, the myths and narratives that sustain the culture, and the speech patterns of the elders occur over and over again in the new writing (N. Dauenhauer, R. Dauenhauer, & G. Holthaus, 1986, pp.10-11).

The insistence on reading Native literature by way of Western literary theory clearly violates its integrity and performs a new act of colonization and conquest (Blaeser, 1993, p.55).

### ***Coming To Terms With Oral and Written Ways***

Losing the “eyes” or the understanding of a worldview embedded in Aboriginal oral traditions, in particular the stories, is strongly linked to the legacy of forced assimilation through the missionary and residential school eras, then the public schooling system (Ashworth, 1979; Kirkness, 1981; Archibald, 1993). A life experience story of an anthropologist, Barre Toelken (1981) exemplifies the detrimental influence of schooling and academic literacy upon the ability to make story-meaning in a traditional way thus affecting the storytelling relationship between a Navajo Elder, Little Wagon, and the Elder’s grandson. The grandson asked Little Wagon where snow came from. In response, the grandfather told a story about an Ancestor who found some beautiful burning material which he kept burning until the owners, the Spirits, asked for it. The Spirits wanted to reward the finder, but because the material was so precious, they asked him to complete very difficult feats to test his patience and endurance. After he successfully completed them, the Spirits told him in return for his fine behaviour they would throw all the ashes from their own fireplace down into Montezuma Canyon each year when they cleaned

house. Little Wagon closes the story: “ Sometimes they fail to keep their word; but in all, they turn their attention toward us regularly, here in Montezuma Canyon” (p.73). After awhile the grandson asked why it snowed in another area. The Elder told the boy that he would have to make his own story to answer that question. Much later, Little Wagon told Toelken that it was too bad that his grandson did not understand stories. The lesson/point that Toelken learned:

I found by questioning him that he did not in fact consider it an etiological story and did not in any way believe that that was the way snow originated; rather, if the story was about anything it was about moral values, about the deportment of a young protagonist whose actions showed a properly reciprocal relationship between himself and nature. In short, *by seeing the story in terms of any categories I had been taught to recognize, I had missed the point*; and so had our young visitor, a fact which Little Wagon at once attributed to the deadly influences of white schooling (my emphasis, p.73).

Little Wagon was right about the "deadly influence of white schooling" which contributed to the diminishing influence of the oral tradition when institutionalized schooling and its essayist form of literacy (Scollon & Scollon, 1981) was forced upon First Nations. The history of colonized assimilation and acculturation predominantly through education forced mainstream literacy, values, and ways of thinking upon generations of Aboriginal people in Canada. Aboriginal languages, and hence our forms of orality were prohibited in the residential schools. More stories of children being harshly punished for speaking their language and the inter-generational effects of residential school abuse are being told and published (Jaine, 1993; Sterling, 1992; Royal Commission On Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). The Aboriginal cultural values and

worldviews were displaced for a time and viewed/interpreted with “categories” different from their original cultural context.

When I first began reading literature about First Nations orality, its relationships to both literacy and to literary theories seemed problematic. The *Coyote's Eyes* story helped me characterize their relationships. At first I placed orality and literacy and orality and literary theory in dichotomies because their characteristics seemed so different. Perhaps I did this because the historic relationship between First Nations and anything ascribed as “Western” has usually been described as being different and in opposition to each other. The benefit of these dichotomies was that I began to explore what I called a pathway to “strengthen orality” (1992, p.78). For four years I learned from Elders and other storytellers about the characteristics of the oral tradition and stories. I also examined the topic of orality and its relationship to literacy from the lens of various Western scholars such as Havelock (1963, 1986), Ong (1971, 1982), Goody (1977), Olson (1987), and Egan (1987, 1988). Their understandings of oral cultures were derived either from examinations of Greek orality or from other non-Indigenous academics who studied and wrote about Indigenous oral cultures.<sup>1</sup> After many attempts to revise this chapter, I finally realized that their paradigms and my use of them had the same mistaken result as Toelken viewing Little Wagon's story with categories that did not fit. In various drafts I tried to show that First Nations orality had “good” forms of thinking (Egan 1987) and had some of Ong's (1982) components of his “psychodynamics of orality” (pp.28-37). By doing

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<sup>1</sup> See Archibald, J. (1990). “Coyote's Story About Orality and Literacy” which contains a fuller discussion about First Nations orality and its relationship to forms of Western literacy.



this exercise I felt it was important to show that First Nations orality was intellectually challenging in order to demythologize the notion that the knowledge contained in the oral traditions of Aboriginal people was not as intellectually challenging as that based in Western forms of literacy (i.e. the literacy hypothesis advocated by Goody (1987), Olson (1977), and Ong (1982). By engaging in this type of comparison I was missing the “point” of learning from First Nations’ oral tradition from those who knew about it and had shared it with others in a literate form. I was also caught in a theorizing dilemma. Kimberly Blaeser (1993) of Ojibway ancestry from the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota identified as inappropriate theorizing applied to American Indian literature/stories: “The insistence on reading Native literature by way of Western literary theory clearly violates its integrity and performs a new act of colonization and conquest” (p.55). Colonization in this newer context means “authority emanating from the mainstream critical center to the marginalized native texts” (p.56). Even though Blaeser refers to literary theory; literacy can have the same colonizing influence upon our literature—our stories. To get away from this “new act of colonization” I had to read/hear the voices of First Nations and find the theories embedded in their stories. Kimberly Blaeser echoes these reminders: “...we must first ‘know the stories of our people’ and then ‘make our own story too’...we must ‘be aware of the way they [Western literary theory] change the stories we already know’ for only with that awareness can we protect the integrity of the Native American story” (p.61).

To provide an understanding of First Nations perspectives about storytelling in this chapter I will present literature from Elders and other storytellers.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, I will present storytellers who use written text to show characteristics of stories and the power of storytelling for teaching and learning purposes. Seven of these characteristics will be examined. In addition issues are shared which are related to the politics of accessing publishers and producing publications, the authority to tell stories, and establishing collaborative relationships between First Nations Elders and storytellers and non-First Nations. My concern about the negative influence of literacy and literary theory faded to the background as I found more books and articles related to the oral tradition written by Aboriginal people.<sup>3</sup> As I examined what they had to say about stories and storytelling, I also noted how Aboriginal storytellers used text to portray their oral tradition. These methods will be discussed. In the “review” of literature that follows, there are times when explicit points about issues are made. Sometimes First Nations perspectives are presented without explicit comment, in order to follow the oral tradition of letting the listener, now reader, make meaning from someone’s words and stories, without direction from the storyteller. I ask the reader for patience and cooperation in trying to gain an appreciation of First Nations oral tradition which is presented in textual form. The text limits the level of understanding because it cannot portray the storyteller’s gestures, tone, rhythm, and personality.

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<sup>2</sup> Many Aboriginal storytellers use literacy and sometimes the quoted literature refers to them as “writers.” If the word “writer” appears, then it implies that the writer is also a storyteller.

<sup>3</sup> It seems too obvious to say that without the written text, I would not have learned as much as I did about First Nations orality. Another point which seems obvious is that First Nations people who are skilled at using the oral tradition can also be as skilled with literacy.

## ***Writing About Oral Tradition: First Nations' Perspectives***

Indian elders often remind young people to *live the myths* by saying, 'These stories, this language, these ways, and this land are the only valuables we can give you — but life is in them for those who know how to ask and how to learn' (Gregory Cayete, 1994, p.41).

Scholarly journals and books are important means to create opportunities for First Nations discourses. B.C. Studies (1991), *In Celebration of Our Survival*, dedicated an issue exclusively to First Nations peoples and their voices. The editors, Doreen Jensen and Cheryl Brooks, both Aboriginal women, wanted to acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal peoples' ability to survive decades of colonization and forced assimilation and asked knowledgeable Aboriginal people who were also well known orators to contribute articles. They share a respectful approach to the book that arose from a reaction against a commonly experienced disrespectful one.

As we planned for this publication, we debated how we should limit and focus the content, but ultimately decided that perhaps that has been part of the problem in the past: native people have always been asked for their comments on and contributions to established agenda topics rather than simply being requested to tell their own story. So our contributors were invited to write about what they personally felt was important in painting a portrait of our people (p.10).

The Aboriginal people who contributed to this particular journal edition used personal experience stories, poetry, art, "talks" about traditional teachings, and critical essays about historical, political, and cultural issues to present various and diverse portraits of Aboriginal life.

Jeannette Armstrong (1993) of the Okanagan Nation, also edited a collection of Native academic voices and views about First Nations literature and First Nations literary

analysis, *Looking at the Words of our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature*. In her words: “I felt that gathering a collection of Native academic voices on First Nations literature is one way I can insist on listening to First Nations analysis and the best way to contribute to the dialogue on English literature and First Nations Voice within literature itself” (p.8). Jeannette insists that “the questioning must first be an acknowledgment and recognition that the voices are culture-specific voices and that there are experts within those cultures who are essential to be drawn from and drawn out in order to incorporate into the reinterpretation through pedagogy, the context of English Literature coming from Native Americans” (p.7). She felt uncomfortable taking on the role of an “authority on First Nations literature” (p.7); therefore, she asked various First Nations academics to create literature about approaches to and issues about literary analysis. Her emphasis on finding and letting cultural insiders talk about their meanings and ways of coming to understand their literature/stories should not seem like such a grand idea in 1993!

It is through these types of written forums that First Nations discourses become evident. Carl Urion, (1991) of the Dearborn River Metis, noted two critical considerations about First Nations discourse that he has observed: (1) “it assumes a context in which there is unity and wholeness to be discovered or reaffirmed” and (2) “the relationship between a person of moral authority and another person creates the discourse; it is created anew in each generation; it changes, but maintains its stability and its internal organization” (p.5). I believe that one who has tried to live their “life right,” by practicing the values of

respect, reverence, responsibility, and reciprocity<sup>4</sup>, is one who may have the kind of moral authority advocated by Urion. His considerations are process-oriented and the meanings that are derived through First Nations discourse require constant thinking about and playing with “levels of metaphor and implication” (p. 5). The late Linda Akan, (1992) of the Saulteaux Nation, also talked about First Nations thought using metaphor:

If one were to try to give a metaphorical description of some of the features of First Nations thought, one might say that they go to school in dreams, write in iconographic imagery, travel in Trickster’s vehicle, talk in metaphor, and always walk around (p.213).

Carl Urion also points out that it is not useful to put First Nations and academic discourses in polarized positions, so that one is either chosen over the other, ignored, trivialized, or translated in terms of the other. To make comparisons blurs the vision (of each eye), especially since First Nations have not had much opportunity until the mid 1980s to begin publishing their views and discourses on an ongoing basis in scholarly journals such as the Canadian Journal of Native Education and the Mokakit Education Research<sup>5</sup> publications. He advocates scholarly work that reflects First Nations values in discourse and which “deny no one’s integrity; they hold no one culpable; they exclude no one from the discourse. They let us laugh a little. They recognize that learning is a transcendent experience, a kind of play” (p.7).

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<sup>4</sup> These four values will be developed further in subsequent chapters. They form a beginning Sto:lo and Coast Salish framework for making meaning from stories.

<sup>5</sup> Mokakit is a national First Nations directed research association. Mokakit is a Blackfoot term which means ‘to strive for wisdom.’ The editors of the Canadian Journal of Native Education are First Nations.

The issues and the way that we want to deal with the issues—the types of conversations and talks—must be given space for us to fill. This does not mean that non-Native people should be forever excluded from the conversations. I am suggesting that we, First Nations, need some space to talk: to share our stories in our own way, to create our culturally based discourses, develop our ways to validate our discourses, then open the conversation for others to join.

There is a lot of rhetoric about the “voices” of the people being presented through written text. How does one assess the cultural content coming from the many voices and who has authority to speak? Basil Johnston, Objibwa storyteller and author provides an answer based on traditional reverence for speech and its strong connection to truth:

...words are medicine that can heal or injure....To instill respect for language the old counselled youth, ‘Don’t talk too much,’ ...for they saw a kinship between language and truth. The expression is not without its facetious aspect but in its broader application it was intended to convey to youth other notions implicit in the expression ‘Don’t talk too much,’ for the injunction also meant ‘Don’t talk too often...Don’t talk too long...Don’t talk about those matters that you know nothing about.’ Were a person to restrict his discourse, and measure his speech, and govern his talk by what he knew, he would earn the trust and respect of his (her) listeners...people would want to hear the speaker again and by so doing bestow upon the speaker the opportunity to speak, for ultimately it is the people who confer the right of speech by their audience (1990, p.12).

Johnston shows a relationship between truth, respect, and trust which could serve as a criterion for determining the credibility of one’s words. He goes on to exemplify the high regard given to those who skillfully and respectfully practiced the oral tradition and introduces a negative effect of literacy which separated the speaker from the listener:

Language was a precious heritage; literature was no less precious. So precious did the tribe regard language and speech that it held those who abused language and speech and truth in contempt and ridicule and withheld them from their trust and confidence. To the tribe the man or woman who rambled on and on, who let his tongue range over every subject or warp the truth was said to talk in circles in a manner no different from that of a mongrel who, not knowing the source of alarm, barks in circles. Ever since words and sounds were reduced to written symbols and have been stripped of their mystery and magic, the regard and reverence for them have diminished in tribal life (pp.12-13).

The mystery, magic, and truth/respect/trust relationship between the speaker/storyteller and listener/reader may be brought to life on the printed page if the principles of the oral tradition are used. A few First Nations people have persisted and managed to publish their traditional and life experience stories using principles from their oral traditions: George Clutesi (1967, 1969, 1990), Ellen White (1981), Simon Baker and Verna Kirkness (1994), David Neel (1992), and Maria Campbell (1973, 1995). There are other Native American storytellers and writers such as N. Scott Momaday (1969), Leslie Silko (1981, 1996), Paula Gun Allen (1983, 1986, 1989), and Gerald Vizenor (1987, 1989), who have been greatly influenced by the study of oral traditions.

The late George Clutesi (1967, 1969) was among the first Aboriginal people in British Columbia to publish two books of stories from his culture, the Tse-shaht people of Vancouver Island: *Potlatch* and *Son of Raven, Son of Deer*. Both were used in the public school system. In 1969, I heard George Clutesi speak to a group of First Nations university students; I was one of them. He was an inspirational yet humble speaker. I felt very proud to identify with him as an Indian person. There were very few Aboriginal people who had published books at that time and who had them included in school

curricula. Today, as I look at the book *Potlatch*, and read the jacket cover, written by someone else, I feel frustrated with the patronizing tone of the language; but at least the writer was right about his leading white children to deeper understandings:

In 1967, during Canada's Centennial Year, Mr. Clutesi was commissioned to paint a large mural at Expo and his first book. *Son of Raven, Son of Deer* appeared and headed for immediate success. Now his message was coming through strong and clear. The final accolade after years of struggle was the selection of this first book as an elementary English text in British Columbia schools. Indian children making an appearance in schools outside the reserves are delighted to find a text written by one of their own race. White children discover in George Clutesi an Indian Aesop who leads them to deeper understanding.

In the forward to *Potlatch*, George Clutesi tells us: "This narrative is not meant to be documentary. In fact it is meant to evade documents. It is meant for the reader to feel and to say I was there and indeed I saw." The power of the storyteller to make the listeners/readers visualize and feel like they are part of the story is a principle I have heard from others. This principle will be exemplified in later chapters. George Clutesi died before his last book *Stand Tall, My Son* (1990) was published. In this book he wrote about the education of a young boy, a member of a Northwest Coast culture, through stories, talks, and art; the themes of tradition, change, survival, and strength are strongly presented. Mr. Clutesi was a very respected orator, artist, and educator. His legacy of knowledge, wisdom, and philosophy have been left to those who take the time and effort to learn from his teachings.

We, as a nation, possess many admirable qualities. We still have enough patience. We still listen before we utter. There are yet among us admirable teachers endowed with empathy and compassion. Seek for their knowledge especially during your quest and sojourn in the alien world of



technology....Among other qualities, your people as a whole possess a voice that soothes and calms the whole being (p.169).

Verna J. Kirkness of the Cree Nation, Manitoba, and well known educator compiled and edited the life story of Dr. Simon Baker, from the Squamish Nation: *Khot-La-Cha: The Autobiography of Chief Simon Baker* (1994). Simon is my long-time friend, mentor and teacher. He asked Verna to help him present his life story through a book, and in his own way. His motive for publishing his life story, based on the principles of reciprocity and responsibility has been echoed by many Elders:

I would like to tell about my life, what I've seen, what I've done, so my grandchildren and their children will learn things that happened in this last hundred years. I believe that my story will be interesting for schools. I know when I go to schools today, kindergartens or even high school, the children like to hear about my life. They enjoy my songs that my elders taught me many years ago. I sing to them in my language and often I tell them the story of my people, using my talking stick (p.xi).

Chief Khot-La-Cha continues his Elder teaching responsibility by creating educational material that could be used in school curricula. The students of the Native Indian Teacher Education Program at the University of British Columbia are working on a Teacher's Guide to accompany his book. Simon's book shows how life experience stories can teach about culture, nature, history, politics, leadership, family relationships, and the importance of Elders. His people's teachings about relationships to nature's resources, the importance of spirituality, and the benefits of cultural knowledge are stressed in his talk.

I was born and raised by the river. Water is very important. Our old people used to say, 'water is your best friend.' They would tell us to go and swim even when we were just toddlers. Mother Earth gave us water and we were taught....It goes in a cycle. If we didn't have water we would perish...water gives you a new life, a good feeling (p.155).

We have gone too long in the wrong direction. We were a spiritual people. We paid great homage to our Creator and we must get back to that way of thinking. Spirituality, culture and [Native] language must be emphasized for our young people to know who they are. Education is the tool necessary for self-determination...it will take time. First of all, our young people need pride (p.176).

Simon tape-recorded many of the political meetings and talks that he had with his *tillicums*/friends. Over the years there has been concern among First Nations about not recognizing the important contribution Elders can make. One such historic meeting was held in 1976 to discuss the provincial disunity of the B.C. First Nations and the role of the Elder “kept coming up” (p.181). Simon shares what the late George Clutesi said:

We must ask ourselves how we can best get back together....We the old-timers, old men and old women, are feeling bad because we seem to have been thrown aside because our usefulness has been considered to be at an end. Friends, in the old Indian tradition, in the old Indian philosophy, in the old Indian teachings, the older you get, the more you will be needed. The sooner the young people realize this the sooner we can work together like one good family (p.183).

There are many First Nations Elders who could make significant epistemological and social contributions to all levels of education. We are fortunate that Elders like Dr. Simon Baker have given inspiration, good teachings, and quality leadership to many.

I’m in the last cycle. People are coming to ask me, ‘What did you do in the past? What can we do in the future to teach our children?’ We are faced with so many things: violence, drugs, alcohol. So we’re going back to our culture, to the old ways; taking our children back into the longhouse, taking them into the sweat lodge....It’s coming back strong. The cycle of healing. We’re healing a lot of people of the suffering when they went to [residential] school....Their cycle is coming back. They’re giving themselves back to the Great Spirit. It is good to sit with an elder. It is good medicine for us. We like to talk. When the day is finished, I like to think I did something for today. Tomorrow is another day (p.173).

David Neel (1992) photographer, artist, and writer from the Kwagiutl Nation, talked with 47 Northwest Coast Elders and leaders for *[Our Chiefs and Elders]: Words and Photographs of Native Leaders*. He combines photography and the talks with very little editing, to present “a statement of the surviving race” (p.11). This work is in contrast to the much earlier approach of Edward Curtis who promoted the ‘vanishing race’ myth. Neel also acknowledges the critical need to have Elders’ teachings and shares important lessons he learned about respect and responsibility during his work:

Today, the role and knowledge of elders are being preserved and respected to the best ability of the people. The roles of elders vary from area to area and from family to family. Throughout the Coast area they are recognized as a great resource. Elders often play a role in the political process as well as in the general culture. It is their inherited knowledge, as well as their perspective (derived from experience), which is valued. In the Native way, memory or history is a tribal or family responsibility and is held and passed on by elders.

....Respect is the foundation for all relationships: between individuals, with future and past generations, with the Earth, with animals, with our Creator...and with ourselves. To understand [respect] and apply it to our lives is an ongoing process. This is the most valuable lesson the leaders have for us. It is not a lesson that can be explained with the simple formula [or definition], ‘Respect is...’(p.22).

Maria Campbell (1995), a Metis author, film maker, teacher, activist, and storyteller, translated *Stories Of The Road Allowance People*, as told by some of the “old men.” She describes the comfortable family-like context for storytelling and how she was directed to learn from the old men rather than the old women:

I remember a warm kitchen on a stormy winter night. I am sitting on the floor with my Cheechum and the old ladies. The room is full of grandpas, mammas and papas, aunties, uncles and cousins. There is laughter, hot sweet tea and the smell of red willow tobacco. ‘Hahaa kiyas mana kisayanoo kah kee achimoot...Long ago the old man told us this story,’ my

uncle would begin and my Cheechum and the old ladies would puff their clay pipes and nod. 'Tapwe anima, tapwe...Yes, yes it is true.'

....Today, the stories I heard then, I have learned, and I have been given permission to share them with you. They are old men's stories. I had hoped when I became a student of storytelling that I would get old women teachers, but that was not meant to be. The old women were kind, made me pots of tea, cooked me soup and bannock, made me starblankets and moccasins, then sent me off to the old men who became my teachers (p.2).

In Maria's case and often in a traditional way, Elders will direct the learning process for those who ask. They seem to know what the learner is capable of absorbing. They connect the learner with the appropriate teacher, the main considerations relate to the most appropriate teacher for the learner or for the type of knowledge being sought. The learner needs to have faith and trust in the Elders who are directing the learning process and follow their lead.

Maria carries out her cultural responsibility of sharing her learning and takes ownership of any mistakes. This is a gentle reminder to me that I should also take responsibility for any mistakes contained in this research work because those who shared their knowledge with me, did so with great care and often said that they spoke the truth as they knew it. Another important principle of learning through storytelling is that time does not matter. Stories can be heard and the meanings one makes or does not make of them can happen at any time. One does not have to give a meaning right after hearing a story, like the question and answer pedagogical approach.

....With the stories, I have had lifetimes of 'stuff' put into my memory. I am not even sure what it all is but the teachers say, 'Don't worry about it, just think that your brain is the computer you use and we are the people typing it in. When you need it, or you have had the experience to understand it, your spirit will give it to you.' I have learned to trust them.

It is in this spirit that I share these stories with you. I give them to you in the dialect and rhythm of my village and my father's generation. I am responsible for all the mistakes (p.2).

A similar "timeless" experience was shared by Simon Ortiz (1992) of the Acoma Pueblo, New Mexico, who strongly connected to stories heard in his childhood, but did not recognize their communal power until he was older: "...all were interesting and vitally important to me because, I could not explain it then, they tied me into the communal body of my people and heritage." By using English and writing, he found new ways to ensure that these stories would continue: "Consequently, when I learned to read and write, I believe I felt those stories continued somehow in the new language and use of the new language and they would never be lost, forgotten, and finally gone. They would always continue" (p.9). He, like numerous Elders before him, learned to use English and writing as "tools" to represent the orally told stories. The oral tradition of the stories shaped and created a framework in which to place and use literacy. Transforming the orally told stories to another language and another form of representation so that the power and integrity of the stories remains requires that one know the essential characteristics of stories. I have heard Elders talk about the necessity of knowing the "core" of the stories. I believe this means knowing the basic content of the story, its characteristics or nature, as well as the cultural principles connected to the story.

### ***Getting To The "Core" Of Stories: Some Principles To Consider***

Simon Ortiz (1992) reminds us of how the oral tradition reflects the belief system and consciousness of a people.

The oral tradition of Native American people is based upon spoken language, but it is more than that too. Oral tradition is inclusive; it is the actions, behavior, relationships, practices throughout the whole social, economic, and spiritual life process of people. In this respect, the oral tradition is the consciousness of the people. I think at times 'oral tradition' is defined too strictly in terms of verbal-vocal manifestations in stories, songs, meditations, ceremonies, ritual, philosophies, and clan and tribal histories passed from older generations to the next....Oral tradition evokes and expresses a belief system, and it is specific activity that confirms and conveys that belief (1992, p.7).

Learning how a story fits within a people's belief system requires that one live with or interact with the people for a long time. The communal principle of storytelling implies that a listener is or becomes a member of that community. Lee Maracle (1992) of the Coast Salish Nation, reinforces the communal Spiritual reverence of oratory:

Oratory: place of prayer, to persuade. This is a word we can work with. We regard words as coming from original being—a sacred spiritual being. The orator is coming from a place of prayer and as such attempts to be persuasive. Words are not objects to be wasted. They represent the accumulated knowledge, cultural values, the vision of an entire people or peoples. We believe the proof of a thing or idea is in the doing. Doing requires some form of social interaction and thus, *story* is the most persuasive and sensible way to present the accumulated thoughts and values of a people (1992, p.87).

Using the written English language to portray a story can be very problematic to Aboriginal storytellers because its framework (principles, values, and format) may be very different from the Aboriginal framework. Maria Campbell (1992), a Metis storyteller, had to understand the Metis communication structure of her community before she presented her people's stories in the English language. She also had to understand how the English language and its writing structure overshadowed Metis ways

of communicating a story and learn to manipulate the English language/structure to tell a

Metis story in a Metis way:

For a long time I couldn't write anything, because I didn't know how to use English. I'm articulate in English. I know it well. But when I was writing I always found that English manipulated me. *Once I understood my own rhythms, the language of my people, the history of storytelling, and the responsibility of storytelling*, then I was able to manipulate the language. And once I started to be able to manipulate English, I felt that was personal liberation (my emphasis added, p.10).

The personal liberation that Campbell speaks of is linked to communal responsibility.

Jeannette Armstrong (cited in Cardinal & Armstrong, 1991) of the Okanagan Nation speaks about a way of listening and taking responsibility for one's words/thoughts shared publicly because of their effect upon others: "One of the central instructions to my people is to practise quietness, to listen, and speak only if you know the full meaning of what you say. It is said that you cannot call your words back once they are uttered, and so you are responsible for all which results from your words. It is said that, for those reasons, it is best to prepare very seriously and carefully to make public contributions" (p.90). The storyteller's responsibility towards others is linked to the power that her/his stories may have. Leslie Marmon Silko (1996) speaks of the Laguna Pueblo's communal concept of the healing power and influence of story:

The old folks said the stories themselves had the power to protect us and even to heal us because the stories are alive; the stories are our ancestors. In the very telling of the stories, the spirits of our beloved ancestors and family become present with us. The ancestors love us and care for us though we may not know this (p.152).

Remembering the stories was important not only for continuing the oral tradition but to help one continue in a healthy way: "...the old-time people always say, remember the stories, the stories will help you be strong" (ibid, p.71). The term "remember" implies that one may, if given the authority, tell that story to others, thereby, practicing the principle of reciprocity.

Nora Dauenhauer (1986) of the Tlingit Nation of Juneau Alaska, describes a culture-specific principle of reciprocity embedded in Tlingit oral tradition and culture to show its multi-dimensional meaning:

...ownership and reciprocity. Songs, stories, artistic designs, personal names, land use and other elements of Tlingit are considered the real property of a particular clan. The Tlingit name for this concept is *at.oow*. The form, content, and immediate setting of oral tradition exist in a larger context of reciprocity or "balance." The form and content of verbal and visual art are congruent with each other and with social structure.

The two moieties, Eagle and Raven, balance each other out. They select marriage partners from each other, and direct love songs and most oratory to each other. In host-guest relationships at feasts, they share in each other's joy and work to remove each other's grief. This balancing is reflected in the oral literature itself.

Here are some examples:

- 1) Ravens and Eagles address each other.
- 2) A song or speech must be answered—not in competition, but that it be received and not 'wander aimlessly.'

Within speeches and stories, these components are balanced:

- 3) physical and spiritual,
- 4) living and departed,
- 5) humans and animals,



6) humans and land (pp.105-106).

Some First Nations people use a collaborative approach to provide cultural information about the principles or “core” of First Nations stories and/or to present stories in an Aboriginal language and/or to transform it to English.

### ***Collaborating: Between People, Between Languages***

Younger First Nations people are collaborating with Elders to publish culture specific stories. Darwin Hanna and Mamie Henry (1995) of the Nlha7kapmx Nation edited the book, *Our Telling: Interior Salish Stories of the Nlha7kapmx People*.<sup>6</sup> Darwin is a UBC law school graduate and Mamie is an Elder who continues to teach the Nlha7kapmx language at Lytton, B.C. They visited Elders in their cultural territory and asked them to share their stories, which many did, often telling their story in the Nlha7kapmx language. The stories were transcribed, translated, and checked by other language speakers. Very little editing occurred in order to retain some of the storytellers’ personalities in the literate version of their stories. Darwin Hanna notes that stories that were translated from Nlha7kapmx into English are more “polished” and seem to flow more “smoothly” (p.15) than the stories told in English. He attributes this difference to “how one sounds when speaking a language with which one is not completely comfortable” (p.15). I also noticed that these stories had more detail than those told in English. In the book’s *Afterword*, the Chief and Councillors of the Cook’s Ferry Band, of which Darwin is a member, affirmed their and the band members’ support for the research and publication process. Respect

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<sup>6</sup> Hanna and Henry’s work is used to show a respectful research approach to working with First Nations Elder storytellers. This example also shows how seriously a community feels about their orality and how they can show their support for a research project. “Nlha7kapmx” is written using the international phonetic alphabet.

towards the Elders and their cultural knowledge was their prime concern. Because of Darwin's work history they knew "the stories would be recorded properly and that the elders would be treated with respect" (p.201). It is rare to find such support from one's own cultural community printed in the publication. The band council also voiced their responsibility for cultural knowledge:

The most important qualities of our culture are our language and our stories. In oral tradition such as ours, telling stories is how we pass on the history and teachings of our ancestors. Without these stories, we would have to rely on other people for guidance and information about our past. Teachings in the form of stories are an integral part of our identity as a people and as a nation. If we lose these stories, we will do a disservice to our ancestors—those who gave us the responsibility to keep our culture alive (p.201).

Another example of respectful story research is that of Freda Ahenakew, a Cree Associate Professor of Native Studies, and H.C. Wolfart (1992), a non-Native Professor of Linguistics, who edited a book of reminiscences and personal stories told by seven elderly Cree women: *Our Grandmothers' Lives As Told In Their Own Words*. They spoke in their Cree language to Freda Ahenakew. The grandmothers' stories were translated and written as told with no "smoothing over," with care similar to that described by Hanna and Henry. Fidelity to the Cree language was an important feature of their approach to ensure an accurate representation of the Elders' knowledge.

In presenting the original Cree texts—in both roman and syllabic orthography and accompanied by a careful translation into English—told by seven women, we want to make sure that they are heard speaking to us in their own words (preface).

Those who speak and read Cree have the benefit of seeing a traditional form of orality, in its original language. I have heard many Aboriginal language speakers say that so much cultural meaning and humour is lost in the translation to the English language. Some of the Cree women who shared their stories have now passed to the Spirit World, but their values, messages, and history in their own words and language will live on.

The transformation of the First Nations oral language to printed text, in both the First Nations language and English, not only has the challenge of ensuring the accuracy of content and meaning from one language to another, but it also has to maintain the spirit of the oral tradition. An example which does this, is that of Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer (1990) (Eds.) *Haa Twunaagu Yis, for Healing Our Spirit: Tlingit Oratory*. The editors, a married couple and a "professional collaborative team" (ix)—the wife a member of the Tlingit Nation, Alaska, and the non-Native husband from a background in language and literature, worked with eighteen Elders, to record their speeches first in the Tlingit language then, with their verification to translate them into the English language. The book is structured so that pertinent introductory ethnographic information on Tlingit culture, important themes, types, and structures of orality, and biographies and pictures of the Elders are sequentially combined to aid the reader's acquaintance and learning of Tlingit oratory. All the speeches are printed in the Tlingit and English languages and a Tlingit/English Glossary is provided. The editors discuss their ethics and purpose of their work:

We see this book as a Tlingit book; it belongs ultimately to the Tlingit people and to the clans involved. The speeches in Tlingit are the words of the elders themselves, as they spoke them. We have tried to present their

words in English through careful translation, and we have tried to bring additional meaning to them through commentary in the introduction, annotations, and biographies. The oratory presented here has been documented for our children and for all younger generations in the Tlingit community that they may come to a greater understanding of and an appreciation for their heritage and traditions.

As editors, we are salaried to do this work, but we make no money from the sale of books ....royalties normally accruing to the editors will go to Sealaska Heritage Foundation to be used for the publication of additional books 'lifting up' the elders to whom the work is dedicated, honoring their achievement and their memories (xxxv).

The editors have carefully spoken through a written way to share Elders' important speech and teachings for the benefit of Tlingit people. In an earlier draft of this chapter, I recommended that this book and process of bringing together a First Nations culture and ethnography could serve as a model for bringing together epistemology and research methodology. I felt that the introductory ethnographic information could help the cultural "outsider" gain some contextual background to understanding the meanings in the Elders' orality. If one does not know the cultural values and "codes" then an understanding of the oral tradition may not occur. Almost a year later, I found an article by Ojibway writer, Armand Ruffo (1993) which exemplified a limitation of ethnography which has strongly influenced my thinking. Through his analysis of the story, *Tracks*, written by American Indian writer, Louise Erdrich (1988), Ruffo asks these questions: "*How much goes unnoticed? How much is left unknown? How much can the 'outsider' really know and feel?*" (my emphasis, p.163). Neither ethnographic detail, no matter how 'rich and thick,' nor ethnographic interpretation no matter how close to 'truth' can replace living with the people and being "initiated" into their cultural community. In Erdrich's story, Eli a hunter is helped by the vision of an Elder man, Nanapush, while on a winter moose hunting

journey. Eli performs a ceremony after he kills a moose. For the long walk home, Eli cuts pieces of the moose and ties them to parts of his body, enabling him to carry much of the animal. The meat freezes to Eli's outer garments and assumes his body shape. Ruffo makes this point:

For the outsider, then, attempting to come to terms with Native people and their literature, the problem is not one to be solved by merely attaining the necessary background, reading all the anthropological data that one can get one's hands on. Rather, for those who are serious, it is more a question of cultural initiation, of involvement and commitment, so that the culture and literature itself becomes more than a mere museum piece, dusty pages, something lifeless. Think of Eli, after his kill, wrapped in moose meat; in Nanapush's words 'the moose is transformed into the mold of Eli, an armor that would fit no other.' That is how Native culture should fit if one is truly to understand its literature [stories] and people (p.174).

In reflecting on Ruffo's words, I found a deep personal resonance to his point of view. My criticism is not aimed at the ethnographer. My point is that, at most, the reader can glean an introduction to Aboriginal culture and oral tradition through ethnography, even if presented as well as that of the Dauenhauers. If the reader wants to begin the process of understanding the oral tradition, she/he cannot be a passive observer or reader. According to Ruffo, the oral tradition "implicates the 'listener' [reader] into becoming an active participant in the experience of the story" (p.164). An inter-relationship between the story/storytelling/listener is a critical principle of storytelling.

### ***Inter-relating Between Story/Listener And Text/Reader***

Mabel once said: *'Don't ask me what it means, the story. Life will teach you about it, the way it teaches you about life.'* It is important that I remember my life, my presence and history, as I attempt to understand Mabel. As I learn more about Mabel, I learn more about myself. In this way, using much of what Mabel has taught me, I show in these essays

myself and others learning, seeing beyond what things seem to be. I chart dialogues that open and explore interpersonal and intercultural territories (my emphasis, Sarris, 1993, p.5).

In *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*, Greg Sarris (1993) of the Pomo Nation invites the reader to interact with his many stories. He shares his interactions and critical thoughts about making meaning from the late Mabel McKay's stories and talks. Mabel McKay was a Cache Creek Pomo medicine woman from the Santa Rosa area of California, and his relative, from whom he learned over a thirty year period. Sarris provides the reader with a framework for thinking critically about one's own historical, cultural, and current context in relation to the story being told, by using his personal life experience stories as examples. He advocates this kind of synergy between the story or text and the reader's life experience. He also cautions Aboriginal people about using textual frameworks acceptable in academe, that result in disrespectful representations, and make us the objective "Other" or that create opportunities for sacred knowledge to be appropriated.

In creating narratives for others about our histories and religions, in what ways are we not only compromising those histories and religions but at the same time compromising our identities, that are largely dependent upon these, as well as our resistance to the colonizer and dominant culture (p.68)?

The interactive relationship between the reader and text that he advocates is the opposite to what he and countless others experienced in university classrooms through the "objective textual" presentation of Indian cultures and people.

Though I could not articulate my feeling at the time, I sensed what bothered me when reading 'Indian books' for 'Indian courses' at the university. Objectivism and text positivism, which influenced pedagogical practices at the time, hardly encouraged readers to think of people and places outside the actual text. I was not encouraged to engage my personal

experience as I was at home when hearing stories. The text was supposedly complete, self-contained, a thing to dissect rather than to have a relationship with (p.186).

Gerald Vizenor (1987) also believes that the storylistener must become a participant with the story.

The story doesn't work without a participant...there has to be a participant and someone has to listen. I don't mean listening in the passive sense. You can even listen by contradiction....So that's really critical in storytelling (pp.300-301).

Synergistic interaction between storyteller, listener, and story becomes another critical story principle. Much of the literature presented in this chapter has identified the story principles of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, wholism, inter-relatedness, and synergy. Coyote used his new eyes to look at these principles, as known and experienced by various First Nations storytellers. These principles become “markers” on the trails that Coyote will continue to travel on as she/he/it learns more about storytelling in the chapters that follow.

## CHAPTER THREE: COYOTE SEARCHING FOR THE BONE NEEDLE

This chapter documents my research methodology which begins with a look at ethnography, then shifts to a view of critical ethnography through the lens of First Nations cultural and ethical considerations. The methodology eventually focuses on a Sto:lo and Coast Salish<sup>1</sup> story approach with Elders. Traditional and life experience stories of the Elders and my experience of becoming a beginning storyteller are presented to exemplify the learning and healing power of stories; how stories were and can be used for educational/social purposes; how storytellers were and are “trained”; and ways of working with Elders in a research context. A curriculum story completes the research process<sup>2</sup>. The first sections in this chapter highlight issues from literature about ethnography and critical ethnography. Later sections focus on research relationships where Elders take the lead. Respectful, reverent, reciprocal, and responsible dynamics of my research relationships with Elders, *Khot-la-cha*, *Tsimlano*, and *Kwulasulwat* are also reinforced.

As I think about research in relation to First Nations, I remember a story my friend, Dr. Eber Hampton, of the Chickasaw Nation told about a particular trickster. He told this story at a Mokakit Education Research Conference in Hull Quebec in October 1990. After telling the story he talked about the connections between motives and methods in

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<sup>1</sup> The Sto:lo were considered part of the larger grouping of Coast Salish Peoples. The term ‘Coast Salish’ is an anthropological term used by some First Nations Elders. I use this term because I learned from some Elders who are not part of the Sto:lo, but are Coast Salish.

<sup>2</sup> This curriculum story is placed in Chapter Six and continues with the discussion on methodology.



research. This story has stayed in my memory, and has become an integral part of my being, with each telling. Every time I tell a story I acknowledge the storyteller and/or source of the story. The stories I tell are ones given to me or ones that have been published by a storyteller. Eventually Eber gave me permission to use this story with the encouragement to adapt it—to make it mine. I renamed the trickster “Old Man Coyote” because “Coyote-ness” in all his/her/its forms has become my trickster of learning.

Old Man Coyote had just finished a long hard day of hunting. He decided to set up his camp for the night. After supper, he sat by the fire, and rubbed his tired feet from the long day's walk. He took his favourite moccasins out of his bag and noticed that there was a hole in the toe of one of them. He looked for his special bone needle to mend the moccasin, but couldn't feel it in the bag. Old Man Coyote started to crawl on his hands and knees around the fire to see if he could see or feel the needle. Just then Owl came flying by and landed next to Old Man Coyote and asked him what he was looking for. Old Man Coyote told Owl his problem. Owl said that he would help his friend look for the bone needle. After he made one swoop around the area of the fire, he told Old Man Coyote that he didn't see the needle. Owl said that if it was around the fire, then he would have spotted it. He then asked Old Man Coyote where he last used the needle. Old Man Coyote said that he used it quite far away, over in the bushes, to mend his jacket. Then Owl asked him why he was searching for the needle around the camp fire. Old Man Coyote replied, ‘Well, it’s easier to look for the needle here because the fire gives off such good light, and I can see better here.’

In my search for a culturally appropriate research methodology (a bone needle) about First Nations storytelling, I started with the principle of respect for cultural knowledge embedded in the stories and respect toward the people who owned or shared stories as an ethical guide. Like Old Man Coyote I wanted the (re)search to feel familiar and I did not want to question my motives and methods; but, unlike Old Man Coyote, I went to the unfamiliar by questioning a methodology that was commonly used to study First Nations

—ethnography. I wondered about which aspects of ethnography would be beneficial for my study and which aspects would continue to create “hurt” for the research participants? I also questioned my motives and methods: Was I doing anything different from the “outsider” anthropologists that I criticized? I also had to work through the anger and skepticism that personal history with academic research ignited. Going over personal and collective history is like staying near the fire. Going out and finding ways to move beyond the history of colonization is hard work. The next few pages show my journey as I move away from the fire, and sometimes come back to it, and finally find the courage to leave it in search for the bone needle.

### ***Looking At Ethnography***

Ethnography was one pathway which offered an opportunity to explore the concept of respect as a research ethic. Finding a suitable definition was the first marker on the trail. I liked the notion of ethnography being a wholistic approach (Fetterman, 1982) since wholism is a common principle among many First Nations, and the Sto:lo in particular. I looked toward Geertz’s (1973) concept of ethnography: “thick description” (p. 6) with a theory of cultural interpretation. Geertz identified four characteristics of ethnographic description: (1) it is interpretive; (2) it interprets the flow of social discourse; (3) it interprets the “said” of social discourse and puts it into readable form; and (4) it is microscopic, in that it focuses on something particular and in depth (p. 20). He also identified two conditions for developing cultural theory: (1) “it is not its own master” (p. 25) which means that theory is gradually developed from thick description and cannot be generalized across cultures, but can establish generalizations about and within the culture

under study; and (2) it is not predictive; a theoretical framework is required which needs to be able to accommodate new or future defensible interpretations of cultural acts. I wanted to find a way within academe to honour the knowledge of Sto:lo and Coast Salish Elders and their stories. If there was a theory to First Nations storytelling, it had to come from social discourse with Elders and the act of interpretation or making meaning from their stories was inevitable if one followed the traditional way of learning through storytelling.

Methods of representing the ethnographic information was another area to explore. Van Maanen (1988) shed some intriguing light on the task of putting the cultural information into readable form. He states that ethnography is the result of a researcher doing fieldwork with a specified group of people, then writing a report that reflects the group's culture, or some aspect of it. He also believes that ethnography is an interpretive act:

Ethnographies join culture and fieldwork. In a sense, they sit between two worlds or systems of meaning—the world of the ethnographer (and readers) and the world of cultural members....Ethnographies...necessarily decode one culture while recoding it for another (p.4).

He categorizes three major ways of writing about culture which he calls realist, confessional, and impressionist “tales.” The terms are used to convey the story-like character of written fieldwork and the practices utilized by the ethnographer. These types of classification may be useful because they hint at the assumptions and views of the ethnographer about culture and they provide the reader with a framework for understanding the researcher's cultural description and interpretation. The influence of the researcher's epistemological approach is acknowledged. However, Van Maanen's use

of the term “tale” does not connote seriousness. Readers may enjoy a narrative style but will the ethnographic work be viewed as scholarly?

Although ethnographic researchers travel to and become part of a cultural community (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983), their ethics may not be respectful toward cultural knowledge and the community people. Historically, ethnographers, especially anthropologists, held the role of principal researcher with sole or monologic authority and voice. Disrespectful representations of cultural knowledge created distrust from First Nations.

Anthropology concerns an individual who goes into a community, learns,...writes his books, publishes it in another system—one altogether different from the one he has just learned from and studies....The anthropologist does that as a career, as an identity, as a way of life...while the people that he studies are...disrupted, having given the very heart of their perception of themselves and their world. This is extractive to us. In no small measure, a rip-off. Anthropology serves...the so-called ‘body of knowledge’ that Western education systems of higher learning seem to cherish so much (Ismaelillo, 1978, p.20).

This quote echoes the experiences and feelings of animosity and ambivalence numerous First Nations have toward researchers and ethnographic research carried out in a tradition which favours the monologic power and authority of the researcher, and which disregards cultural ethical processes toward the people who are being “studied” and their culture<sup>3</sup>. This kind of power is disrespectful.

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<sup>3</sup> I am not making a generalization that all Anthropologists are or have been disrespectful in their cultural representations of First Nations. The cogent point is that First Nations people who let ethnographers (and other researchers) into their communities and lives do not want to be viewed or written about as “objects of study,” and more First Nations now want control of the way their cultural knowledge is published.

## ***Finding Problems With Ethnography***

The tenets and practices of positivism dominated social science research and held a central place in early qualitative research, ethnography in particular, in the first half of the twentieth century (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, Marcus and Fischer, 1986, Clifford, 1988). This early "objective" scientific approach to ethnography created a powerful position and authority for the ethnographer who determined how a culture was studied and represented in text. Clifford (1988) traces the historical development of "participant observation" as a research method where academic fieldworkers influenced by Boas, were "trained in the latest analytic techniques and modes of scientific explanation" (p. 30) and underwent an intense personal experience to "live in the native village, use the vernacular, stay a sufficient (but seldom specified) length of time, investigate certain classic subjects" (p.30). Thus, the personal experience of the professional ethnographer was prized and validated by scientific/objective methods. The ethnographer was also encouraged to use existing theories and theoretical structures to fairly quickly "get to the heart" (p.31) of the culture. Acknowledging the existence of First Nations theories and theoretical structures was not part of the scientific/objective research paradigm. In fact, a general suspicion of "privileged informants ...interpretations of indigenous authorities" prevailed (p.31). Vine Deloria, Jr. (1995) of the Sioux Nation, South Dakota, reinforces this problematic suspicion and raises the problem of institutional racism towards non-Western knowledge and peoples wanting to research their epistemologies in a culturally compatible manner:

Even with tribal peoples now entering academic fields, there is bias, and most academics deeply believe that an Indian, or any other non-Western

person, cannot be an accurate observer of his or her own traditions because that individual is personally involved. It follows, to listen to the apologists for many university departments, that an urban, educated white person, who admittedly has a deep personal interest in a non-Western community but who does not speak the language, has never lived in the community, and visits the people only occasionally during the summer, has a better understanding of the culture, economics, and politics of the group than do the people themselves.

....Thus, ethnic scholars are not encouraged to do research in their own communities—studies done by whites are preferred. Many scholars with ethnic backgrounds are even denied tenure because they are ethnic and their studies and publications relate to that background. Particularly in the arts and social sciences, supposed bastions of liberalism, minority scholars are simply run out of the professions unless they are totally submissive to prevailing doctrines of the discipline and their writings do not clash with established authority (pp.40-50).

Based on my teachings and experience I do not understand how any one could think that they could master knowledge about our cultures by "living" with us for relatively short periods of time; then work at getting a "true" depiction of our cultural principles and practices by focusing on a few "variables" or parts, and finally have the audacity to take away the knowledge people have given, perhaps never to be heard from again, until an insider from the culture finds a book written by the outsider anthropologist/ethnographer.

I found some of these books when I first started university in the late 1960s and took anthropology classes where "...the professors began describing Indian cultures in that objective kind of jargon and third person descriptions....We became them" (Journal entry, June 20, 1991). Since these university experiences, I have been consciously and critically learning about my Sto:lo culture, and other First Nations, and feel that I am only at the beginning stage of forming some significant understandings. I must remember my earlier "displaced" feelings and I must remember the disrespectful "objective" process that

created them, so that I will not perpetuate the same kind of hurt upon others.

Experiencing and identifying disrespectful practices is an important step to creating respectful research practices. However, it is not the only step. Critical questions need to be asked about who has the cultural authority to decide on textual and other media representations of cultural knowledge and what types of cultural knowledge can be shared. Greg Sarris (1993) relates the objective examination to American Indian cultures as a colonizing process and poses a cogent question to Aboriginal people engaged in cultural academic work: “ In creating narratives for others about our histories and religions, in what ways are we not only compromising those histories and religions but at the same time compromising our identities, which are largely dependent upon these, as well as our resistance to the colonizer and dominant culture?” (p.68). He questions the mainstream academic discourse required to tell others about our cultural knowledge and how that discourse changes cultural meaning. He also warns us about the possibility of appropriation of sacred knowledge.

These issues of appropriation and changing cultural knowledge and meaning are related to cultural responsibility. Documentation of stories in the languages in which they were told (Dauenhauer & Daunhauer, 1987, 1990, and Ahenakew & Wolfart, 1992) and the ethnopoetic approach which tries to capture the linguistic structure and poetic purpose (Hymes, 1981) of the story help to keep some cultural fidelity to the story’s structure. Some believe that ethnopoetics can facilitate textual understanding:

Linguistics and linguistic-like analyses are necessary means to the joy and understanding because words were the means used by the authors of the texts. If we do not deal with the means, we cannot possess the

meanings....If we refuse to consider and interpret the surprising facts of device, design, and performance inherent in the words of the texts, the Indians who made the texts, and those who preserved what they made, will have worked in vain. We will be telling the texts not to speak. We will mistake, perhaps to our cost, the nature of the power of which they speak (Hymes, 1981, pp.5-6).

A value of ethnopoetics is to preserve the oral word as told, on a printed page. The work of Robinson and Wickwire (1989, 1992) which will be discussed later, comes to mind. But when the reader has never heard the storyteller or does not know how the oral tradition works, the “nature of the power” and value of the story may not “speak” to the reader. Hymes concurs with the textual limitations:

Mostly what is required is to ‘listen’ to the text in all its details. The work is structural in method, poetic in purpose. The structural method is no more than an application of the elementary principle of structural linguistics: look for covariation in form and meaning. The poetic purpose is to come as close as possible to the intended shape of the text in order to grasp as much as possible of the meanings embodied in this shape. Much will still escape (p.7).

Ethnopoetic’s concern with linguistic structure and shape of the text does not seem to extend to ethnographic cultural description and interpretation. Much will escape the reader who does not know the cultural context for the story and who does not think critically about issues of appropriation and cultural fidelity. Much of the work of ethnopoetics are from university academics whose published documents may be inaccessible to Aboriginal people. Swann (1992) raises this problem and quotes Hymes’ conference talk:

Dell Hymes...brought up the question of reparation. Information for those native people who desire to know about their own heritage is seldom available, or if it is available, it is not accessible geographically or is in a form available only to specialists. Hymes noted that we have here ‘an



example of alienation in the Marxist sense.' A community's labor has become an external alien object (p.xvii).

The university academic exercises power and authority with ethnopoetics because ultimately, it is his/her interpretation that is used to portray the textual format of the storyteller's words, even though the storyteller may agree and give approval for the poetic form used. It is rare to find an ethnopoetic approach published by the original storyteller. Aboriginal storytellers need to exercise their authority and responsibility with the stories' textual representation and to diminish the monologic authority of academic outsiders.

### ***Diminishing Monologic Authority***

Until recently, ethnographic research has predominantly used the monologic authority or voice of the "principal researcher," with the voices of the study "subjects" either depersonalized (anonymous), quantified, non-existent, or shoved into an appendix (Clifford, 1988, Tedlock, 1983). Educational ethnographies about First Nations schools in British Columbia by King (1967) and Wolcott (1967) are prime examples of monologic authority. Both worked as teachers while studying First Nations children and their communities. Interviews, conversations, observations, and historical records were used; neither author states that permission was obtained from any of the children, their parents, or adults who were interviewed or that the ethnographers told the people that they would be publishing a book as a result of their "study." Neither mentions checking back with cultural members to see if the author's interpretations of people's reaction to and effects of institutional schooling were accurate and valid. Much of the literature about residential

school experiences portrayed from Aboriginal peoples' perspectives emphasizes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual abuse.

With a single exception, the operation of the school at Mopass for Indian children bears a striking resemblance to a well-run stock ranch or dairy farm in which valued animals are carefully nurtured...the children are moved, fed, cared for, and rested by a rotating crew of overseers who condition the herd to respond to sets of signals (p.55).

I could not help but get angry after reading the patronizing animal analogy of how King viewed the operation of this residential school. Wendy Wickwire's cogent review of P. Carstens (1991) *The Queen's people: A Study of hegemony, coercion, and accommodation among the Okanagan of Canada* shows that this ethnography was derived from and shaped by the author's ideology. Carstens' text and conclusions were not validated by anyone from the Okanagan Band. Carstens' ethnography contradicts the conclusions drawn by three earlier ethnographers: Teit (1900), Ray (1939), and Walters (1938), all of whom spent extensive time as participant observers, and all of whom worked with a wide variety of "insiders" and all of whom acknowledged the people as their sources of authority. Carstens spent twelve months in the field and mentions one person as his "informant." Most ironic is the fact that he relied extensively upon Teit's historical material as his background information. His written representation does not show how the Okanagan First Nation peoples contributed to or shaped his analysis.

The monologic authority or expert voice of the "outside" researcher is no longer acceptable to First Nations or non-Native researchers who have come to respect the people with whom they work, as indicated in the following quotes:

What we have in the Carstens' account is ideology masquerading as ethnography and the result is the imposition of a white, male Western world view onto a culture that in fact does not fit that mold. This is a dangerous situation as only a few people can challenge the text: those who know the ethnographic sources that are used selectively, and especially those who are sufficiently familiar with the Okanagan community to know how it may have been colored by Carstens himself (Wickwire 1991, pp.243-244).

The article by Wendy Wickwire points to yet another area of struggle: the fight against distorted, simplistic views of First Nations peoples by outsiders who do not appear to be immersed in the culture. This...shows that, even in 1991, such biased positions are still being put forward in the academic press, which emphasizes that, in consequence, we [First Nations] need to be constantly vigilant (Kirkness, 1991, p.109).

The vigilance demanded by Verna J. Kirkness requires First Nations peoples to have more control and involvement in research about our cultural contexts. This control and involvement is crucial if the research is to reflect our realities and our perspectives. Our voices have to be heard and we must assume respectful power and authority in the whole research process.

### ***Sharing Authority And Power: Moving Toward Critical Ethnography***

Tedlock (1983), Mishler (1986), and Clifford (1988), advocate sharing power and acknowledging dialogic (between individuals) and polyphonic (many voices) types of authority with research participants. Lather (1991) introduces a notion of research having catalytic validity if the participants reflect/act and take power over their situation during the research process. She cautions participants to be aware of "false consciousness" which is "the denial of how our common sense ways of looking at the world are permeated with meaning that sustain our disempowerment" (p.59). She asserts that it is critical for

participants to criticize ideology of the society/societies that one is a member of and/or influenced by to attain empowerment: "... (by) analyzing ideas about the causes of powerlessness, recognizing systemic oppressive forces, and acting both individually and collectively to change conditions of our lives...empowerment is a process one undertakes for oneself; it is not something done 'to' or 'for' someone" (p.4).

Lather's claims make me wonder about the images I present about the traditional ways of the oral traditions. I could be criticized for longing for what was, or what is perceived as what was, and that these images are "romanticized," while other negative aspects of traditional life are omitted. Am I creating a false consciousness based on my reaction to colonization? I can also be criticized for emphasizing non-Native ways that were/are oppressive to First Nations. But I do this to show the research ways that created harmful effects upon the individual and collective identities of people. Taking power, becoming empowered is not simple and it is not an academic exercise. For example, one can identify and analyze "systemic oppressive forces" such as the Indian Act, which is a federal government legal document that takes away power to be self-governing. Creating change within an oppressive force like the Indian Act takes years, and is a struggle that First Nations have been engaged in since Confederation.

The tensions that have been created through the use of ethnography to study and write about First Nations cultures have also raised my consciousness enough to keep asking this fundamental question throughout my research work: **How will the culture and the people be hurt by this research?** Despite my skepticism towards ethnography, I believe

that it, and in particular critical ethnography, have positive research possibilities to offer First Nations peoples' contexts. I am leading to the need for critical ethnography which is based on action, reflection, and transformation. A definition which Celia Haig-Brown and I agreed upon during a collaborative research project follows:

...critical ethnography is research which provides opportunity for study participants to engage in dialectical interactions of action and reflection—praxis—in relation to both the research and their situations, thereby transforming those situations. Such reflection entails serious consideration of ideologies and practices and of accompanying power relations. Critical ethnography in a First Nations context resists hierarchical power relations between study participants, including the principal researcher, and focuses on ethics sensitive to and respectful of the participants and their contexts. The research approach allows a responsiveness to the community and the people there and incorporates historical and social analyses in the conduct of the research (1996, p.246).

Hammersley (1992) notes that critical ethnography is concerned with the overt expression of values (p.103). I have had to argue that three essential cultural principles: respect, responsibility, and reciprocity must have a central place in First Nations story research. The next section highlights the research of those who have journeyed into the dark, to places unknown. What they have learned about respect, sharing power and responsibility in a research relationship, and practising reciprocity will be shared.

Some First Nations Elders have reclaimed their cultural authority and responsibility during ethnographic research with non-First Nations academics (Cruikshank with Sidney, Smith, and Ned, 1990; Robinson and Wickwire, 1989, 1992). Much of the cultural knowledge of First Nations is collectively held by the people of that Nation. Individuals

may have the authority and responsibility to teach others. The Elders in my dream<sup>4</sup> told me to go back to the Sto:lo traditions of learning from Elders who know and have the authority to teach others. Many times I have heard people say that to learn in-depth cultural knowledge, one should “go and ask an Elder.”

### ***Taking Direction From Elders***

Julie Cruikshank in collaboration with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, Annie Ned (1990) *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders*; and Harry Robinson and Wendy Wickwire (1989) *Write It On Your Heart* and (1992) *Nature Power: In the Spirit of an Okanagan Storyteller* are examples of shared power and voice, and culturally respectful representations of cultural knowledge related to the oral traditions. These examples also show respectful, responsible, and reciprocal relationships between non-Native ethnographers and First Nations Elders. Each non-Native researcher has over 10 years experience of living within and on the borders of First Nations cultural contexts. The First Nations Elders who worked with each ethnographer did so with the purpose of documenting their stories and their cultural teachings for the younger and future generations.

Over a 10 year period, Julie Cruikshank (1990) worked with three Yukon Elders, Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned to document their life histories. Cruikshank presents life history work as a model for collaborative research which begins by “taking seriously what people say about their lives rather than treating their words simply as an illustration

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter One.

of some other process” (p.1). Her theory about life history is that it contributes “to explanations of cultural process rather than as simply illustrating or supplementing ethnographic description” (p.2). Cruikshank describes the way that the Elders directed the collaborative nature of their research work and took cultural authority and control:

Over time, my own understanding of our (research) objectives shifted significantly. Initially, I expected that by recording life histories we would be documenting oral history, compiling accounts that would be stored, like archival documents, for later analysis. I was interested in hearing women talk about events chronicled in written documents and records and tried to steer our conversations in that direction. *Although the older women responded patiently to my line of inquiry for a while, they quite firmly shifted the emphasis to ‘more important’ accounts they wanted me to record—particularly events central to traditional narrative. Gradually, I came to see oral tradition not as ‘evidence’ about the past but as a window on ways the past is culturally constituted and discussed.*

I always brought questions to our sessions, but as I began to take increasing direction from the narrators, the kinds of questions changed....*The women would give brief answers to my direct inquiries and then suggest that I write down a particular story they wanted to tell me. Usually such stories involved a bewildering series of characters and events, but with practice I learned to follow the complex plots, and to understand that when women told me stories they were actually using them to explain some aspect of their lives to me* (pp.14-15, my emphasis).

The women’s purpose for having their life stories/histories written was to pass their “wealth,” their knowledge to the children, in a manner that honoured their authority and allowed them to fulfill their cultural responsibility. They also recognized the authority and power of school literacy, through books, and decided to use this medium to legitimize their traditional knowledge in the school context:

Mrs. Smith explained her motives for recording her stories with reference to a great-grandchild: *‘Well, she’s six years old now. She’s going to start school now. Pretty soon paper’s going to talk to her!’* Schools teach things totally outside the experience of elders; stories, on the other hand, recreate

the life cycle. Women see their books of stories as a connection between the world of tradition and the school's 'paper world' and feel that, thus legitimized, the stories should be part of the school curriculum (p.16, my emphasis).

Today, many Elders are not afraid to use technology as tools for purposes of sustaining oral tradition:

One day while we were checking my transcript of a particularly circuitous narrative, one woman in her mid-seventies patiently asked me whether I had ever thought of using a tape recorder as I could 'get it right the first time,' thus dispelling any simple notions I had about the alienating effects of technology. In fact, during the years we have worked together, three of the eldest women were given ghetto blasters as gifts from grandchildren and used them to replay tapes we had made. One even invited neighbours in, and we all sat around drinking tea in her cabin and watching the digital strobe light flash as a tape of our interview played (p.15).

First Nations people can also learn research lessons about responsibility, reciprocity, and respect from the Elders' stories and experiences, as they read and think about these story-based accounts. I appreciated Cruikshank's introductory explanations of how each Elder woman's stories were organized, how the textual representation was collaborative, and how each woman approached her responsibility to pass stories on to others. The introductory section was like a map that I could follow into the unknown territory of storytelling in the southern Yukon Territory. This map extended into the Okanagan territory with the collaborative work of Robinson and Wickwire (1989, 1992).

Harry Robinson, an Okanagan Storyteller, and Wendy Wickwire, an ethnographer, worked together over a twelve year period to put Harry's stories, as he told them in



English, into literate form. I found it interesting that Harry Robinson's story memory<sup>5</sup> returned in his Elder years:

Leading such a strenuous life, Harry had been so busy that he had had little time or inclination for telling stories. 'I don't care for it,' he explains, 'and I forget.' As his life slowed down, however, those hours and hours of stories he had heard as a child began to come back....Advancing age actually seemed to stimulate his storytelling ability. By his late seventies he remarked that, 'The older I get, it seems to come back on me. It's like pictures going by. I could see and remember.' (1989, p.13).

The importance of going to Elders to learn was reinforced. Elder Robinson felt that his stories contained important knowledge about relationships to nature, the source of problems between the "Whites and Indians" (1992, p.14), and history that "Is not to be Hidden....It is to be showed in...Canada and United States, that is when it come to be a Book" (p.15). Many of his stories contained references to power<sup>6</sup>: "To Harry, great powers in life were to be gained from encounters with natural beings, from relationships with nature and with the land" (p.20). Wickwire's responsibility was to put his orally told stories and some of his letters into a structured format and "onto the printed page" (p.17). She describes her editing process which digresses from an ethnopoetic approach that adheres to words documented as said:

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<sup>5</sup> Other examples of Sto:lo Elders whose storytelling memories and abilities came back and came to life are discussed in Chapter Five. The need for having Elders as storyteller teachers in classrooms is reinforced by this phenomenon.

<sup>6</sup> Some of the stories in *Nature Power* (1992) are about Okanagan Sacred Spiritual practices. In many Aboriginal cultures the Sacred Spiritual is not to be publicly talked about. However, there are Elders who decide that it is more important to document this type of knowledge so that it is not lost forever. Wickwire does not discuss this issue, which may not have been an "issue" to Harry Robinson. The limitation of not having Okanagan cultural information about this issue, leaves the reader not knowing how other Okanagan holders of cultural knowledge feel about publishing Sacred knowledge. Because an Elder is respected and has important knowledge, is she/he morally right in publishing knowledge that has been forbidden to the public? Is the tradition oppressive, as asked earlier by Lather? There may be no right answer to this question, but it must be asked.

...I have tried to present the stories exactly as told. In only two instances have I changed Harry's original. First, in speaking English, Harry uses pronouns indiscriminately. 'He,' 'she,' 'it,' and 'they' are interchangeable, no matter what the antecedent. In most cases, Harry uses the plural neuter 'they,' rather than the singular 'he,' 'she,' or 'it.' This is common in the English speech of native elders, and when one is used to it, it does not cloud the story line. However, in order to minimize the confusion for readers new to these stories, I have edited the pronouns to make them consistent with their antecedents. Second, in a few cases where, due to an interruption, a short segment of a story is repeated verbatim, I have deleted it (1989, pp.15-16).

Wickwire also describes the limitations of using a literate form to truly represent the way that Robinson told stories:

In trying to remain as true to Harry's originals as possible, I did encounter some problems. The first was that Harry's words, when presented as narrative prose, were cryptic, and the stories lost the dramatic quality of their original telling. To remedy this, I decided to place them on the page in the form of narrative poetry, which brings out the unique features of Harry's style—the frequent repetition, the pauses, the sentence structure (1992, p.17).

Critical questions emerge from the process of editing and textual representation: (1) Who should the textual representation be for?; (2) Should the storyteller's words be changed to facilitate readers' understanding? There are no easy answers to these questions. However, what one does may be guided by the principles of respect toward the Elder's way of telling the story and respect toward the substance of the story. This respect must be understood within the wholistic cultural context.

Harry Robinson is now deceased. Readers and learners have been given part of his storytelling legacy, almost as he would have told it to us. As I was reading the stories, I kept wanting to hear Harry's voice orally tell his stories. Although Wickwire presented

some cultural information about the nature of his stories and some aspects of his personal life, it was too brief for me. I wanted more. Cruikshank provided a wealth of ethnographic information as well as her process of learning from the Elders. I felt I knew the Yukon Elders better than I knew Harry Robinson. The Yukon Elders' stories became more real for me.

These two non-Native researchers—Wickwire and Cruikshank—and the First Nations Elders they worked with successfully challenged conventional ethnographic research which gives overriding power to the ethnographer. The dialogic/polyphonic approaches could be helpful guides to others. The relationship between the Elder-teachers and academic researchers were developed over a long period of time and respect for each other was evident. Each eventually agreed upon their responsibility and their work with story—storywork—was reciprocal. The Elders were given knowledge through stories and had a cultural responsibility to pass it on to others. The academic researchers were given knowledge through the Elders and their stories and gained an appreciation of their ethical responsibility to represent the knowledge and stories in a respectful textual manner. I looked to other Elders to help me with a critical ethnographic approach as I began the research journey.

### ***Learning More From Elders***

From my understanding of First Nations cultural ways authority and respect are attributed to "Elders"—people who have acquired wisdom through life experiences, education (a process of gaining skills, knowledge, and understanding), and reflection. Elder Ellen

White, from the Nanaimo Coast Salish Nation, said this about Elder characteristics: “To be an elder you first have to be accepted, listened to, and not laughed at. You have to be a good speaker....You always know where it’s [knowledge] going to be in your memory, in your mind. It’s so easy to just go into that—they always mention a basket [metaphor] and you know it’s all in there” (cited in Neel, 1992, p.107). Elder Beatrice Medicine (1987) of the Lakota/Sioux Nation says: “Elders are repositories of cultural and philosophical knowledge and are the transmitters of such information” (p.142). Age is not a determining factor for becoming an Elder. As noted in Ellen White’s definition, respect and knowledge are critical characteristics. Elders have varying knowledge and “gifts” to pass on to others, such as spiritual, medicinal, historical, storytelling, and linguistic. Important cultural teachings/knowledge are learned carefully—over time—through interaction with Elder teachers. A researcher who enters a First Nations cultural context with little or no cultural knowledge is viewed as a learner. To enter a learner/teacher relationship requires time and practice of various cultural protocols before teaching and learning can really occur. I have heard many Elders say that they wait to be asked to share their knowledge. The term “share” implies teaching. If a learner is really serious about learning in a traditional manner, then the learner must ask and must make themselves culturally ready, perhaps through “protocol,” to receive the knowledge. Walter Lightning (1992) of the Samson Cree Nation of Alberta describes the term “protocol”:

That term, protocol, refers to any one of a number of culturally ordained actions and statements, established by ancient tradition, that an individual completes to establish a relationship with another person from whom the individual makes a request. The protocols differ according to the nature of the request and the nature of the individuals involved. The actions and

statements may be outwardly simple and straightforward, or they may be complex, involving preparation lasting a year or more. The protocols may often involve the presentation of something. It would be a mistake to say that what is presented is symbolic of whatever may be requested, or the relationship that it is hoped will be established, because it is much more than symbolic (p.216).

If researchers don't follow cultural protocol and take the necessary time to develop respectful relationships with Elder-teachers, and instead begin to pose questions, they may find that the teachers answer the questions indirectly or not at all. This is where the researchers' role of outside "experts" ought to quickly change to one of "learners" and where their job begins with getting to know the teachers and learning to listen, learning to watch, and then being challenged to make meaning and gain understanding from the Elders' talks and actions. Researchers need to learn and appreciate the form and process of teacher/learner protocol, the form of communication, and the social principles and practices embedded in the First Nations cultural context.

Through this inquiry/learning process the questions of the researchers, now learners, may change depending on the context and what they need to know and can understand. The end result is that the skills, knowledge, understanding, and perhaps wisdom gained must be shared with others in a manner that incorporates cultural respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and reverence. The voices of the teachers, their knowledge, and the way that knowledge is represented and publicly shared must be in compliance with culturally "proper" ways. For example, particular stories must be told accurately—as "handed down"—and not told unless permission is granted by the storyteller; and the storyteller is

always acknowledged. Three Elders, Simon Baker, Vincent Stogan, and Ellen White walked with me on the pathway to create research relationships.

### ***Beginning Research Relationships With Elders***

#### **Chief Khot-la-cha, Dr. Simon Baker**

*Chief Khot-la-cha, Man With A Kind Heart*, Dr. Simon Baker, is one of my thesis committee members. I have known Simon Baker for over ten years, but have known about him for many more years in his role as Chief of his reserve, speaker for the Squamish people, and ambassador for First Nations. NITEP, and later the First Nations House of Learning staff and students asked Simon to be our Elder. He has fulfilled this role by giving talks, guiding program development, and being a mentor. Simon's humour and life experience stories about cultural, political, social, and economic survival are ways that he carries out his Elder teaching responsibilities (exemplified in his autobiography and noted in Chapter Two). I felt it was important for Simon Baker to be on my thesis committee because he has the wisdom of the oral traditions, would be accepted by the university, is someone whom I respect as a teacher, and is respected by many First Nations.

I invited Simon to breakfast one day in the winter of 1990. We talked for quite a while. He spoke about his past life experiences. He always talks about his Ancestors, and what they have taught him. Our talks are often like this one. He readily agreed when I asked him to be on my thesis committee. I have met with Simon Baker many times since 1990, to talk with him about ethical concerns of representation, reciprocity, appropriation, and

to get his feedback on what I have learned about oral traditions. He also helped me with piloting an interview and its analysis in the beginning stages of the research process.

Since I began the research process I have been troubled by guilty feelings which stem from academic disrespect discussed earlier. Even though I am First Nations and have some initial understandings about various First Nations cultures, I become like an outsider when I use the "tools" of literacy to record my observations and reflections about the oral traditions and practices through fieldnotes and now through this thesis:

I felt tension in doing my first ethnographic observations at an Elders' gathering for a fieldnote exercise. Tension/uneasiness because I had to record people's behaviours, their words in key phrases, the physical setting, the chronological order of events, which is antithetical to the way I normally participate in this type of cultural gathering. Even if I hadn't taken notes during the event, I viewed everything with different eyes. Tension/anxiety because *I had to become and see like an outsider*. To do this, I visualized the event within a circle, and I stood outside it and I looked in. The act of writing notes also made me feel like an outsider. Tension/resistance because I knew I would be eventually writing for others, about what I had seen and interpreted; thus transforming myself and culture (Journal entries, May 27, June 20, July 5, 1991).

But I am also a university academic which again may place me on the borders of First Nations contexts. I have always felt uneasy admitting to First Nations people that I am in a Ph.D program because they may associate me with the effects of academic disrespect discussed earlier. However, I have an additional concern. First Nations people are encouraged by Elders and local community to "get more education." But becoming educated in mainstream institutions can create a chasm between the university educated one and others who were not educated in this way. The language, critical rational thinking, questioning, and writing required by academe is like one Coyote eye as noted in

Chapter One. A First Nations way of thinking and communicating may be the other eye. I, the university educated one have to work hard at showing others that I still have the same community cultural values and that I am still a First Nations person. I have learned to use either eye when necessary. Many Elders have said many times one must learn to “live in two worlds.” This metaphoric statement still holds true today, even though there are more “worlds”; there are various academic, social, political, cultural milieu that one may find oneself in today. The words of Elder Ellen White help soothe the uneasy feelings:

To young people my grandparents always said, ‘You’ll do all right if your hands are both full to overflowing.’ One hand could be filled with the knowledge of the White man and the other could be filled with the knowledge of your ancestors. You could study the ancestors, but without a deep feeling of communication with them it would be surface learning and surface talking. Once you have gone into yourself and have learnt very deeply, appreciate it, and relate to it very well, everything will come very easily. They always said that if you have the tools of your ancestors and you have the tools of the White man, his speech, his knowledge, his ways, his courts, his government, you’ll be able to deal with a lot of things at his level. You’ll not be afraid to say anything you want. A lot of people keep back—they say, ‘Oh, I might hurt them—I might say something.’ When your hands are both full with the knowledge of both sides, you’ll grow up to be a great speaker, great organizer, great doer, and a helper of your people (1992, see David Neel, p.108).

Some of my uneasiness or guilt feelings are also based on the possibility of financial gain. I benefit from this research work by completing a thesis, thereby obtaining a university degree which could influence my career and possibly my financial earnings. The guilt arises because I see how many of our Elders and cultural people live: in near poverty, yet, they are the ones with the highest degree of cultural knowledge. During one of my conversations with Simon Baker I brought up a suggestion concerning possible



publication of the thesis material. I suggested that if a book was to occur from the research work, then any monies received from sales would go to an Elders' fund. Even though sales of educational books do not result in a lot of money for the author, some financial reciprocity would occur. He thought that this was a good idea and also talked about another ethical issue of appropriation where someone from his Nation used his words and knowledge without acknowledgment to Simon:

In my den, I have many tapes in there. A lot of them say 'Why don't you let us use it?' I say 'No, unless you people invite me or do something. I'll be glad to do it. But I'm not going to give you what I got so you can write and use it, and say I did this.' That's what [someone] did to me, oh [he/she] sure used me. I don't mind it if you come, like you did, that's when I give you permission, that's good. I respect you for that and I know a lot of it will come out for good use. That's very good (Feb. 18, 1992 Transcript).

I am very honoured that Chief Simon Baker agreed to help me by being my guide and teacher. Talks with him have helped me realize that respect must be an integral part of the relationship between the Elder and the researcher. Respect for each other as human beings, respect for the power of the cultural knowledge, and respect for cultural protocol for honouring the authority and expertise of the Elder teacher. The principle of respect includes trust and being culturally worthy.<sup>7</sup> The researcher must trust and have patience that the Elder is guiding the learning process in a culturally appropriate way. The Elder

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<sup>7</sup> Floy Pepper of the Choctaw Nation, an Elder, and one of my mentors, read a draft of my thesis and told me that she "was tired of reading about my anxious feelings" and that what she thought I meant was that I was "not feeling worthy and ready to receive the Elders' cultural knowledge and teachings" (personal communication). I had to agree with her, although these guilty feelings were there at the beginning of my research process. Being worthy means being ready, intellectually, emotionally, physically, and spiritually to fully absorb cultural knowledge. Getting ready in a wholistic way is like participating in a cultural protocol, as discussed earlier by Walter Lightning

must also be trustworthy.<sup>8</sup> The next section exemplifies how this type of respect came about in an interview assignment and its analysis for a qualitative research methods course. This interview was between Simon Baker and me and begins with some theoretical notions about interviewing and talking with Elders.

## **Understanding An Elder's Talk: A Way Of Interviewing**

### ***Guiding Theoretical Notions***

I believe that sources of fundamental and important First Nations knowledge are the land, our spiritual beliefs, and the traditional teachings of Elders. To understand Elders' teachings, the values and actions of patience, responsibility, respect, and reciprocity are essential. Thomas King (1990) exemplifies these values in his explanation of a traditional teaching about "all my relations":

'All my relations' is at first a reminder of who we are and of our relationship with both our family and our relatives. It also reminds us of the extended relationship we share with all human beings. But the relationships that Native people see go further, the web of kinship extending to the animals, to the birds, to the fish, to the plants, to all the animate and inanimate forms that can be seen or imagined. More than that, 'all my relations' is an encouragement for us to accept the responsibilities we have within this universal family by living our lives in a harmonious and moral manner (a common admonishment is to say of someone that they act as if they have no relations) ( p.ix).

I also believe that understandings result from lived experiences and critical reflections of those experiences. Many Aboriginal people have said that in order to understand ourselves and our situation today, we must know where we come from and know what

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<sup>8</sup> Some Aboriginal people who mistakenly have been called Elders have also been accused of sexual abuse. When I talk about trust, I don't mean to have "blind" trust, but to know when an Elder is also worthy of trust and respect.

has influenced us. The historical and current effects of colonization, assimilation, and acculturation still impact our people and communities today. Hearing Elders' stories, in particular, helps to show how they survived and how they kept their spirits and cultural knowledge intact.

At the beginning of my research process, I looked to others who advocated ways to let stories be told. Mishler (1986) suggests that when people are given space and time they tell stories in an interview situation. The problematic analysis task then is to determine the speaker's meaning by taking into consideration the "linguistic and paralinguistic features that appear routinely in naturally occurring talk" (p.47), the social context influencing the speaker, and the relation between the speaker and interviewer. Another important caution that Mishler raises is the realization that the transcript is a "transformation...and partial representation of what actually occurred" (p.48). What is missing are the facial expressions, the body language, changes in pitch and volume of voice. He reminds us that it is essential to keep returning to the original tape to check on the adequacy of our interpretations, and not to let the transcript become the sole authority for getting to meaning. However, the transcripts easily become the focus of the analysis and provide the verification quotes. Fieldnotes, journal, and other sources of information also help to validate the meaning or interpretation derived from the interview (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.198). Neither Mishler, Hammersley, or Atkinson emphasize going back to the people who "talked" to verify their meanings and the researcher's interpretations.

At first, I used a reflexive interview approach as discussed by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983); that is, use issues rather than a list of questions to guide the process. There were issues that bothered me and I wanted some general direction in which to start the research process. I wanted to ask Simon's advice on who I might approach and how I should start my research work.

As I continued to work with Simon, our interviews moved from "research as conversation" to "research as chat" (Celia Haig-Brown, 1992, pp.104-105). Research as conversation is characterized as an open-ended interview with opportunity for both sides to engage in talk, rather than having only one party doing most of the talking. Research as chat, occurs when the researcher is very familiar with the participant(s), and they interact on a frequent basis. The researcher may often not have the trusty tape-recorder, but instead takes written and "memory" notes after discussions. The next section focuses on a beginning interview/talk that I had with Simon Baker.

### **Analyzing The Transcript: "Sit down and Listen"**

...sit down and listen, and that's the thing our Ancestors used to say (Chief Simon Baker, Feb. 17, 1992 transcript).

Before transcribing the tape, I thought about the teachings (Mishler might say ideas or themes) Simon wanted me to learn. I listened to the tape twice. He talked a lot about Elders, how important it is to go to them, to listen to what they have to say, to show respect by listening and spending time with them, and establishing a learning relationship with them. One answer to my question of who to work with was Elders. During his talk, he stressed the importance of living honourably and showing respect to everyone, even if

you dislike a person. In time, that respect could be returned to you. After the talk I decided to seek out those Elders who continue to practice and pass on their cultural teachings.

Simon also made me realize the importance of keeping the tapes and perhaps finding a way to have them available for others to hear and appreciate the Elders' way of talking and the knowledge shared. The tapes serve as a record of cultural history along with the written talks. However, sometimes the person who is talking names others and may talk about experiences that are of a confidential nature. Then the tapes may not be ethically shared if permission is not given by the others named in the discussion. Permission would also need to be given to have the tapes used for purposes other than this thesis. I have found that going back each time for permission to use tapes, quotes, or stories for purposes other than the purpose initially agreed upon is looked upon as a "nuisance" by the one who generated the knowledge. There is an implied understanding that once permission is given, then the knowledge can be used for teaching/learning purposes as long as proper acknowledgment of the source is made clear. Acknowledging the person is one way, although limited, for the listeners/readers to assess the validity of the claims. The learner is given trust and must exercise ethical responsibility to learn cultural ways for using the teachings.

Giving and getting permission raises ethical questions of who has authority to give permission and under what circumstances. The researcher given permission has the ethical responsibility to understand the limits of permission and to try and prevent her/his

abuse of the knowledge and permission. Sometimes institutional procedures, such as making people sign documents and continually asking them to check the written versions for accuracy, may create an atmosphere of distrust, or that the learner/researcher can't get it right. The importance of establishing a teaching/learning research relationship based on trust and ethical responsibility became more important to me in the work with Simon Baker and others.

Mishler's (1986) notion of the interview as a speech event facilitating the creation of narratives and the cultural relationship of teacher/learner between Simon and me is evident in this particular transcript. The quantity of what I say, though, is less than what Simon says. I feel that Elders should be given as much time as they need and want to talk<sup>9</sup>. I tried to note the start of new stories that he told throughout the transcript because I wondered if the stories could be categorized into various types. This was hard to do. Simon told many stories and it was not clear if a story was completely finished before he started on a new one. He described survival life activities that he experienced with his grandmother and uncles, the teachings of various Elders, and his current life style in relation to the past. Many different life experiences were brought together, to make a composite story of his life. The themes that were repeated and that stood out were knowledge from nature, learning by listening, Elders' ways of teaching, Elder responsibility and time for reflection, living right, and the responsibility of the learner to find and question the Elders.

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<sup>9</sup> Some Elders also like to talk at length and get off topic. In research situations, though, I feel their expertise should be respected. If they fully understand and are committed to the importance of the work, they will say only what is necessary (see Chapter Two for reminders of using words carefully).

When I listened to the tape and heard my “talk,” I was embarrassed by my ramblings and hesitations. Toward the end of the talk, Simon mentioned the traditional way of speaking. I really wanted to keep going because I was interested in the structure and content of speaking. However, I realized that we had been sitting for a long time and that Simon was tired. I also knew that we would continue our discussions for a long time.

I recalled the good healing kind of emotions I felt after bringing Simon home. He provided me with good things to think about. He had soothed my anxiety. He had also pointed out some markers that I could place on my “journeying” map, to act as “bearings” to help me find my way as I began to explore the territory of First Nations orality. However, Celia Haig-Brown, who examined my interview analysis and interview transcript, felt differently and questioned my lack of critical examination:

A fascinating interview. My outsider status (perhaps) forces me to question why you make no mention of the fact that Simon gives no direct answers to your questions—the two primary ones being what to do about reciprocity and who else to interview.

And yet you make no comment. Clearly, I’m missing something here.

Let me be very honest. I read the transcript first and felt frustrated with the flowing talk, moving from one topic to the next without apparent pattern (or one that meant anything to me, I should say). I thought of Wendy’s transcription of Harry Robinson and wondered if a different format would aid my understanding and perhaps clarify the meaning you take from the talk.

...I wanted the analysis to do more than show he made you feel better.

A critical eye is not a disrespectful one, I don’t think. Is there something tied up in that which makes important your lack of probing, questioning the transcript? (March, 1992)

I wrote the following response to Celia's criticism in a fieldnote journal entry, March 31, 1992 to show that indeed I had thought critically about what Simon told me and to raise three questions related to communications and our research relationship:

...if Simon Baker talks more about his life experiences, and does not appear to be answering my questions then why? If I am to work with Elders such as Simon, then I will probably have experiences similar to the one evident in the transcript. Therefore, I need to see what I can learn from the process of analysis, which should make me go back—think back to the process of 'interviewing' or having a talk. The following questions could be possibilities to probe:

1. Are my questions clearly stated? Does he understand them? I could try asking them again another time, without the tentativeness evident the first time.
2. Am I asking the wrong questions at this particular time? Should I take more time to establish a teacher/learner relationship with him? I know Simon quite well, but I have not worked with him on this particular topic or area, in depth. Perhaps his life story is a way for me to get to know him more (how he was raised, what teachings are important to him, how he views the world—what and who has shaped his world view). By spending more time with Simon he would also get to know me better, and to understand what my learning needs are, in a way to make him become a traditional teacher, similar to how he describes his relationship with his grandmother.
3. Does Simon have his own purpose for the stories he tells? Remember Julie Cruikshank's experience where the three Yukon Elders politely evaded answering her questions, and told her stories instead? As Julie worked with the Elders, they took increasing control of the research process. However, Julie came to see the women's ways of telling stories as a way of telling her about themselves and their histories. It seems they all had a similar purpose—to record history, but each wanted to achieve it in different ways: Julie at first wanted to hear and record chronicled events, while the women wanted to tell traditional kinds of stories. It would appear that Julie decided to honour the Elders' ways of telling their stories—and to honour their ways of knowing.

...Or perhaps I have to learn which of Simon's words should stay inside my mind and which ones should 'go out the other ear' as he has said. Having a transcript allows me to go back over the words, to pick ones for



particular meanings at this stage of my thinking and research, and to leave the others which can be revisited later.

Perhaps in my initial analysis I let the transcript talk too much. I focused on trying to see what themes or messages were contained in Simon's stories, rather than seeing how his talk related to the questions asked. Words related to Elders' teachings were highlighted in orange colour. It appeared that Simon answered the question of who to speak to about orality, *Elders who have traditional teachings and who live respectfully, characteristics rather than specific names, and Elders who welcome the opportunity to share their knowledge*. Yes, I wondered why he didn't name names. But I know that Simon wants to keep working with me and perhaps February 28th at the Saskatchewan Restaurant was not the right time or place to get an answer. I have learned from experience with the Sto:lo Elders that an answer may not be evident when a question is first asked. But I came to understand that when I am ready and worthy for the answer, it is given. *Patience, patience, patience*.

Even though Simon may not have said much about the questions regarding reciprocity, I had already given him my answer, when I posed the question. I think that I had to admit those guilt feeling to someone like Simon. On page seven of the transcript he tells me that he respects me for the way I came to ask him permission and that he knows 'a lot will come out for good use.' I guess I wanted to hear that I was doing the right and respectful thing. So what I realize now is that the interview can also be therapeutic for the person posing the questions.

After a few discussions with Celia Haig-Brown, I finally mentioned that the notion of respect encompasses effects created from disrespectful practices such as those stemming from colonization. She was bothered that I didn't talk about disrespect and felt that the term 'respect' could become a sugary coated platitude. One can never forget the personal or generational hurt created by disrespectful times and people. The pain may be dulled but comes alive when racism in whatever guise re-appears. The traditional teachings about respect for oneself, for others, and "all my relations" helps keep the disrespect in perspective. In earlier chapter sections, the mistrust and emotional hurt caused by disrespectful research practices were emphasized. The Trickster stories also show

disrespectful thinking and behaviour. They are reminders about respectful thinking and behaviour. Disrespect and respect are not intentionally positioned as binary opposites, to simply show that one is good and one is bad, although it may appear that way. I have tried to show that they inter-relate to one another and influence one another. Their interaction causes a synergistic action, much like the notion of praxis—action based on reflection.

### ***Learning More About Respect***

To be in harmony with oneself, others, members of the animal kingdom and other elements of nature requires that First Nations people respect the gifts of each entity and establish and maintain respectful reciprocal relations with each. One might ask, how can this principle of cultural respect transcend context and time and be applicable to First Nations academic research? A while ago, I heard Chief Len George of the Burrard-Squamish Nation reply to a question with similar implication: "How can urban First Nations maintain their cultures which may have deep connections to the land, in a city environment?" I wrote a fieldnote with his response on June 21, 1991; then, four years later, find his same response written in a book edited by David Neel. I have often noticed that storytellers and speakers will often retell their stories and particular talks in varying contexts:

I try to use old philosophies as a tool. I call it learning how to become a hunter of the city, using the old philosophy of the hunter in the forest and the respect that he had, and using only what you need for that day, and taking it out, bringing it back and sharing it with as many people whose needs will be suited by it. This changed my perspective on the city. It is a wonderful resource then—go in and hunt and get things out and bring it back home ( 1992, p.53).

What I take from Chief Len George's metaphor is that I need to first understand the values of the "old philosophies," then go to the new environment, that of First Nations storytelling/research, then learn and share this learning with others. I can do this partly through my thesis experience. Those who are interested in learning about First Nations orality and storytelling will find my work and take (not appropriate) what they need from it. The cycle of reciprocity and reverence toward the spiritual are important dynamics of storywork which will be shown with the next teacher.

***Tsimlano, Dr. Vincent Stogan, Musqueam-Sto:lo Elder***

During the process of learning about ethnographic interviewing, I experienced similar lessons about respect, responsibility, and reciprocity between teacher and learner from another respected cultural teacher of the Sto:lo-Musqueam people, Dr. Vincent Stogan, *Tsimlano*, which means *A Great Man*. I also learned more about the principle of reverence. Vincent Stogan is a Spiritual healer and works with many people across Canada and the United States. He and his wife, whom everyone calls "mom," carry on the traditional healing and spiritual work passed down to him from his relatives:

A lot of Elders wanted me to take my grandfather's place...he was a great healer. That old man he was blind but he said when I was little...you are the one that's going to take my place and do this kind of work. I never thought of it until I was old enough...I was about 45 years old I guess when we [mom and I] noticed that our Elders were going fast, so we made up our mind that we better do the work they want us to do. We put our minds to it and then started the healing work (Transcript, August 16, 1994).

He was trained in the Spiritual ways by his male relatives. The spiritual dimension of the wholistic paradigm presented in Chapter One became more evident with my interaction

with Elder Vincent Stogan. I have known Vincent for seven years, but have watched him work at numerous gatherings over many years. He is also an Elder Advisor to the students, staff, and faculty of the First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia where I work.

Vincent Stogan agreed to talk to me about our oral traditions. In our first research session, Vincent immediately became the teacher, and I the learner (similar to the relationship between Simon Baker and me). Our teacher-learner relation was based on respect for the Sto:lo cultural ways. Because I wanted to learn about a topic I did not know very much about, I approached Vincent Stogan, a respected keeper of the culture. Because I am an insider of the culture, I observed a cultural learning protocol: the Elder determines where we should meet, I ensure that there is sharing of food and tea, and I create unhurried time and talking space so that we can get to the topic of discussion at the "right" moment. It would be disrespectful to ask my questions immediately. During breakfast we talked about many things and I told Vincent about my Ph.D program and the reason I was interested in the research topic of our " Oral Traditions," and the kinds of things I wanted to know. When he began to talk, he assumed the role of teacher and I understood that he was agreeing to teach me. His comments show how he intended to direct the learning process:

Another way that I can help you get to know these things, it won't be just like us talking now, it'll take time, I can go just so far and maybe we carry on some other time...because this is the teaching that we got that we can't hurry everything.... Well I think knowing you this long, I know your parents now, where you're from, I'm willing to help you. I trust you and I know you're our kind (Transcript, May 17, 1991).

When Vincent talked about knowing my parents and knowing where I am from, I understood him to mean that our common history bonded us together in important ways. He felt responsible to help me because of our cultural bond. His decision to help me by becoming my teacher and our subsequent talks made me realize that as a learner I, too, have responsibilities. Our relation as teacher and learner had to be based on respect for each other and respect for the traditional cultural ways of teaching and learning, and reverence for Spirituality. I also realized that reciprocity was essential to our working together. As learner, I needed to listen carefully and to think "hard" about the meanings in Vincent's personal stories and in his words. I could then check my understandings with him to ensure their accuracy. Once an agreement between us was reached, then these understandings could become "public" information for both written and oral purposes. Vincent would carry out his Elder responsibility by teaching and also ensuring the correctness of the learning. My part then included acquiring and validating my understandings and eventually sharing them and even perhaps becoming like a teacher to others. This reciprocal action has a cyclical nature.

Vincent also carries out important Spiritual cultural work. He opens gatherings with prayer and sometimes song. He is teaching the "younger" ones the Spiritual ceremonies in Sto:lo territory. The importance of addressing spiritual needs and asking for spiritual guidance from the Creator became an important teaching for me and continues to guide my work. I have learned that prayer is an essential beginning:

...we always pray first to the Creator...I think in your kind of work using [spirituality] will help you a lot, it's no shame to pray to the Creator (May 17, 1991 transcript).

Elder Vincent Stogan has continued to provide encouragement to me with this research and with teaching me more about traditional Spiritual teachings and cultural knowledge. He will phone me or drop by the First Nations Longhouse at UBC to ask how things are going, or to say that he and mom are going travelling. He now calls me his “niece,” which makes me feel related to him, although we are not related by kinship. I stopped taping and interviewing him and followed, for a while, the research as chat approach. I then switched to a traditional approach of learning from *Tsimlano*, as he first directed me: learning pieces at a time and not hurrying the learning. I have watched him speak many times and at many different gatherings. We have shared many private talks. What he has taught me is in my oral memory and in my “being.” His teachings are reflected on the pages of my thesis.

Establishing relationships within this research context has become a way of establishing and sustaining lasting friendships with deep caring and endless stories and talk. Learning to listen with patience, learning about cultural responsibility toward the oral tradition, learning to make self-understandings, continuing the cycle of reciprocity about cultural knowledge, and practicing reverence are some of the lessons I experienced with Chief Simon Baker and Elder Vincent Stogan. These lessons and others were reinforced through my relationship with *Kwulasulwut*, Elder Ellen White who is from the Coast Salish, Nanimo people.

### **The Teachings of *Kwulasulwut*, Ellen White**

I will first describe the developing relationship between *Kwulasulwut*, which means *Many Stars* and me. Elder Ellen White is my mentor, teacher, and dear friend. The collaborative research process undertaken between Ellen and me to create an educational journal article will highlight some pertinent issues of collaborative analysis of transcripts, editing the text for publication, and translation considerations between a Native language and English. Working on these issues with Ellen White prepared me for the analysis and verification process with the (Sto:lo) Coqualeetza Elders.

### ***Establishing A Relationship***

I met Ellen White in the Spring of 1991, but I knew about her long before that. I have admired Ellen's work as storyteller, writer, and healer for many years. Her book *Kwulasulwut: Stories From The Coast Salish*, gave me inspiration when it was published in 1981 (now reprinted in 1992) because she, a First Nations storyteller and writer, was able to take the oral traditions that she was taught and put them in a literate form for educational purposes. When I met Ellen at a public lecture at the Museum of Anthropology at UBC in the Spring of 1991, I was struck by her powerful way of passing on her knowledge. Her talk, combined with song, humour, the drum, engaged the listeners, particularly me. Being there, hearing her words, brought me back to the times when I listened to the Sto:lo Elders, at another time and place. After her talk, I introduced myself to her and acknowledged her good words, a teaching that I remember Chief Simon Baker encouraging in his many talks. However, this was the first time that I followed his teaching with someone I did not personally know. During our short talk, Ellen said that

she thought she knew me from other times. I knew intuitively at that moment, that I wanted to work with and learn from Ellen. During the summer of 1992, Ellen participated in a working committee to select writings of Aboriginal students for a book about their Aboriginal heroes. Our working relationship began with this experience. Ellen also agreed to participate in an educational talk with me about *Giving Voice To Our Ancestors*. This particular talk, is now taped, transcribed, edited and printed in the *Canadian Journal of Native Education* (CJNE) (White & Archibald, 1992).

September 18, 1992, was the date we began our work for the CJNE. I travelled by ferry to Ellen and her husband Doug's home in Naniamo. When I arrived, Ellen had made salmon chowder and bannock. As we ate, Doug and I teased each other about who drank the strongest coffee—me from the Sto:lo or him from the Nanaimo Coast Salish. In a way we're related by the Halq'emeylem language, although Ellen's community has dialectical differences. They call their language, Hul'qumi'num. We come from the same cultural traditions. I felt accepted and at home there; I felt like a member of their extended family. Before we began working, I offered Ellen White a Starblanket as a gift from the First Nations House of Learning, to thank her for helping us with this important work. When her husband left, I took out the tape recorder, and we sat at the dining room table. I reviewed the intent of the talk, the purpose of the CJNE, the process of how we could work together—I record, transcribe the talk, and review the written transcript with her, and get her approval before the text—her story, her words, and her work are put into book form (similar to the process used by Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Robinson and Wickwire, 1989; and Cruikshank, Sidney, Smith, & Ned, 1990). Ellen asked what I would add to her



words. I said that I wanted to write a reaction to her words and that our article would be collaborative: she and I would be the authors. Ellen said that she liked that approach because I could question what was not clear and add parts that were missing. Then Ellen began talking about some of her Ancestors; after a few minutes, she said to turn the tape recorder on.

I remember feeling emotionally strong, spiritually grateful, and intellectually challenged after I left Ellen and Doug White's home, September 18th. My journal entry notes:

I feel almost overwhelmed! What a rich experience—to be involved at so many layers....I get immersed in her stories. When Ellen talks about her Ancestors, it is as if she is 'there with them'—her voice changes and she sounds as if she is her granny. I recall the power of her metaphors: trees, baskets, canoes, hair, paths, air/body. I see these images so vividly and, when I do, the comparison and connection of them to life considerations is so clear, so evident.

The metaphors visually reinforce one teaching that has been on my mind a lot since that day: beginning the learning with the "core" of knowledge and starting from the inside and going to the surface, the outside. Ellen said:

They said you learn the base, the very basic, the inside, the stem, the core. It sort of sounds like it when you translate it, the core of what you are learning and then expand out. The teacher will already know that—it is like a big tree, never mind the apples or if it's flowers, we're going to learn inside first and then out, they said. Never from outside first (CJNE, 1992, p.154).

Ellen's Ancestors also said, it is important to take time to sit, think about, and feel what we have learned. **My challenge is to find this "core" for storytelling.** Until my

encounter with Ellen I had thought more about uncovering the layers of meaning from story—going from the surface to the depths. Now, I had to re-think this approach.

I visited Ellen a second time on November 11, 1992, to go over the written transcript for editing purposes. We both had time to read the transcript individually before meeting; I had mailed her a copy. During my September visit, we had agreed to go over it together at our next meeting, to take out or add any necessary information. I suggested this process, in response to Ellen's question about how I was going to use her talk and what was going to be put into print. Ellen agreed with this process. We began to work shortly after I arrived. My journal notes:

Ellen is so good to work with. She knows what words and information that she wants kept in, what might be inappropriate for the readers, and what is culturally inappropriate for this article (i.e. particular healing and spiritual practices).

I did not realize that during our first session, Ellen was thinking entirely in Hul'qumi'num first about the teachings and knowledge acquired from her Ancestors, and was translating, or as she says, "looking for the closest English word" to describe what she meant. She did say a few words in Hul'qumi'num during the first talk. In this session she shared more Hul'qumi'num and talked about the difficulty of finding the right English words to convey her meaning. I felt at a disadvantage because I do not know the Hul'qumi'num language enough to appreciate the connotated meanings. I noted that I should examine further the problems related to language differences, especially with translation and changes of word/concept meaning with Ellen and other storytellers who are fluent in an Aboriginal language.

This experience with Ellen made me realize some of the complexities of collaborative critical ethnographic interviewing with Elders such as: (1) needing lots of time to record then listen to the tape, then transcribe verbatim the talk; (2) examining together the correctness of the English words which will become the public cultural record for future generations; and (3) ensuring that the collaborating partner and author are satisfied with the article before it is printed. The September visit was about four hours long. It took at minimum 40 hours to transcribe and check back with audio tape for accuracy of pauses/silences, voice inflection, names etc..which I did, rather than have someone else do it. Our November visit was also about four hours long. Ellen was directive, in identifying sections that were to be deleted. She was thinking foremost about the reader, who might not understand the spiritual ways, and said that if we were to keep these parts in then we would have to add more background information for them, which would then change the intent of her "talk." She also noted that some of the knowledge was not for public use. In the process as described, Ellen took the lead at the beginning of the transcript work, when deciding what words and sections were to be kept, and what was to be left out, rather than I first suggesting and she agreeing. I gave her feedback on her directives, and by the end of the transcript our process was similar to that described by Walter Lightning and Carl Urion (1992) as "mutual thinking": when we came to certain parts we simultaneously identified them. I think our process of getting to know one another, sharing the same cultural traditions, and establishing a consensual working approach led to mutual thinking. Out of the aforementioned complexities I gained an appreciation for these four principles: (1) respect for each other and for the cultural

knowledge; (2) carrying out the roles of teacher and learner in a responsible manner (a serious approach to the work and being mindful of what readers/other learners can comprehend); (3) practicing reciprocity where we each gave to the other, thereby continuing the cycle of knowledge from generation to generation; and (4) reverence towards Spiritual knowledge and one's spiritual being.

During the CJNE sessions with Ellen, I wanted to ask her if she would agree to work with me on my thesis research. However, I resisted because I wanted her to get to know me better, to see how I would work with her stories/words on the CJNE article, and to establish a trust between us. More importantly, I wanted her to trust my motives and methods toward story research. Since September 1992, Ellen has also been involved in two other First Nations curriculum projects with me which use storytelling. We know each other really well and there is a special connection between us. Another reason that I feel close to Ellen is because she is an Elder Coast Salish woman and I wonder if the kinds of stories that First Nations women tell are different from stories told by First Nations men. This notion was introduced by another storyteller, Louise Profit-Leblanc, of the Yukon Tutchone Nation:

Women speak to the moral and spiritual fibre and men speak about the laws of the land (March 7, 1993, fieldnote).

So if I am honouring/respecting cultural protocol, then should I be mainly working with First Nations women? Another question to ponder.

When I was writing my response to Ellen's talk for the CJNE article, I felt a strong resistance. This resistance to writing has been so prevalent in my academic work for so long, it has become like a friend: a friend whose positive and negative attributes I have come to know and like. The resistance continues from not wanting to take on the disrespectful actions of academic outsiders by becoming too explicit and directive. From my Sto:lo teachings and from other First Nations ways, I have learned that in the oral tradition, the listener-learner, is challenged to make meaning, gain understanding from the storyteller-teacher's words, which is an empowering process. My friend Richard Wagemese of the Ojibway Nation said we need to "take the story away and find our own truth in it" (Sept. 29, 1992 talk and fieldnote). This same way of gaining understanding and knowledge is reinforced by another Elder storyteller. Upper Skagit Elder, Vi Hilbert, of the Lushootseed Nation, told an audience at the Vancouver storytelling festival, "I never insult an audience by telling them what to think. They must use their minds, the gifts they were given to think with" (March 5, 1993 fieldnote). The responsibility of the storyteller-teacher to ensure appropriate understanding of the listener becomes crucial if she cannot tell the listeners what the "right" answers are. I observed Vi Hilbert's storytelling session where she gave clues to unlock meaning by sharing some basic cultural principles and sharing other peoples' understandings of the stories. If listeners were really listening, they could easily follow her lead and personalize the meaning of the story metaphors.

From 1992-95, Ellen White and I continued our friendship and worked together on a new kindergarten to grade seven curriculum project which was sponsored by the Law Courts

Education Society of British Columbia: *The First Nations Journeys of Justice*. During the curriculum work, Ellen became the project Elder with whom the curriculum staff and I consulted. She also participated in the Advisory Committee meetings, shared two stories which created a firm foundation upon which to build understanding of working with stories, and was a participant in a teachers' storytelling video. *The First Nations Journeys of Justice* project is a storybased curriculum which is discussed in detail in chapter six. Ellen also continued to be one of the Elders-In-Residence each summer with the First Nations House of Learning youth programs. She lived on campus for a two week period and participated in the program graduation. During the curriculum project and the youth program, Ellen and I had time to visit and also talk about storywork. Some of these discussions were tape recorded or video recorded because they were for the *First Nations Journeys of Justice* project. Ellen agreed to participate in these recorded sessions and we also agreed that she maintain copyright of her stories.

I did not ask Ellen to directly participate in my thesis work until the summer of 1995. I was finally ready and culturally "worthy." I was also ready to share and "give back" to Ellen what I had learned from her. The concept of "sharing" or reciprocity became another guiding principle. Turning to tradition helped me. I remember Dr. Eber Hampton also spoke about the concept of tradition and preservation at the same Mokakit gathering where he told the *Bone Needle Story*. This traditional principle was told to him by others with whom he had worked in Alaska. He said that "*it is not as important to preserve tradition, as it is to let tradition preserve us.*" When I let this tradition help me, I was able to let go of those earlier guilt feelings and I was ready to be guided by respect to share

knowledge with others who may benefit from this sharing<sup>10</sup>. It is similar to how the Elders talk about the desire to pass on their knowledge to others, especially for the future generations. I felt that I could ask Ellen to help me with my thesis by sharing what I learned about storywork from her in particular. The teachings that I learned from *Kwulasulwut*, Ellen White guided me through the rest of the story research process and helped me to appreciate the power of stories.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> My experiential story of working through ethical research issues may be criticized for being “too confessional.” The issues are complex, emotional, and require on-going reflection. I confess feeling guilt, anxiety, and nervousness, but I do not apologize for feeling this way. These feelings helped me appreciate the significance of respect, responsibility, reverence, and reciprocity in research relationships with Elders.

<sup>11</sup> I gave the sections of the thesis that contained Ellen’s teachings/words. She approved them and did not suggest any changes.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE POWER OF STORIES

Stories, you see, are not just entertainment. Stories are power. They reflect the deepest, the most intimate perceptions, relationships, and attitudes of a people. Stories show how a people, a culture, thinks (Keeshig-Tobias, 1990, January 26, The Globe and Mail).

Each Aboriginal Nation has particular traditions, protocols, and rules concerning stories and the way that stories are to be told for teaching and learning purposes. The types of stories can vary from the sacred to the historical; from the development and perpetuation of the social/political/cultural ways to the personal life experiences and testimonials. Some stories are just for fun. Some stories may be "owned" or the responsibility of individuals, clans, or families; some belong to the "public domain," available for anyone to tell. The power of storywork creates a synergistic effect among the story, the context in which the story is used, the way the story is told, and how one listens to make meaning. The principle of synergy and characteristics of storypower are woven into this chapter. Wapaskwan, of the Dearborn River Metis, shares some text with Walter Lightning (1992) about characteristics of Aboriginal stories and some principles for listening and interpreting stories. I cite Wapaskawan's text to help the reader listen/read the stories which follow:

The way to interpret those stories has never been clear to the literate, academic community until recently. The stories are not just 'texts,' or narratives that deal with sequences of events in a linear progression of events.

There are several classes of stories. For example, there are 'sacred' stories as opposed to 'historical stories,' and traditionally it has taken 40 years or so of apprenticeship for an individual to work to gain the authority to tell the sacred class of story. That length of time is not required just to learn



the texts of the stories, nor how to perform them. It takes that long to acquire the principles for interpretation of the stories.

There is a 'surface' story: the text, and the things one has to know about the performance of it for others. The stories are metaphoric, but there are several levels of metaphor involved. The text, combined with the performance, contains a 'key' or a 'clue' to unlock the metaphor. When a hearer has that story, and knows the narrative sequence of it, there is another story contained within that story, like a completely different embedded or implicit text.

The trick is this: that the implicit or embedded text, itself, contains clues, directions—better yet, specifications—for the interpretation of an implicit text embedded in it.

...At some levels there is very explicit and precise spatial and temporal information. [He makes reference to a specific story, a version of which is included in a classic ethnography of the Crow, and he refers to some of the narrative sequence.] At one level, that sequence of the story contains a very precise topological description of a stretch of the Missouri River and the basin around it, just south of its confluence with the Yellowstone. At another level, that same sequence contains a very precise set of principles for relationships between specific kin. *A hearer isn't meant to understand the story at all levels, immediately. It is as if it unfolds* (Canadian Journal of Native Education, 1992, pp.229-230, my emphasis added).

This chapter will begin with my experiential story about learning to become a beginning storyteller. My life experience story shows how the power of story became real for me and others engaged in storywork.

### ***Becoming A Storyteller***

We come from a tradition of storytelling, and as storytellers we have a responsibility to be honest, to transmit our understanding of the world to other people....In this process, there is something more than information being transmitted: there's energy, there's strength being transmitted from the storyteller to the listener and that is what's important in teaching young people about their identity (Beth Cuthand, 1989, p.54).

## **Learning To Make Meaning From Stories**

I have felt the story energy and strength Beth Cuthand speaks of. It is an energy, a source of power, that feeds and revitalizes mind/body/spirit in a wholistic manner. This strength and power challenges me to think, to examine my emotional reactions in relation to what may be called story plot and story characters, to question and reflect upon my behaviours and future actions, and to appreciate the story's connection to my spiritual nature. An appreciation of the values of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and reverence embedded in First Nations stories did not occur until I learned to tell stories and to interact with and through story. I did not intentionally set out to become a storyteller, but I did set out to learn more about the nature of First Nations stories and how they could be used for quality education. I am a beginning storyteller who is just starting to gain some understandings of the significance of stories for teaching and learning. My experiential story is told to exemplify the values listed above and to introduce some issues related to story-memory, letting Elders guide a learning process, learning patience, and appreciating silence. The power of a story is shown through stories about a story.<sup>1</sup>

My stronger memories of encountering First Nations stories in school curriculum go back to my elementary school teaching experiences from 1972-79. There are faint memories of learning about a few Indian<sup>2</sup> legends through the subjects of reading and social studies

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<sup>1</sup> My story is a retelling of life experiences constructed from memory with personal interpretations and contextual description woven in, to resonate with the notion that the narrator can also be a commentator who offers "criticism" (Dennis Tedlock, 1983, p.236) and that "writing, as much as possible, should reflect oral tendencies to engage the larger world in which the spoken word lives" as advocated by Greg Sarris (1993, p. 45).

<sup>2</sup> I use the term "Indian" here because during the late 60s and 70s it was commonly used. As I reflect upon the word and examine it in my thesis context, it had such a negative and painful connotation. During these periods, a political resistance militant movement, known as AIM, *American Indian Movement*, was gaining support in Canada, and the "younger" generation became involved with resisting mainstream

during elementary and high school years. These memories are ones I've tried to forget or to ignore because I felt humiliation and emotional pain over the way the Indian cultures and peoples were represented and studied. Indian stories and by implication cultures and peoples were portrayed as simplistic and primitive. Werner, Connors, Aoki, and Dahlie (1977) examined multicultural content of and pedagogy for social studies curricula prescribed for elementary and secondary schools across Canada during the 1974-75 school year. The common approaches to teaching about Indian cultures were described as 'museum and heritage' at the elementary level, and 'discipline and issues' at the secondary level. The former approaches which I would have labeled, 'arts and crafts; colour a totem pole made from an egg carton,' tended to reinforce stereotypes because of the superficial treatment of culture. With the disciplines' approach, Indian people became objects of study. The issues were often considered "The Indian Problem." These same approaches were what I experienced at least 15 years earlier, as a student. Learning about Indian cultures through public school curriculum was something I endured. Perhaps that was why I was drawn to developing better curricula about First Nations through teacher education and later as a teacher. I didn't want other First Nations children to have to suffer the same humiliation and pain that I experienced.

I admit to using basal readers that had an Indian legend or two in them, but I supplemented these with other culturally based material that I found or developed. There was not much available, especially any developed by First Nations. I did not realize the

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values and assimilation and fought to get "Indian" pride back (Armstrong, 1985). Churchill (1994) presents a critical AIM leader's perspective about appropriation of American Indian culture and identity and a historical view of the resistance movement.

significance of stories at that time, but I also felt that using an Indian legend to teach reading, in particular comprehension skills, was not appropriate either. Dissecting the story for the purposes of developing a list of comprehension questions to be discussed in a question/answer, then written format, felt wrong.<sup>3</sup> I did not hear traditional stories being told when I was a child; however, I heard many life experience stories. It was not until I started working with the Coqualeetza Cultural Centre, Sto:lo Sitel, and Elders' group that I began learning about the educational importance of stories.

In 1975, I became part of the Sto:lo Sitel Advisory Committee which oversaw the development of the Sto:lo Sitel curriculum. The committee comprised 10 -15 educators from the public school districts, band schools, Sto:lo communities, and Coqualeetza staff, all of whom met on a monthly basis. The Committee developed curriculum policies, gave feedback on the curriculum approach and materials, and liaised with school administrators, teachers, and Sto:lo community members. The Advisory Committee and Elders' Group were the vital community link to the curriculum project. The Elders' Group became the "backbone" of the Sto:lo Sitel curriculum. They provided the cultural knowledge, also guided the process of development, and verified all material before it was published.<sup>4</sup> I also became one of the curriculum developers, and later, senior consultant to the curriculum project. The curriculum development group included an artist, language and culture specialists, a writer, and a secretary. The process for working with the Elders and their stories included: first getting their support and establishing their

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<sup>3</sup> I speak of the time period, 1972-79, much before the whole language approach became popular.

<sup>4</sup> For a fuller description of the Sto:lo Sitel curriculum development and implementation phases, see Archibald (1995).

trust in the Sto:lo Sitel staff, tape recording the Elders telling their stories, transcribing them, then putting the stories into text and developing illustrations for storybooks.

The need for the Sto:lo Sitel curriculum was first suggested by the Elders. They wanted their weekly meetings to focus on documenting cultural knowledge but they did not want the tape recorder used. I wondered if it was because they did not feel comfortable with this kind of technology. Shirley Leon, Coqualeetza Manager, recalls that “every meeting we would bring the tape recorder, but they didn’t want it turned on. It was at least eight months before they finally said at one meeting it was okay to turn the recorder on” (personal communication, January 31, 1996). She felt that the Elders needed to be reassured that those working on the documentation of cultural knowledge and the Sto:lo Sitel curriculum had the same intentions/motives as they did: the work was for the children and future generations. During this process, the written story version and illustrations, and accompanying teacher’s lesson plan were verified with the Elder who told the story. I’m not sure why the printed text was selected as the main medium to represent the stories: books were and are the predominant tool for instruction, perhaps, we wanted to legitimize First Nations stories through a literate form in school curriculum. The Cultural Centre was beginning to use video for some cultural programs, but developing them for school use was too expensive. This process was time consuming; some stories took a full year to go through the developmental/printing process. The Elders were adamant about getting the story’s text right as Shirley Leon, recalls: “[The Elders] would correct how their story was written, they would say, I didn’t say that, you’re putting words in my mouth...that’s not how I said it” (December 5, 1995,

transcript). The curriculum team developed one or two stories for grades one to four in the manner described earlier. The stories that the Elders selected for inclusion in the Sto:lo Sitel curriculum contained information about cultural traditions, environmental knowledge, values concerning inter-relationships amongst people, nature, and land. The Elders' stories were then matched with the grade level concepts of family, community, and culture prescribed by the Ministry of Education for teaching social studies. The curriculum developers added a contextual beginning to the stories where Sto:lo children heard stories from a grandparent either at bedtime or when they demonstrated disrespectful behaviour or broke a cultural rule. Hearing stories from grandparents at night or when one misbehaved resonates with traditional story ways. The Elders were careful with the selection of stories appropriate for children. The ones they shared were ones they heard as children. For one of the grade levels, we wanted a story about plants, but the Elders would not give one. At first we thought they did not remember; however, they told us much later, after we had moved onto a different unit, that stories they knew about plants were not to be told to children as the story had powerful knowledge about the plants' medicinal, healing or spiritual use, that was too strong for children. At the time, I thought they just meant that children would not understand the story or that the content/language was too difficult for the children to understand or that the story would not interest them. I did not understand the concept of *power* embedded in some of the stories.

During the weekly discussion sessions with the Coqualeetza Elders' group, the curriculum staff also asked questions about the age level appropriateness of stories, the meanings or

teachings of each story, and how they were and should be taught through the use of story. During this research phase as we called it, I learned to have patience and to wait for an answer when asking Elders questions. In the large group meetings, I recall at first feeling intimidated<sup>5</sup> going before the Elders and asking questions, intimidated because I did not know them, had not done research in this manner, and I was not sure how to talk to them in a culturally respectful manner. I had sat in on their meetings and observed the seriousness with which they approached the documentation of the Halq'emeylem language and cultural information with the linguist, Brent Galloway.<sup>6</sup> I started by saying which reserve and which family I belonged to. Amongst the Sto:lo it is still customary to say where and which family you come from, if the Elders don't know you, so those listening can place you within your community/family history, thereby knowing something about you<sup>7</sup>. I remember that often there were long silences after I asked my questions. At first I was uncomfortable with these long silences and wondered if they did not understand it or did not want to answer. Sometimes Shirley Leon would help by asking individuals to share their experience in relation to the question. I learned that these silences were important because they were thinking about the question and that they did not speak until they were sure about an answer. Silence is respectful and can create good thinking. They would answer with personal, family, and community experience stories. Sometimes a question was not answered at the Elders' meeting, at the time it was asked,

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<sup>5</sup> Now, in 1996, I realize that I was not ready or worthy to work culturally with the Elders.

<sup>6</sup> These are vivid memories because Shirley Leon and I often talked about this type of interaction and learning from Elders in the numerous Sto:lo Sitel workshops we conducted.

<sup>7</sup> Identifying one in relation to place and family is part of knowing how one fits within the collective or larger cultural group, a wholistic knowing. Even though this practice may extend to other cultures, I include it here to show that it was and is important in Sto:lo contexts.

because they needed time to reawaken their memory and ensure that what they said was the truth as they knew it. They recognized that the work they were doing was a part of recording “oral history” as they call it and because it was for educational purposes, the cultural knowledge had to be accurate. Shirley Leon links the effect of taking time to think and talk about cultural knowledge to the process of making meaning from story:

I think Elders [who] were born storytellers weren't spontaneous decision-makers....I think that came from the history of the stories; you don't make up your mind [quickly]; you have to think about it...maybe two, three days....Some of our [curriculum] questions, we [had] to wait three, four weeks before we got answers. I think that's something we have to remember in today's life, ...everything is so fast paced, Elders are starting to say, 'At least talk about things, especially where the language is concerned, don't you change anything unless you talk about it for at least six months (December 5, 1995, transcript).

The directive to spend more time talking about knowledge that is important has implications for researchers and educators who want and need particular knowledge immediately. The Elders are implying that traditional forms of knowledge contained in the Halq'emeylem language and in their stories need to be carefully transformed into English and into current educational practice. What also must be remembered is that those who have the cultural knowledge often have to remember what they were told years earlier, sometimes there is a translation process which occurs from the Halq'emeylem language to English, and the Elder may not have thought about the topic of inquiry for years<sup>8</sup>. In the case of Sto:lo storytelling, no written sources exist which describe or analyze the way that people became storytellers and how story listening and meaning

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<sup>8</sup> I have often heard the Elders say that much of what they know about traditional knowledge was “put to sleep” — was not talked about, and also outlawed. They also speak about the difficulty of finding the right English words to convey the meaning of the Halq'emeylem language.



making occurred. There are Sto:lo stories which anthropologists, linguists, and Sto:lo storytellers have published. The researcher/educator—learner—must then establish a trusting teaching/learning relationship with those who know about storytelling and she/he must learn the cultural implications embedded in the talk of the Elders. An example would be the term “Longhouse,” which has particular ceremonies and values practiced there. They will not explicate its meaning because they assume you know or you ought to know what they mean. If you do not know what they mean, then there is an expectation that you will go there and learn about it. At one time asking direct questions about what one said was considered rude. One reason relates to making meaning from stories, where one went away to think about its meanings in relation to one’s life. Today, Elders know that many Sto:lo people do not know the traditions and are willing to explain more. Some are used to talking to various people about cultural ways and find ways to explain cultural meanings.<sup>9</sup>

A deeper level of story meaning first occurred to me during one discussion at an Elders’ meeting about the story *Mink and Miss Pitch*.<sup>10</sup> I summarize it here. Mink is a trickster character journeying to find a wife. He often picks beautiful women and wants to marry them immediately. Mink usually has trouble because of his quick pick. Miss Pitch is the new object of Mink’s attention and desire. Mink tries to persuade Miss Pitch to marry him by saying that he will look after all her needs. At first she ignores, then later turns down, Mink’s marriage proposal because she says she is too different from Mink and

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<sup>9</sup> See Chapter Three where Ellen White uses metaphors that people will understand today. Also look at Sherman Alexi’s definition about Coyote in Chapter One.

<sup>10</sup> This version was told by the Susan Jimmie. It is one of many Mink-looking-for-a wife stories.

implies that their differences will not make a good marriage. Mink will not take “no” for an answer and gets angry then violent with Miss Pitch when he can not have his way. He hits Miss Pitch with one arm then the other, and kicks her with one foot then the other, then butts her with his forehead, and gets stuck to her pitchiness, overnight. The next day, when the sun warms Miss Pitch, she releases Mink, knowing she has made her point. Mink goes away. His search continues.

The Elders related some of their understandings from this story: the problems of intermarriage, the cyclical effects of violence, and challenging relationships because of major differences. Before this discussion, I did not like the story because of Mink’s violence. I saw no humour in the story; yet the Elders said it was a humourous story. My understanding was stuck on spousal abuse. After listening to the Elders’ discussion, I began to think beyond the physical violence and to think about metaphors of cultural and racial differences and to problems resulting from these differences. I started using this story in Sto:lo Sitel workshops with educators, usually reading the text version at the end of the workshop. I did this because I was not comfortable or confident enough to tell the story. I used the story to reinforce points introduced during the workshop, especially those where difficulties occurred when people with opposing views and attitudes encountered one another. I would hint at these meanings by personalizing them in this manner: “Sometimes I feel like Miss Pitch wanting to ignore and to keep people away who have differing views, or who are aggressive in wanting the recipe-list approach of how to teach First Nations students.” From these workshops, I realized that this story connected with people at an emotional level, some shared their experiences of

encountering inter-personal differences. I gradually became more familiar and comfortable with this story, and appreciated its humorous aspects. Mink, in his “sticky” predicament as a result of his disrespectful behaviour and selfish thinking is funny.<sup>11</sup> In 1981, I took a break from the Sto:lo Sitel curriculum project to work as a First Nations studies instructor, then Coordinator, and later as Supervisor for the Native Indian Teacher Education Program at UBC. The concept of the power of story became more real to me as I learned to tell stories in a new context.

### ***Living The Power of Story***

When I began working for NITEP, I used First Nations stories in classes that I taught and with educational talks that I gave, in a manner similar to that described in the Sto:lo Sitel curriculum workshop example. I gradually gained the confidence and ability to remember and tell stories without using a written text. Before 1990, I had not trained my memory to retain these stories: perhaps it was the reliance upon the literate form and my lack of confidence in telling stories. I began to remember humorous stories, mostly about Coyote, and I consciously used my memory more and used writing less, when listening to lectures, recalling phone numbers, even grocery lists. This memory building exercise revealed how much I, and today’s ways of living rely so heavily on the use of literacy. The *Coyote Eyes Story* was a fun way to try and learn the balance Terry Tafoya spoke of in Chapter One. I’d imagine seeing the world only through the lens of the oral way and use of the memory and realize how unskilled I was and how few people live this way

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<sup>11</sup> Here is an example of Indian humour. I’ve heard many First Nations people tell stories of living through events that were hurtful at the “lived” time, but having survived and come to some understanding of the experience, they are able to inject a humorous aspect to their telling.

today. The Elders are those most familiar and skilled with orality. They also read, but they recount cultural knowledge and history through orally told stories. There are some who include vivid detail about events, dates, names, and places: their oral accounts would surpass Geertz's call for thick description. Then I'd switch to the literate lens and appreciate its archival function, and the opportunity to rest the memory and listening functions for awhile. Having the typed transcriptions of the Elders' talks and stories gave me a feeling of security, knowing I could keep going back to them to complete a thematic analysis and to get necessary detail. Having the personal interaction with the Elders talking, hearing and feeling, visualizing their stories during and after the session helped me establish some thematic notions that were verified by their textual record. The written record loses the nuances of inter-personal interaction and depth of emotion and humour that were shared. The oral process without the written record, is subject to the listeners' memories, and limited to what the listeners can recall and later share with others. Used together, orality and literacy, find a mutually beneficial meeting place where each has a function that contributes to increased understanding of storytelling.

But the stories that I really remembered were ones that I did not set out to consciously try to remember, and they came from both oral and written sources. They were ones that instantly and strongly connected with me either intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, or physically.<sup>12</sup> By physically, I mean that I reflected upon my behaviour and actions that needed changing or that needed to be practiced more. Something the characters

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<sup>12</sup> The stories in this thesis are examples.

experienced in the story grabbed me emotionally. My imagination was challenged to visualize the story plot and characters and to think about the possible meanings of the story. It was as if the story became embedded in my being, in my consciousness, and in my Spirit. Sometimes my storytelling friends gave me permission to use their stories or passed written ones on to me.

Gradually the process of me planning which story to tell to exemplify some meaning changed to one where I let my intuitive nature select the story to be told. Instead of planning which story to use and framing my talk around the story, I waited to get some feeling from the group or the situation, or waited until a particular story came into my mind and being—wanting to be told. I have heard other storytellers say that they will not know exactly which story will come out until moments before they are to speak. It is the storytelling situation and the needs of the people that guide the selection of story in these circumstances. Knowing the stories intimately, as though they are a part of one's being, is essential if a storyteller is to use her/his intuitive sense for telling stories. The thoughts of the late Harry Robinson (1989) mean more to me now. He was told by his grandmother that to remember a story you must "Write it on your heart" (p.28). Knowing stories intimately can have beneficial effects upon story-listeners. I will share a storytelling experience to show what I mean.

I remember a time, February 4, 1992, I was to tell a story to a small group of third and fourth year NITEP students, enrolled in an educational seminar. Sheila TeHennepe, the instructor and my friend, wanted a story that could be used for the term's seminar

sessions. Her plan was that I would tell the same story at the beginning and end of the term. I went to the classroom early before anyone arrived, waited and asked for guidance from the Creator. I had started this practice of getting a sense of the place and people and asking for this type of help, for selecting the story to tell. It was a beautiful spring-like day, the windows were open and upon hearing the birds' songs, I knew which story to tell. This session was the first powerful emotional healing experience I have had with story, where it took on a "life" and became the teacher.

We put our chairs in a circle. Sheila introduced me then gave me a jar of home canned pears to symbolize the act of feeding the storyteller, a symbol of reciprocity, that Leslie Silko (1981) talks about: "That's what you're supposed to do, you know, you're supposed to feed the storyteller good things" (p.110). Now, the story about *The Bird In The Tree* begins.<sup>13</sup>

There were two male cousins; one lived in a northern isolated part of BC., and the other in the city of Vancouver. One day, the northern cousin came to visit his city cousin. The city fellow wanted to bring his cousin to the better more lively parts of Vancouver. He chose Robson Street. Robson Street gets quite busy with lots of people walking along the street, shopping and looking around. There's lots of traffic, loud music being played from the car stereos. As they were walking down Robson Street, the northern fellow says, 'I feel out of place here. This cement sidewalk is so hard, my feet are sore from walking on it. There are so many people, you get bumped a lot. It's so noisy. I miss my home. I miss the quiet. I miss the smell of the land. I miss the trees and mountains being close by, and I miss the birds' songs. I feel as out of place here, as that bird I hear singing in a tree at the end of the street.' The city cousin said, 'You must be homesick: how can you hear a bird singing in a tree at the end of the

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<sup>13</sup> This is not a traditional First Nations story. A friend sent me a version of this story which was written but did not have an author. I have adapted it and over time and repeated tellings, made it mine. I liked it when I first read it and began to use it for some talks to have listeners think about making space in their busy lives to hear the beauty of First Nations peoples' songs/words/stories which get drowned out by the dominant society.

street with all this noise?' The northern cousin said, 'Let me show you something. Do you have any coins?' The city fellow handed him a pocketful of change. The northern cousin took it and threw the coins onto the cement. A strange thing happened as those coins hit the sidewalk. There was a moment of silence. In that moment of silence, the people and their noise stopped. In that moment of silence, those who listened heard a bird singing in a tree at the end of the street.

After telling the story, I asked the participants to say whatever they wanted in relation to the story. I also asked them to hold a small rock while speaking; they could also choose not to hold it. I said for me the rock serves as a reminder of our connection to the earth and serves as a "witness" to what is said. Our people, the Sto:lo, believe that rocks come from a life form—the earth—and have life within. As each person began telling how she related to the story or what it meant to her, the power of the moment seemed to keep on building. Each personal story connected deeply on an emotional and spiritual level with each person around the circle. Some cultural songs were shared. Because I had not intended to use this particular story experience as part of the research process, when I told the story, I did not get permission from the participants to share what they said. Because this storytelling experience was an important turning point that created an important realization, I asked Sheila TeHennepe and two of the participants Floy Pepper, an Elder originally from the Creek Indian Nation of Oklahoma, and Shirley Sterling of the Nlakapamux (Interior Salish) Nation, to reflect upon this experience, their perceptions about the power of story and this particular storytelling session. They readily agreed because they remembered the powerful effects of the experience, although its details have faded away, as I ask them to recollect an experience that happened almost four years ago. As Shirley Sterling said "Sometimes I have a hard time remembering what I said

yesterday” (February 7, 1996, transcript). During the interview, she said that she remembered the bird imagery from the story vividly because she was reminded of her father’s affinity for birds. Sheila who is non-Native, has worked with NITEP students for 15 years. She has gained cultural understandings from interactions with the students and other First Nations. When I used the term “power of story”, Sheila and Shirley identified this power as the story having its own life:

....We didn’t know what was going to happen....I remember [one of the participants] was hurting [emotionally, spiritually] and somehow it [the story] took care of her and [then] all of us....I’d say [this story] had a life of its own (Sheila Tehennepe, November 3, 1995, transcript).

I’ve always had that sense that stories have their own life...because sometimes when you tell a story to a hunter, the hunter will take, interpret that story differently than say the basket maker. And the basket maker may remember other details. So the story takes on a life of its own and it travels from person to person and it...takes a different shape, but there’s something the same. Each person interprets slightly differently and yet it’s really amazing how some stories will persist...[for years] (Shirley Sterling, February 17, 1996, transcript).

The way that Shirley talks about the story, it is evident that she believes it has a “life” even though she is aware that story listeners will shape the story to their situations. This “life” is like having core values or teachings and content that keeps the story going and useful to people.

Sheila also believes, and I agree, that the use of the circle, rock, and food, establish respectful contextual signals “that say, this is a time to sit together....The rock, the circle, represents a certain kind of behaviour and people in the circle know that something can be brought into the circle to do. These signals mean that things are going to go in a



particular way...[they] open up a way for the story [to be] put into the circle and it goes from there” (November 3, 1995, transcript). In this particular storytelling experience, the way of sharing was open-ended. One person’s relationship to the story had a powerful effect upon me in gaining appreciation of a story’s impact upon another.

She said that last night she was feeling very lonely. Her home was in northern BC and she was missing her family and was finding it hard getting used to living in the city. She called home. Her mother answered and she could not talk about her sadness; she could not say anything; she could only cry. Then, her mother started to sing her some traditional songs. That was all she did, little else was said. At the session, the student said she felt better after hearing those songs. The bird’s song reminded her of the healing effect of her mother’s songs<sup>14</sup> (fieldnote, February 5, 1992).

Floy Pepper shares her memory (helped by reading the preceding pages) of how the rock that was sent around the circle took on its own power:

...all right, for the first time in my life I had to hold a rock that felt like it was alive....I don’t know where the feeling came from; it was like from the story. But ...as I handled the rock it was...like I had something alive in my hands. I’ve never felt a rock that felt that way before....It was almost as if it had vibes. So I associated [the rock] with the powerful thing that happened there (January 9, 1996 transcript).

As Floy and I talked further, she remembered the strong spiritual feeling that increased with each person’s words and/or songs:

To me it was sort of a spirituality thing and then when Shirley sang her song, that really got me because I’d been through a disastrous period during that time. I thought that whole experience that afternoon was really...uplifting....It was like something great happened....As I reflect

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<sup>14</sup> I share the impact of someone else’s thoughts upon me, through an experience with a storytelling session, which I feel is ethical. For a long time, I didn’t feel I could put this person’s thoughts in this thesis, because I hadn’t asked her permission. When I wrote this chapter, I felt that I couldn’t leave her words out because she helped me appreciate the significance of this story. Although she is “anonymous” because I didn’t get her approval, I remain troubled by the ethics of getting permission for using one’s words.

back....I can recall [those] feelings. [Shirley] ...recorded that song for me, when I play it I still get the same kind of feeling you know (ibid).

The February 5, 1992 storytelling experience, made me understand what others have said about stories and talk associated with them, that is having the ability to soothe, to heal. In this session, the story and the storytelling context enabled the participants to interact with the story, to let it help them bring out emotional concerns so others could then help. This particular story has been heard by Sheila a number of times in different contexts. She shares an experience where the *Bird In The Tree Story*, again “became a life of its own” and created “a place,...a reality” to interact through story.

[O]ne day, only a couple of months ago, I was walking downtown, on Hastings Street with a friend and chatting. It was still warm, it was a nice day and another friend of ours came running out of one of the buildings...she was visibly upset....She was startled to see us, so we talked. She didn't want to say what was wrong, but she said she would be okay in a minute, but for that moment she was not okay....[W]e talked to her, to see if she wanted to go for a walk, go have coffee.

This is the part I can't explain, but it happened. It was like that place on the street, was so clear, somehow we were inside a bubble...nothing else was going on, but you know how busy Hastings Street is. [This] zone has three people in it; it was really quiet. The friend that I was with reached down on the ground and picked up a maple leaf, a fall maple leaf. *It was not fall*. [She] gave it to the woman that was upset....there was a little tree...standing next to us which we hadn't noticed. Our friend took [the leaf], it was like a treasure, something to take care of her and she left.

Both my friend and I were thinking of your story, *totally*. It was like we were inside the story....It was like being an actor in the story...all of a sudden [there] was silence....It was like that same [story] space opened up. We could say to each other, it was exactly like Jo-ann's story...a silence was created, it was a spiritual silence for me. I hadn't...actually connected to that part of the bird story before. I felt the silence. It wasn't money on the ground, it was a beautiful leaf, that leaf was a gift....Later on [we saw this same woman] at an event, and she felt much better and was appreciative of that beautiful moment. I can't articulate it well, [but] it was

like living out that story (original emphasis, November 3, 1995, transcript).

After the NITEP storytelling experience, I began to wonder about the possibility of the *power* in story, to heal the emotions and spirit. *The Bird In The Tree* story was not a traditional First Nations story; but it became my story to use in a cultural way that enabled people to help one another, and which enabled people to interact with and through the story. I also wondered if this was one way that stories became attributed to particular storytellers. If so, then which cultural rules apply to this story? Because I am Sto:lo, does *The Bird In The Tree* story become a Sto:lo story, or am I appropriating someone else's story? Again, questions with no easy answers. The important point of my relating this story experience is that the power created during the storytelling session seemed to have a relational (inter-related) movement amongst the storyteller, story-listeners, and storytelling situation. The interaction created a synergistic storypower that had emotional healing and spiritual aspects. This synergistic storypower also brought the story "to life" for some.

An essential part of this story research process is to go back to the people—the teachers, to continue learning and to verify particular understandings. On November 1992, I returned "home" to the Coqualeetza Elder's Group, to seek their guidance and help with my story research.

## CHAPTER FIVE: GOING BACK TO THE STO:LO ELDERS

From 1992-96, I took the Elders' teachings about storytelling, wrote chapter drafts, and continued to engage in storywork through other curriculum projects. I returned to the Coqualeetza Elders' Council for verification sessions and revised the text according to their instructions. With each visit to the Elders, I learned more and wrote more. This chapter contains an analysis of what I learned about traditional ways of training to be a storyteller, learning about the cultural contexts for storytelling, and introducing pertinent issues of concern to the Elders. During this four year period, my methodology changed from critical ethnography to that of story research with Elders.

### ***Seeking Their Permission And Guidance***

The Coqualeetza Cultural Centre located at Sardis, British Columbia provides culturally oriented services and programs to the Sto:lo, other First Nations people, and to non-Natives, particularly, teachers. The centre began in 1973, a time when First Nations peoples across Canada were involved in a cultural resurgence movement. This cultural movement was one response to a renewed threat of assimilation of First Nations peoples based on a proposed federal government policy, the *White Paper*, which intended to obliterate any rights that Indian people had (Battiste, 1995). In 1974, I was teaching in the Chilliwack School District. Previously, I had been away from home for six years, going to university then teaching for two years in North Vancouver. At home, in Chilliwack, I participated in the Halq'emeylem language classes and cultural programs such as cedar

root basket making and hide tanning. I enjoyed these activities because I got to know the Elders and other community people who were teaching and taking the courses, and learned more about the Sto:lo territory and cultural ways.

The Elders' Group actually began in 1970. They would meet at each other's homes to document and tape-record the Halq'emeylem language and their cultural knowledge, through storytelling and talk. As the group expanded, they changed their meeting place to the Coqualeetza Cultural Centre, to what the Sto:lo people call the "Big House," a large heritage-like home, which was the doctor's residence when the Coqualeetza Complex was used as a hospital and tuberculosis sanatorium for First Nations people throughout British Columbia.<sup>1</sup> The first time I walked into this Big House I wondered what the doctors' lives were like, who lived in this mansion-like atmosphere, while most Native people lived in crowded, much smaller, poorly constructed, modest homes. By 1973, the Sto:lo people had appropriated this Big House and made it "home" to many who came to learn, share knowledge, and friendship. Some of the Elders cooked food for lunch; then after lunch they sat and talked about the cultural ways, recorded the language, and gave advice to the staff about programs. Usually there were at least 30. There was always lots of teasing, laughter, and serious talk in both English and Halq'emeylem. From 1975-1985, I either worked at Coqualeetza or participated in various courses and committee work. My

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<sup>1</sup> Coqualeetza was a residential school for First Nations children from 1886-1895 (Edmeston, 1956). It was first operated by Methodist Missionaries then run by the Protestant Church. Coqualeetza became a hospital after the residential school closed.

most memorable learning experiences are from the times I spent with the Elders and other Sto:lo people, through the Coqualeetza Cultural Centre activities.

In 1985 I moved away from home, and back to Vancouver to work as Supervisor of the Native Indian Teacher Education Program at UBC. Since moving away, I have continued to assist the Coqualeetza staff with the Sto:lo Site! work when requested and occasionally visit the Elders' Group. Since the Elders' group started, many have "passed on to the Spirit World," leaving a small core of about 15-20 who are either fluent Halq'emeylem speakers or knowledgeable about cultural traditions. The Elders' meetings are mainly conducted in English which shows that the Halq'emeylem language has lost its functional use amongst our people.<sup>2</sup> Some new Elders have joined the group. They have either moved back to Sto:lo country, or have been asked to join the group, or have volunteered themselves. Fortunately, I still know many of the current members of the Elders' Group.

On November 19, 1992, I met with the Elders' Council, to ask for their approval and assistance with my thesis work. Approximately seven Elders are appointed to the Elders' Council, to represent the Coqualeetza Elders. They make decisions, develop policies, and provide guidance to the offices of the Sto:lo Nation. Council decisions and business matters are always discussed at the weekly meetings of all Elders. I felt this approval process was important because I am part of the Elders' family, and have a responsibility to them to respect their role and authority as teachers. It is respect and caring that guides

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<sup>2</sup> Coqualeetza offers Halq'emeylem language classes to two band schools and one pre-school in the Sto:lo Nation. There are language programs being offered to the adult population and various forms of immersion language training for some to first become fluent language speakers, then teachers of the Halq'emeylem language.

my feelings and actions, not an obligatory sense of duty. The Elders said they were glad to see me, and noted that I had been away for a long time (fieldnote, Nov. 19, 1992). The family-like relationship I feel toward the Elders was affirmed when at one of the larger meetings, where all Elders and interested persons gather, one Elder said that I was “the Elders’ granddaughter” (fieldnote, January 18, 1995).

On November 19th, we met at the Big House, sat around a few tables, were served tea and coffee by the Sto:lo Sitel staff, and talked while waiting to begin the meeting. After the prayer, I told them the purpose of my research and I asked them to be my guides. They were very encouraging, readily agreed to help me, and said they were glad to see me doing this type of work. My field journal notes:

I recall the good warm feelings of being loved and respected by the Elders' Council that day. Coming home.

They liked my work and said it was important to do; so many Elders have left us. We talked about the importance of stories for teaching and how they help us to live right—to be good human beings. Such a relief not to be doing this important work alone; but to have guides (Nov. 23, 1992).<sup>3</sup>

During the session we reminisced about some of the memorable storytellers. Of the people they talked about, it seemed clear that good storytellers had two definite qualifications: people can listen to them for a long, long time, without getting bored and their stories are remembered. The Council members with the assistance of the Coqualeetza Cultural Centre staff agreed to meet with me on a regular basis and also

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<sup>3</sup> I realize that there are times that I am doing much of this thesis work alone, especially when putting thoughts into text, but at the moment of writing the journal entry, I did not feel alone. It's not only having the Elders' Council to guide me, but having the teachings and stories of all the Sto:lo Elders whom I learned from that gives me comfort and keeps me company at those moments when I may feel alone.

agreed to ask certain people to join us. They wanted each meeting tape-recorded so that their knowledge embedded in their words would "never be lost." This group is now accustomed to tape-recording what they say in group gatherings, and put trust in the technology to work. I discussed the possibility of publishing this work, and using royalties for whatever purpose they chose. They suggested either an Elders' fund or a student scholarship fund. We did not spend too much time on this topic and there was not much discussion on it. Upon reflection, as I now write, I feel I have gotten this anxious feeling out of my system and no longer feel a need to discuss it with others. But I hope to always have this kind of sensitivity in my consciousness when I do cultural publishing work. I always want to question my motives and ensure that they are guided by compassion for others, with a humble, deep feeling of respect for cultural traditions, and not driven by notions of self-aggrandizement.

Another question I asked was about protocol: how do I approach people with whom I would like to talk? Their reply: "go ask them." They say that being Elders, they have time to do this kind of work and they are waiting to be asked. They suggested that one of them could go with me to see people whom I did not know, to help. Their response seems so simple, yet for any researcher, me included, to get this kind of cooperation and support, is not an easy matter. I have established a strong familial bond with the Elders over many years and also have the support of the Coqualeetza staff who liaise with the Elders and who help with the research process by arranging Elders' transportation to the meetings, providing the meeting space and food, and are research participants. The scope of my



research would have been hindered had I not had the assistance of Coqualeetza staff and the personal history with the Elders.

### ***Talking Around The Circle***

I had four other follow-up meetings with 7-15 people at each session; about one-third of the group are men, which is representative of the gender mix of the larger Elder's Group.

Those who attended the meetings included: Mary Lou Andrew, Pat Campo, Wilfred Charlie, Amelia Douglas, Jim Fraser, Frank Gardner, Roseline George, Tillie Guterrez, Ann Lindley, Frank Malloway, Elizabeth Phillips, Roy Point, and Mary Uslick.

Sometimes younger Sto:lo community members attended the sessions. The Sto:lo Sitel staff look after the logistical arrangements as previously described. We usually begin the meetings at 10:00 a.m., talk until 12:00 noon, and continue during lunch. The Elders are brought home by 1:30 p.m. Our meetings are held either in the Big House or what used to be called the Nurses' Residence. It now houses the Sto:lo Nation education offices. The following fieldnote describes the physical context of the Nurses' Residence meeting place:

I'm back at this two storey brick building on the Coqualeetza Complex. Coqualeetza's history: a traditional gathering place where tribes met and women washed clothes and blankets in the nearby stream. (Part of the meaning of Coqualeetza is a gathering place, a cleansing place. This is still a gathering place where the people talk and do cleansing metaphorically). It was a residential school, then a hospital, an army residence, and now a cultural centre and houses various Sto:lo Nation offices.

We're meeting in what is now called the Board room. Over the years, the Elders' meetings have been held in this room. Sometimes the meetings were shifted to different buildings, but they eventually come back here. There used to be couches in this room; now there are only tables and chairs. There used to be an atmosphere of some informality and comfort;

now it seems formal and colder. We rearrange a few tables and chairs into a smaller rectangular space. During the session, many of the speakers refer to us as being in 'this circle here.' Even though we are not physically in a circle, the teachings and feelings make us talk like we are (Dec. 6, 1992).

The reference to being in a circle symbolizes the atmosphere of respect people have for each other and for the purpose of the work that they do when they come together as an Elder's group. Everyone in the circle is treated equally. Not everyone agrees with each other, but everyone agrees that anyone who wants to speak is given that opportunity. A speaker talks without verbal interruption until she/he is finished. Each person who sits with the Elders, in this circle of learning assumes a responsibility to either listen, to share, to teach, or to learn. During our sessions, the Elders and other participants answer my questions with personal experience stories and they tell traditional stories as well. They often take turns responding when I ask a question and ensure that everyone gets a chance to speak. If a person does not choose to speak, then her/his decision is respected. They respond to each other by asking questions, or by teasing each other: once in a while there are tense moments when someone talks too much or not loud enough to be heard.

Whenever someone talks too long, others either give that person a stern "look," or they avoid eye contact with her/him. If someone does not talk loud enough they ask her/him to speak up. The people who are here have sat with each other through countless hours of meetings, so they know each other well. They are like an extended family. They show agreement by saying "yes, that's true, what .....says, I remember" and they continue with a supporting type of story. They also prod each other to speak more at times. When they disagree, they do not openly voice it, but show difference through introducing a different type of story, or saying "Well in my family, this is what I heard." When someone feels

they are getting “off topic” they say something like: “But that’s beside the point; right now we’re trying to help Jo-ann.”

An analysis of the information shared during the Elders' meetings will be presented in more detail after each session is highlighted here. The first session focused on the training of speakers, criteria for determining a good storyteller, and issues of respect or lack of respectful practices towards either the speaker or cultural context for the oral traditions. The second meeting began with my questions about storytelling for children: When were children told stories? What kind of stories? How did one know when to tell a particular kind of story? Each person began to tell their personal experiences. But one man's life experience story emphasized the Spiritual-Sacred which he said he normally does not talk about. One of the Sto:lo cultural rules regarding Spiritual-Sacred experiences is not to talk about them.<sup>4</sup> When he was talking I did not write anything down, but the tape-recorder was on. Others began to tell similar kinds of stories. As they finished their story, each one said with strong conviction, "It is true!" Afterwards, I wondered why they told such stories when they should not have. When I got home I checked the cassette tape and found that the discussion was not recorded. I ponder the meaning of this apparent coincidence. At the beginning of the third session, I felt embarrassed telling the group that the tape recorder did not work. I mentioned that perhaps we were not supposed to have the talk taped because of what was said about the Spiritual. We got into a discussion

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<sup>4</sup> One may ask “why”? Our people would consider this a rude question. There are some forms of cultural knowledge that can not be explained. One has to experience the Spiritual-Sacred, to understand its significance and appreciate its power. Some believe talking about such sacred matters lessens the respect one has toward them, and lessens their power as a result.

about the dilemma of following a cultural rule which could result in important knowledge becoming extinct because it is not passed onto someone else. We talked about possible ways to teach the young children and as importantly the parent generation, the traditional stories. Implied here is the ability to understand the "teachings" (values, beliefs, lessons, symbolism) of the stories. At the end of this meeting, the Elders said that they did not have any more to say about storytelling. I made a commitment to take what they had said, speak to others, write down what I had learned, and come back to share this learning with them.

Two years later, I came back with a chapter draft to verify with the Elders' Council. We started to meet again in December, 1995. The verification process continued until December, 1996 (see Appendix C). I met with individuals, gave copies of chapter drafts to Coqualeetza staff, and met with the Elders' Council. Two new female council members joined in the talks. I also interviewed two Coqualeetza staff members, Shirley Leon, the manager, and Peter Lindley, curriculum coordinator. The quotes used from the 1992/94 sessions were approved by the appropriate individuals. In the verification process, I started with a question I asked in the first session: What makes a good storyteller?

### ***What Makes A Good Storyteller?***

Two memorable storytellers, Dolly Felix and Ed Leon, who have gone to the Spirit World, were talked about when I asked who were/are good storytellers and what made them good. As they were identified, I could visualize both, telling their stories at the

various gatherings, almost 15 years ago. Each had a way of bringing out the humour in the story, and each had an animated manner: Ed with actions, Dolly with the use of her voice. She was blind and used a wheelchair. The gifted storytellers took on the persona of the characters in their stories.

...the greatest storyteller was Ed Leon. He could make any little story funny. Just the way he tells it, the expressions he uses, the actions. It wasn't just using your mouth, it was using your hands, using your body, to get the story out. Ed was the greatest storyteller I know (Frank Malloway, December 3, 1992 transcript).

Shirley Leon, tells a storytelling incident where Dolly Felix captured the attention of 75 kindergarten children:

[At] one of the first Chehalis Pioneer Day sessions that we participated in, Dolly was going to do the storytelling, and somehow the scheduling got mixed up and we ended up with 75 kindergarten children. We were wondering, 'how are we going to pull this off?' There's no way we could get 75 kids to sit still for a story with Dolly because she really elaborates. But I guess...she just had that knack. I think a storyteller's effective if you believe in what you're saying. When she was telling the *Th'oxwiya Story*, it just became a part of her....There wasn't a pin that could have dropped, unheard, in that hall during the storytelling because she got totally involved with the story. And for years after, the teachers commented, what a miracle that was that she was able to capture their attention. I just think when people are gifted with storytelling, the stories become so much a part of their character and that's what really captures peoples' attention (December 5, 1995 transcript).

They are gone, but their stories and story spirit live on in the memories of people who saw and heard them. Some of their stories live (but not as strongly) on the printed pages of storybooks and on cassette tapes. What is missing is the interaction with the storyteller

who could embed the story into one's memory. Fortunately we have some Elders who are trying to keep storytelling alive today.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Becoming Storytellers: The Role Of Mentors And Teachers***

Two Coqualeetza Elders, Tillie Guterrez and Ann Lindley, are storytellers called upon to tell stories in classrooms and they also tell stories at meetings and cultural gatherings.

Both had mentors, who were their relatives, tell them stories when they were young children. Tillie's grandfather and someone else's grandfather brought her to a place with special "rocks" and began to teach her stories about place names and Spiritual matters.

When Tillie talks about what is important to her as a storyteller the influence of her Spiritual teachings stand out: "I start with the stories from way back. I always start when Xa:ls came<sup>6</sup>. I never actually stand up there by myself. I have to have him with me in order to be able to stand in front of people" (December 3, 1992, transcript). Ann's aunt told her stories when she was a child, told often before meal times "when there was time to kill" (January 14, 1993 fieldnote). From the accounts of Simon Baker, Vincent Stogan, and the Coqualeetza Elders, it seems that Elders who now are the experts of the oral traditions, had teachers, often their relatives who told them stories and prepared them, in their childhood, to become storytellers and speechmakers. However, they did not assume these roles until later in life. Their "training" began as a child and during their early/middle adult years, they continued to work, raise children, be a marriage partner and

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<sup>5</sup> In Sto:lo country, if a storyteller is asked for, then specific Elders are recommended. There are very few Sto:lo storytellers who are not Elders. Many people of all ages tell stories, but there is a distinction between someone who tells/knows stories and one who others consider a "storyteller."

<sup>6</sup> Xa:ls is the Sto:lo Transformer who, in our stories, changed people to things in the environment (i.e. rocks). Xa:ls is given much respect. The Halq'emeylem word Xa:ls signifies Spiritual power and respect.

community worker. Often, the time to engage in the oral traditions was limited because of these factors. In their later adult years, the responsibility of teaching the cultural ways through the oral traditions became theirs. Some like Simon Baker and Vincent and Edna Stogan, realized that their Elders were passing away and that they were going to be the next Elders, so they assumed that role. Others were suddenly pushed into the role, like Ann Lindley who told of her realization of her storytelling “gift” and purpose in life:

Each one of us was put here for something. Wilfred Charlie who was coordinating the Elders' group asked her and the late Jean Silver if they wanted to take a drive on this nice sunny day. They ended up in the Langley area. Wilfred told them that a ‘white lady’ was wanting them to tell stories in the school. He said that he would sit with them. So they were ‘put on the spot.’ It was at that point that Anne started to tell stories with Jean. She said that she didn't know that she had these stories in her memory until that time: stories told to her by her aunt. During her adult years she was too busy raising children and did not remember the stories. So that was how her purpose and gift came to her (fieldnotes January 14, 1993 and January 8, 1996).<sup>7</sup>

Wilfred Charlie, who worked as the Elders' Coordinator, reinforces the responsibility of teaching the oral tradition and culture to young children. He also uses his own personal life experience to show that he had to learn how to work with and talk with Elders, in his later adult years. Many Sto:lo people have not had the opportunity to learn directly from Elders because the traditional inter-generational learning process was severed for many years when institutional schooling, the residential school era, was forced upon First Nations. It is my generation that have lost many of the cultural ways and we need to work vigilantly to regain them. My child's generation at least has more curricula and cultural

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<sup>7</sup> Ann felt more comfortable not having the tape-recorder on during our talks. She told me that I could use my memory and that she would tell me this story again if I did not get it all.

educational programs because of the efforts of these Elders about whom I write. Some of these Elders are gaining their rightful place as cultural teachers as they tell stories to children in band and public schools and continue to teach those who ask:

We were talking about the speakers...you got to teach them when they're young, explain your subject or story or whatever you're going to talk about. Skulkale [my reserve], got a little grant for culture [in 1969] I had to learn how to speak to the Elders, to learn how to get back some of our culture.

Then the Centre come in: Coqualeetza. I got involved. I was one of the first to be involved with the Elders....Many tapes of the old people, that never went to school [were recorded with them speaking Halq'emeylem and telling stories]...culture wasn't lost. That's where we got a lot of our information from them....people like Mary Peters, she knew everything.

I am still learning how to speak to the Elders. All them years,...I had to get out and learn. It's not an easy job. You have to know how to get up and speak to people. They only speak on one subject....that's a very important thing in the Sto:lo, we need public speakers, we are short of speakers. That's a little about my background. I try to teach my own children...you have to keep after them....I'm 76 and I've been studying since 1964, that's where my strength comes from....Your turn Frank.

(the group teases one another and laughs)<sup>8</sup>

Some of the inter-generational responsibility of teaching cultural knowledge has been re-gained, by Elders teaching young people, the oral tradition. Each one has a different approach, but the important point is that they had a teacher, who taught them. Perhaps more individual mentoring and teaching is needed to “train” more people to become storytellers:

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<sup>8</sup> During the meetings, there was much laughter. This footnote is inserted to acknowledge that humour through teasing, joking, and telling funny stories is a very important cultural interaction. Humour indicates that the group is comfortable with and open to each other, and the researcher. If humour was absent from a research session, then I would question the validity of the “data” because the Elders may not have felt comfortable with the researcher and therefore did not give sufficient or adequate information.



...so with this little bit of knowledge that we have, like Frank is trying to hand it down to the young ones in the Longhouse, Wilfred's trying to hand his down, this is good. I like to tell stories because there's morals in those stories that give me help. Even if you don't know it all, you still tell it because of the moral. The skunk story that I tell has morals in it. That was told to me over and over, night after night, you know, it was told to me so many times it just stuck in there, I never had to write it down. The morals of that story are not to brag, or show off (Tillie Guterrez, December 3, 1992, transcript).

Not everyone who knows stories and knows the process for the oral traditions, become storytellers. However, those who have been given the “gift” for the oral traditions, were mentored or taught by someone to fulfill this role. It is critical that Sto:lo Elders continue to mentor and teach some of the younger generation storytelling techniques/skills.

### *Training For Oratory<sup>9</sup>*

The responses to the question of how one becomes a good storyteller, besides the individual mentoring process, focused on some basic oratory skills and training, such as speaking in a loud but not forceful voice, standing up when speaking, and stopping if needless repetition occurs. These skills were developed at the same time one was learning about the substantive content of stories and speeches. The voice training of Longhouse speakers usually occurred in nature, not in the Longhouse, as Frank Malloway recounts:

One of the things about voice training I was told, the old people used to take the young men [who were to be the Spokesmen] down to small creeks, you know. The teacher would go on one side and the one in training on the other side and sit and talk to them. And you'd have to talk loud enough for him to hear then they'd go to a bigger river. ‘You talk to me, don't you scream at me, talk to me.’ That's how they did the training, you had to speak loud enough so that the old man could hear him. It was sort of a gradual thing. That was one of the ways that they used to train people (December 3, 1992, transcript).

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<sup>9</sup> The meaning of oratory in this section refers to the art of public speaking.

At one time, people lived in the Longhouses, so it would not have been an appropriate place for this type of learning. The Spokesman<sup>10</sup> was taught the stories, cultural principles, and practices because he had to know all these to carry out his job. Because the significant events went on for hours, sometimes days, the Spokesman's voice had to last, even though there were more than one Spokesman. The late Chief Richard Malloway, a respected leader and speaker, warned his son Frank, about the needless use of repetition during one's talk:

When I first started speaking at functions, my father used to coach me. He used to always say: 'When you find yourself repeating things, you know, it's time to sit down. You don't tell the same thing over and over. People will get tired of listening to you and they'll turn you off. They'll start talking to somebody else.' So he says 'as soon as you catch yourself repeating words or phrases, it's time to sit down' (ibid).<sup>11</sup>

Frank mentions how his father, his oratory teacher, also challenged him through competitive means to become a good speaker. This example shows how the teacher challenged the learner in a positive way:

One of the ways my father taught me to be a good speaker, an interesting speaker, used to challenge me. You know, we were called to witness at a funeral dinner. He'd tell me 'you go first' make me speak first then I'd get up there and talk, walking back to my seat 'I can do better than that' he says (laughs) He'd get up and make a better speech than me. I used to expect this. Next time, he says go up, I'd try and make a better speech, short and sweet, 'oh, I can beat that' he says. Everytime he'd get me to speak first. He was always there to challenge, 'to do better than your dad.

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<sup>10</sup> The tradition of men fulfilling the role of Spokesman is still practiced in Longhouse gatherings and at funerals. Women also have their particular roles in these cultural gatherings and they will either get up to speak, or they are asked to speak. All roles are respected.

<sup>11</sup> I have said that people were taught to respect the speakers by listening and not talking to others when someone was speaking. Richard Malloway's example of people talking to others, may seem like a sign of disrespect, and maybe it was, but the important point here is, this was their way of giving a message to the speaker that they had heard, had gotten the speaker's message, and did not need to keep hearing the same words during the speaker's talk.

Speak better than your dad.' But he was hard to beat....That was one of his ways to teach me to speak better, to make more interesting speeches (ibid).

It must be remembered that these basic skills and stories were learned without the use of literacy; therefore, one's memory skills became highly developed. Roy Point puts it this way : "[T]hey had memories, miles and miles long with their stories" (December 6, 1995, transcript). Hearing stories over and over again was part of the storyteller's training, which began in their childhood, and which happened in contexts where telling stories seemed a natural part of daily life. This type of story repetition is not the needless repetition mentioned earlier.

### ***Storytelling Contexts: The Longhouse, Land, and Home***

**Speaking In The Longhouse: "the old school, the old teaching place of the people"**  
Frank Malloway is an Elder Spokesman called upon to speak at traditional gatherings.

His job is to speak for the family hosting the event, talk about traditions, family history, and rules, and ensure that the event's activities are carried out in an organized manner.

The oral traditions are the predominant means of communication for all activities that take place in the Sto:lo Longhouse and time is not a driving force: "there is no time set on anything that's taking place" (Frank Malloway, December 3, 1992 transcript). Literacy has no place here. Our Longhouses are sometimes called Smokehouses. They are huge cedar plank buildings, the largest in the Sto:lo Nation can seat 500. There are currently six Longhouses in the Sto:lo Nation. Winter Spiritual dancing is practiced by many, in the Smokehouses from November until March/April. People come to these gatherings during the weekday evenings and weekends. Because this is a Sacred-Spiritual practice, I

cannot elaborate upon it. I chose to provide some introductory background to one of the Longhouse cultural lifestyles because it was mentioned during the meetings and it is an important context for the oral traditions. The numbers of people who engage in the winter traditions are not known, but the numbers of young adults has increased. Other cultural gatherings and meetings are held in some of the Longhouses during the months that Spirit Dancing is not practiced. Coqualeetza has built a smaller version of a Longhouse which is used only for cultural education programs.

The Sto:lo Longhouse is associated with a strong Spiritual practice that encompasses teachings about respect for all beings and living a healthy life-style. There are strict cultural protocols and rules about behaviour, whether one is a guest, a hosting family/community, or a speaker.<sup>12</sup> Frank shares his concern about people who have not been taught cultural protocol or the cultural rules for types of talks and notes his teaching responsibility to them. Particular types of speeches and stories have an appropriate structure to follow in the Longhouse.

One of the things that a lot of our people are doing [wrong] in the Longhouse, you're called to witness certain work, and when you get up to talk, you only talk about what you're about to witness. You don't go and talk about something else....That's what a lot of our young people are doing. One of these days I have to take them aside and talk to them. You don't talk about your achievements in life [when you are] called to witness a little job. That's really disrespectful. It's like saying well your work is not that important. My past life is more important, I'll tell about it: It's a sign of disrespect. But they haven't been taught (December 3, 1992 transcript).

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<sup>12</sup> I use the word 'speaker' here to mean someone who is officially asked to witness some aspect of the cultural work. A witness, speaks, and may tell family/geographical history through story, or talk of cultural teachings.

One is expected to listen patiently and “pay attention” to all that is happening “on the floor.” Walking across the floor when someone is speaking or when there is “work” happening, is a sign of disrespect. Shirley Leon reinforces the notion that those taught the Longhouse traditional values behave respectfully toward others, and attributes the negative influence of mainstream education to those who act disrespectfully:

How are you going to explain the difference in training, how you respect people, that's what it boils down to, you know, the storyteller and listener. I always use the analogy if you look at the Smokehouse people, you go into the Longhouses, the environment there, the way they talk to each other, greet each other, it is so different then if you go to an education meeting or band or tribal meeting. Look at the environment, how different it is, just those two places....Scholars will call that different domains. But those people that got training in the Longhouse, when they come here, you notice, I'm sure the Elders notice, soon as they walk in they don't wait to be told to help clean or serve the Elders. They'll notice some Elders might have tea. They notice they might need help. They just pitch in and start helping. They don't have to be told. Old Choppy used to always comment on that at the Elders' meeting with visitors, he'd say 'you can sure tell they got good teachings.' They'd sit and listen, they'd pitch in and help. They don't get up and walk out when someone is talking. Don't matter if it's not important to them. They're showing respect. It's hard to explain the difference. It's just like some people when they get an education they think they're God, you know, just because they have an education, they have no patience with anybody....So different backgrounds (December 3, 1992).

The Longhouse is a natural cultural context for carrying on the oral traditions. Many Sto:lo do not engage in the winter ceremonial lifestyle and may not have the same opportunity to learn the traditional values and teachings that Frank and Shirley have mentioned which are an important requirement for learning how to listen to stories and make meaning from them. Perhaps the Longhouse will one day be considered as a place of cultural learning where educational programs and storytelling sessions could be held during the spring and summer months, which is not contrary to traditional ways. During

the verification sessions some of the Coqualeetza Elders referred to the Longhouse as “the old school; the old teaching place of the people.” Another natural context for learning stories is the land.

### **Telling Stories About and On the Land<sup>13</sup>**

Some of the storytelling training was done on the land. The importance of learning stories from the grandparents about the land, while being on the land was reinforced. Mary Lou Andrew remembered hearing stories when doing chores and walking from place to place: “Stories were told when children were being taught how to sew, how to do laundry....in my childhood, my grandmother, my grandfather, always had stories...[when] walking through the fields or if you went to gather fruit or food, or if you were just going from point a to point b, there was a story to be told about the area [its placename] or [a historical story of] what happened at that place.” She also points out that learning through stories had an inter-related aspect: “Sometimes it took a long time to get there. You got not only history about the place, the land; you were taught [other] lessons....You got social studies...sometimes even science was thrown in, when you had to deal with herbs and medicines. You learned the importance of why you do something; like why you walked on a certain part of the pathway, so that you didn’t destroy certain plants.” (December 6, 1995, transcript and October 8, 1996 verification session). Along with the stories, the Elders gave important teachings, such as the protection of plants, through their talks with the child. Place name stories have not only meanings associated with them, but practices and values such as the Spiritual connection with one mountain Mary

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<sup>13</sup> The term “land” includes the earth and its relations: the water, and resources of the land.

Uslick describes. The inter-generational responsibility of passing on this type of cultural knowledge is advocated because I think that the seamless connection between land and people is still a critical teaching that Elders want continued:

When our ancestors talk about our mountains, our rivers, our trees, and our lakes, they got names for all these places....The names of the mountains and everything was given by our Ancestor because it had a meaning, when it [the name] was given, and it should be respected....That's how they teach the children about it. First of all, they must know the name of that mountain, why the old people call it that. Like Tamahi. We give our offering, we face it, that's where the sun comes out. These children have to learn to respect these [teachings] and then they will teach their children our stories. They will know the names of our mountains, the rivers....Those are the kind of stories that the old people tell so the children...will remember these things, what's going to be their area when they grow up (Mary Uslick, December 6, 1995, transcript).

In these contexts, storytelling was not a public event, but one that was more individualized and which emphasized connections and responsibilities to the land. Again, values and respectful practices were intertwined with the place name stories. Another informal approach to storytelling occurred in the home.

**Telling Stories In The Home: “[The Elders] started [children] very young towards respect...[with] the stories of the animals”**

Some of the Elders recall hearing stories from their grandparents before going to sleep at night. It seems that grandparents also had the responsibility to teach young children proper behaviour. Roy Point recalls:

The way our people were taught...went by our old people....[A]t bedtime, when the little ones were ready to go to sleep, they had a story for everything that had to be taught to that young one. Usually [the story] came out when something that little one done, that needed to be taught...for instance, a little boy went into stealing...then my grandfather...would have a story for that....[T]he parents never had too

much [to do] with the teachings, they had to...provide the food. The grandparents provide the teachings (December 6, 1995, transcript).

It seems that the grandparents never explicitly linked the story with the name of the grandchild the story was directed to, but, he/she knew. It was not a short story episode in the evenings, as Roy recalls, the stories were told “for a couple to three hours” (ibid) so children became accustomed to listening to stories for a long time. He also mentions that the grandparents “had memories, miles and miles long with their stories” (ibid). These night time stories were about animals, and the lessons not only related to behaviour but taught children the close relationship Sto:lo people had to animals as implied by Mary Uslick’s statement: “...[The Elders] started [children] very young towards respect,...[with] the stories of the animals, they understand...what they are to us people” (December 6, 1995, transcript).

Language issues surfaced when Jim Fraser said that he could not speak much Halq’emeylem, only “easy words” (October 9, 1996 transcript). His grandfather used to tell nighttime stories in Halq’emeylem, and his sister Agnes, would translate the stories into English for Jim. Hearing the story in two different languages was confusing at first. But he remembers that the “bad stories” were about Coyote, which fits the Trickster’s way of teaching better behaviour and esteemed values. Jim said the radio “knocked stories from the Elders” (ibid) which meant that radio as new technology at that time was another contributing factor for stopping the practice of storytelling and using the Halq’emeylem language in the home.



During the October 9, 1996 verification session the Elders' Council talked more about the differences between the Halq'emeylem language and English. They said the stories lost their humour and some of their meaning during the translation process. What was funny in Halq'emeylem wasn't funny in English. There are words or concepts in Halq'emeylem that can't be described with English words. Since I am not a Halq'emeylem speaker, I accept what the Elders say: "It's not funny anymore" (ibid). But the Elders and others have continued to tell stories in the English language as that is the predominant language of the Sto:lo people today. Trying to maintain the humour, integrity, and power of the story in the English language and in contemporary learning contexts becomes even more difficult, but not impossible. Learning to listen in a traditional story-way may help with establishing an appreciation of the English told Sto:lo stories.

***Story-listening: "We have three ears to listen with, two on the sides of our head, and one in our heart"***

Many of the Elders kept saying that it was and is important to learn how to listen. Roseline George said one had to "listen, watch, and not talk while the story is told" (December 3, 1992, transcript). Listening involved concomitantly the auditory and visual senses, the emotions, the mind, and patience. I've heard Sto:lo and other First Nations storytellers say that we have "three ears to listen with, two on the sides of our head and one in our heart." This kind of listening was necessary for making meaning from the story because one was not explicitly told what the story meanings were. Shirley Leon said "The old way, you had to really think,...you had to figure it out, they wouldn't give you the

answer, you had to figure it out.” Ann Lindley, responds to Shirley: “Therefore, you had to listen, otherwise you'd miss it” (December 6, 1995, transcript).

Many First Nations gatherings open with a prayer, song, or ceremony like burning sweetgrass or sage to symbolize cleansing the mind/body/spirit to get ready to listen in the manner described above. Centering, quieting oneself, is one way to get ready to story-listen. When people have a hand drum they will beat it after some of the speaker's words to show their appreciation of the thought and some will say “Ho!” which means that they are listening. I think these are examples of how one can take care of and show respect toward the speaker. The speaker/storyteller appreciates these signals of listening. Reciprocally, the storyteller can take care of others by selecting an appropriate story to tell. Sometimes, one's intuitive power helps with the selection.

### ***“Reading The Situation”: Story Intuitiveness***

In Chapter Four I recounted my experience of becoming a storyteller and letting a story-intuitive approach guide the selection of story to be told. Peter Lindley, Ann's son, said that his mother does something similar: “[T]hat's one thing...she [Ann] always says, ‘Don't ever tell me what story I'm going to tell them. I'll know when I get there. I read them [the students]. I read that teacher’” (December 5, 1995, transcript). Ann's “reading” of the participants and the storyteller's intuitive process come from the interaction of the storyteller, story listeners, and the context which brought everyone together. However, it is the ultimate responsibility of the storyteller to know which story to tell and to know how much to tell or explain about story meaning. Some storytellers say nothing about

meaning, while others give an example of a meaning, or a “moral,” as some call it. I believe the need to explicate meaning depends upon how good the listeners are at making their own understandings from stories and the ability of the storytelling to determine this. I think back to Vincent Stogan’s words about the Elder directing one’s learning by knowing how much to teach at each learning session. Peter echoes his mother’s teaching, which she learned from another Elder, about the intended effect of this kind of incremental teaching approach: “[Ann] always remembers what Joe Lorenzetto told her, ‘Don’t tell them everything, give them enough to keep them curious all the time’” (December 5, 1995, transcript). This curiosity may make the listener wonder why a particular story was told, or something in the story may leave the listener in a perplexed or unsettled state. The *Coyote’s Eyes* story seems to end abruptly, without a tidy ending, which should make the listener wonder how Coyote will resolve the differences he ended up with.<sup>14</sup> The value of respect for a sacred kind of knowledge was broken, so perhaps a clue to Coyote’s problem is to find out how to respect certain types of knowledge and to teach/learn it in a culturally appropriate way. During these sessions, the Elders brought up some other issues related to storytelling that need resolution.

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<sup>14</sup> Many trickster stories don’t ever really end (King, 1990). They are like a serial. The important point is that the listener/reader continue to engage in and interact with aspects of the story. It is the process of thinking about and interacting with the story that is essential, rather than giving an ending.

## ***Raising Some Issues***

### **Breaking Cultural Rules: A Dilemma**

The dilemma of practicing a cultural rule which could result in the loss of important cultural knowledge was brought up by Roy Point in relation to not divulging “secret” and sacred knowledge:

Some of the things I said weren't supposed to be brought out at all. The old people used to say ‘when you see something like that, (like what I told), you're not supposed to tell anyone.’ How are we going to learn our history, now that it's getting lost, without telling it? We are taught to not let go any of our own teachings and our own ways, medicines, our own teachings of each tribe, our own secrets. That's the way it was. Now that [knowledge] is being lost. How to keep it alive is a really big question, because so many of our older people are gone, just a handful of us left...I don't know how we can keep it alive (January 28, 1993, transcript).

When he speaks of not letting go or sharing certain types of knowledge, Roy means that one could not teach/learn it without being given or having the cultural authority to do so, and one had to complete rigorous training which was done through individualized learning, and by the oral tradition. This type of knowledge had to be respected because it had some type of power, such as Spiritual or healing, associated with it. If not used properly and wisely, then negative results might result and the power contained in the knowledge would not work. Putting any of this knowledge into written form or other medium was and still is considered an extreme violation of this cultural rule. Today, people are asked not to photograph or tape-record the Spiritual cultural activities that take place. Roy's concern is an important one that others wrestle with. The oral tradition is crucially needed in these circumstances.

The Sto:lo Nation has a cultural committee whose terms of reference include establishing procedures for research and making decisions on matters such as using culturally sensitive knowledge and material artifacts. Each situation is discussed at length and with much consultation with those who possess the type of knowledge in question. One policy or one set of procedures can not be applied now, because of the complexities regarding individual and collective ownership/stewardship. There are also differences among Sto:lo communities about cultural beliefs and practices.

Despite these complexities, our Elders need to teach younger Sto:lo people this knowledge through the oral tradition to ensure that the knowledge does not die because if it does, then a critical part of Sto:lo identity dies with it. Perpetuating cultural knowledge and at the same time trying to respect this cultural rule will continue to raise concerns. The question I raised earlier surfaces and perhaps can guide others to a critically thought out action: How will the culture and the people be hurt by this action? The important point is that the Elders, their families, and other Sto:lo people who work in educational and community development need to discuss this and other issues and come to their decisions and actions: praxis based on reflection, questioning, and action.

### **Reclaiming Responsibility**

More Coqualeetza Elders are reclaiming their role of teaching and taking on the responsibility of giving direction to those who work at Coqualeetza and the Sto:lo Nations offices. The teaching/helping role that Elders had is not forgotten and is being perpetuated by people such as Mary Uslick:

Storytelling, a long time ago...when something happened to a family, we used to go and say to the people, go get this Elder. Go get that Elder, [to] teach them. Have them there, it's their guidance. [The Elder] knows what to say to the people....The way our Ancestors taught us...is very important to remember. And that's what it [oral tradition] is today, to share with the people. What I know better...that's what I do (December 6, 1995, transcript).

The Elders' talk about the loss of some of the traditions contains sentiments of longing for that which has been lost, but it also contains thoughts said with conviction, that they can do something about this concern. They are not completely powerless. Pat Campo said: "We've allowed it [loss of cultural ways] to happen to us, and it's got to stop, it's got to go back to the old ways because the old way was good" (December 6, 1995, transcript). One example of how the "old way" can continue, and which resonates with tradition, is told by Mary Uslick who conducts circle meetings at various communities within the Sto:lo Nation. Children and adults attend. She uses stories, songs, and talk in the circle. At one of the earlier meetings, Roseline George suggested a solution to Roy Point's question of how to keep the oral tradition alive: "We need to practice it with...[our] little ones to keep it alive" (January 28, 1993, transcript). Mary's use of the oral tradition to teach includes not only the young ones, but also the adults, who may become the next storytellers.

During these meetings, it has become evident to me, and I think to the group, that we do not have too many storytellers left. However, we are fortunate to still have some active storytellers who go to the schools to tell stories and who continue to tell stories at cultural events. The school as a place for storytelling is not a natural context, as described earlier by the Elders. But it is a place where our children attend. Many of our children do not hear Elders telling stories in cultural contexts. The Elders and the Sto:lo educators

continue to hope that the school can be a place where children can hear and learn from stories; that is why they continue to go there to tell stories when they are asked. One suggestion that came up during these meetings is to start training new storytellers to meet the increasing demand for storytelling in educational contexts and to ensure a continuation of our oral tradition.

### **Training New Storytellers**

The process of mentoring and teaching younger family members, the oral traditions, has been practiced with our Elders, from their Ancestors; now, the Elder generation is continuing this teaching tradition. Roy Point's son, Steven, carries on the family's stories and takes on the Spokesman's role; Ann Lindley's son, Peter, is learning to tell stories by observing his mother and working on cultural education programs for Coqualeetza; and Frank Malloway is mentoring many young people who are part of the Longhouse family. The important point is that whoever is learning the oral tradition has mentors and teachers, and a familial relationship is established. The new storytellers are learning the oral tradition within social/cultural/educational situations: learning by doing it. They are learning mainly from an orally told teaching approach, not from textbooks. I do not mean to imply that literacy has no place in learning to be a storyteller. Steven Point, Peter Lindley, the Elder storytellers, and myself included, may read books to learn what others say about the oral traditions and find stories to use which were put into textual form. However, the foundation for learning to tell stories must be passed on from personal interaction with a storyteller. I believe it is the good storyteller who will have the major responsibility for keeping stories alive.

## **Keeping The Stories Alive**

Shirley and Peter recollect an experience where the Elders collectively remembered one of the stories, *The Mischievous Cubs*, which was used in the Sto:lo Sitel curriculum. This story had not been told for a long time, but was buried in people's memories. Bringing back stories which have been "put to sleep in people's memories" (as the Elders say), is work that is taken seriously, takes time, and is not without disagreements:

...no one had the whole story. Eventually they got the whole story pieced together, but it went through a...transition of convincing each other that their particular part of the memory was valid. It didn't matter, if they didn't know all of it. Once they put it all together it became a whole story....It was incredible listening to the arguments and [talk about] how long it has been handed down. Teresa Michel was the one that started it....It was about a year, illustrating and working on it....When it was finished another piece of [the story] came back at one of our first gatherings with students. [Teresa] said 'Oh, I remember another chapter' (December 5, 1995, transcript).

Reawakening the memories which hold some of the forgotten stories, and reawakening the storytelling ability of the Elders and other Sto:lo people who have grown up with the oral traditions are necessary if the stories and the ability to make story-meaning are to stay alive, especially in a world dominated by literacy and other forms of media such as video/television/computer. Even though the latter may allow the use of visual images and sounds of the storyteller, the same questions that confront the relationship between orality and literacy apply: How can the story be portrayed so that its power to make one think, feel, and reflect upon one's actions is not lost? Can the cultural context be sufficiently developed so that the listener/viewer can make story-meaning?



Roy Point said: "There's a story for every stage of life" (December 6, 1995, transcript).

We need to get back all those stories and learn how to use them in educational and community contexts. The Coqualeetza Cultural Centre and the Elders have concentrated on the children's stories, some place name stories, and some family history stories<sup>15</sup>. The children's stories could be used at any age level, but more attention could be given to stories oriented to adults, in particular parents and leaders. The Sto:lo Nation's elected leadership and top administrative positions are predominantly held by men. They are preparing for self-government and treaty negotiations with the provincial and federal governments. Many meetings are held and sometimes the Elders get frustrated by the actions of some leaders, and sometimes feel that they are not being seriously listened to. Peter tells another story about his mother's storytelling approach which forewarns listeners of the women's gender power which they have not used yet:

At one of the Chiefs' meetings we were discussing this mess....mom stood up and she said 'I'm going to talk to you like children because you are [children] to me. I'm going to tell you a story that you already know but I want you to listen to it.' She started telling the *Coqualeetza Story*...but then she carried on to that version where...the people were starving and the men went away fishing, and didn't come back. The women and children were starving, a little boy came back and showed them that the men did find food and that they didn't come back to share....So the women got angry and changed them [the men] all to birds. When she was telling the story she said 'You remember that these are all women and if you look around here, the Elders here, are mostly all women and if they did it once, they can do it again!' (December 5, 1995, transcript).

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<sup>15</sup> The Sto:lo Nation Heritage Trust with Carlson (1997) presents two categories of Sto:lo oral narratives: (1) *sxwoxwiyam*, which are "myth-like stories, set in the distant past." They usually explain how things came to be and how to "make things right for the present generation." (2) *Sqwelqwel*, which are "true stories or news" and they describe "experiences in peoples' lives" (p.182). During my discussions with the Elders, they did not name the types of stories but their stories fit these categories.

When Ann said that she was going to talk to the Chiefs like children, she meant that she was going to tell them a story similar to how she tells stories to children. She “reads” them and tells a story that should make them think about the implications of their actions. A major point here is that Ann showed her respect for the Chiefs by allowing them to make their own meaning from the story. The story “prepared them for action” but did not prescribe the action.

As I sat with the Elders throughout these meetings, I thought "this is what research should do: enable people to sit together and talk about the important use of their knowledge for education and for living a good life and to think about possibilities for overcoming problems experienced in their communities" (fieldnote, Dec. 13, 1995). We realized that many of the Sto:lo traditional storytelling practices have been lost; however, some of the oral traditions are practiced in contexts like the Longhouse, and some of the stories have been transformed into educational curricula. We realized that there are a handful of Elder storytellers who are teaching with stories, and teaching some of the younger generation, the techniques of the oral traditions. I realized that others—parents, community members, tribal council/cultural workers, educators, and students who could help revitalize the oral traditions needed to sit with us in this Elders’ circle. Hearing what the Elders said during these talks helped me continue with the purpose that I was given by those who spoke to me in my dream: to create a way to understand what they said. The Elders’ shared stories, traditional knowledge, and guidance prepared me to work with others on a provincial First Nations curriculum that had a story-based component.

## CHAPTER SIX: A CURRICULUM STORY

With the vision of building bridges between the First Nations and Canadian systems of law, this education program honours orality—a traditional approach to education among First Nations of British Columbia—and teaches concepts and practices of justice from the perspective of First Nations ways of knowing.

First Nations oral traditions in various forms, including storytelling, will guide students as they learn traditional concepts of justice, thereby strengthening cultural relations (Mission Statement, *First Nations Journeys of Justice Curriculum*, 1993, p.1).

If Coyote had spent time with the Sto:lo and Coast Salish Elders, then he would have learned that to see clearly from the eye of the oral tradition he needed to understand the cultural ways that stories were told and taught to children, that storytellers learned the stories not only from master storytellers but by being closely connected to land, that stories can become a teacher, and that we can live life through a story. As Coyote continues on his journey, he tries to use his eyes to see how First Nations stories can be transformed into educational curriculum for children. A major challenge though, is that now one eye is shaped by the Canadian justice system, the courts in particular, and the other eye is shaped by the oral traditions of First Nations peoples. The experiences of those involved in a similar kind of curriculum are shared for Coyote to ponder and form a new curriculum story

This chapter presents a practical application of First Nations storywork in a provincial elementary level (kindergarten to grade seven) school curriculum, *First Nations Journeys of Justice*, which was developed under the auspices of the Law Courts Education Society

of British Columbia (LCES). Interviews with curriculum staff, fieldnotes, reports, minutes of meetings, curriculum documents, and teaching material form the foundation of information and analysis for this chapter. This curriculum included other components besides First Nations stories; however, for the purposes of this study, only experiences related to storywork will be examined. This chapter highlights practices and issues stemming from the principles of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and reverence. The next section focuses on the planning and development phases for years one and two. Later sections present experiential stories about and ethical principles for working with community storytellers, examples of pedagogical principles and practices for First Nations stories, and significant issues about using published and archival stories, trying to keep the spirit of stories alive, and posing the question: [How] Can non-Native teachers ethically tell First Nations stories?<sup>1</sup>

### ***Getting Started: The Curriculum Planning And Development Process Of Years One And Two***

The province-wide mandate of the LCES, a public legal education organization, is to:

...work in partnership with the B.C. court system to provide legal education programs, both within the B.C. education system and otherwise. Society programs are aimed (1) at providing British Columbians with a greater understanding of the structure and operation of the justice system in general, and the court system in particular, and (2) at sensitizing persons working within the justice system to the needs and concerns of British Columbians (Law Courts Education Society, Funding Proposal, 1991, p.2).

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<sup>1</sup> The *First Nations Journeys of Justice Curriculum* was developed primarily for teachers with no or very little knowledge of First Nations stories. The staff presumed most of the teachers would be non-First Nations. The question "How can non-Native teachers ethically tell First Nations stories?" emerged during the storywork phases. The question "Can non-Native teachers ethically tell First Nations stories?" is one I continue to ponder, as will be shown later in this chapter.

I was appointed to the Board of Directors in 1989, as a First Nations representative with experience and interest in educational programming. In 1990, a five member First Nations Advisory Committee, which I chaired, was established to ensure broader representation of First Nations concerns and experiences with the justice system. The different views of justice between Aboriginal cultures and the Canadian court system are like the two different eyes from Tayfoya's *Coyote's Eyes Story*.<sup>2</sup> Associate Chief Judges A.C. Hamilton and C.M. Sinclair (1991) conducted an Aboriginal justice inquiry into the administration of justice for Aboriginal people in Manitoba. They reinforce the different meanings of justice between Aboriginal cultures and the "dominant society":

The dominant society tries to control actions it considers potentially or actually harmful to society as a whole, to individuals or to the wrongdoers themselves by interdiction, enforcement or apprehension, in order to prevent or punish harmful or deviant behaviour. The emphasis is on the punishment of the deviant as a means of making that person conform, or as a means of protecting other members of society.

The purpose of a justice system in an Aboriginal society is to restore the peace and equilibrium within the community, and to reconcile the accused with his or her own conscience and with the individual or family who has been wronged. This is a primary difference. It is a difference that significantly challenges the appropriateness of the present legal and justice system for Aboriginal people in the resolution of conflict, the reconciliation and the maintenance of community harmony and good order (p.22).

The Advisory Committee acknowledged these differences. They felt that an acknowledgement of and understanding of First Nations traditional concepts of justice

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<sup>2</sup> See *Delgamuukw v. A.G.: Reasons For Judgment* (1991). This was the historic Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en land claims case brought to the Supreme Court of British Columbia. See also Ross (1992) *Dancing with a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality*. Ross, an Assistant Crown Attorney in northwestern Ontario presents his experiences as a narrative about the differences in Ojibway and Cree concepts of justice with those of the court system.

were needed by students and teachers. They recommended the development of a province-wide elementary school curriculum which used First Nations stories, to show that we had concepts of justice and to develop these through storywork. The cooperation and involvement of First Nations community members and organizations was a fundamental principle and practice of the curriculum work. The Advisory Committee hoped that with community involvement and local adaptation to the curriculum, the First Nations children would learn more about their culture, in a positive manner. They also wanted the curriculum to be useful to the community as a resource for further developing their own community youth justice initiatives. The curriculum was to be for both band and public schools, especially those public schools with a significant First Nations student population. Non-First Nations students would at least get an opportunity to learn about First Nations forms of justice. According to a Department of Indian and Northern Affairs 1990/91 Annual Report, of the 14,481 First Nations students attending school in the B.C. education region, 66% attended public schools, 2% were in five federal schools, 25% were in 100 Band operated schools, and 7% in independent schools (1991 LCES Funding Proposal, p. 9). The need for law-related education with particular preventative relevancy to First Nations students was reinforced by the fact that in 1989-90, 27% of youths in custody in B.C. were First Nations, although First Nations people comprised 5% of British Columbia's population (ibid, p.8).

It took a year before funding was secured from eight different funding sources. Three staff were hired by October 1992—one coordinator and two researchers/curriculum writers. The LCES Executive Director and I also became part of the working team. A

Teachers' Advisory Committee was also established, comprising seven First Nations educators from various band and urban public schools. Some had been classroom teachers and were now in positions of a cultural coordinator, curriculum developer, district coordinator of First Nations Education, and a district principal. One member was a support worker who helped teachers with First Nations curriculum and provided services to students, and one member was a band councillor. The curriculum team felt that an Elder for the project was essential, to give guidance to the staff when necessary. Ellen White was selected because she was a gifted storyteller, had worked in elementary schools, had published some of her stories, and had participated in community justice initiatives. She willingly agreed to be the project Elder. The Native Advisory Committee joined the Teacher's Advisory Committee (NACTAC) for the five meetings held over the two year period.

The first six months of year one (October 1992 - March 1993) were devoted to the planning phase which focused on collecting research literature, examining existing First Nations oriented curricula, contacting various resource people for ideas, and achieving a consensus, through many group meetings, about the philosophical rationale, a scope and sequence, and possible unit themes. The task of developing school curricula for eight grade levels which included First Nations storytelling, First Nations and Canadian forms of justice, and community involvement, has not been done in North America. The task seemed overwhelming, problematic, yet exciting.

During the second half of year one (April 1993 - September 1993), the curriculum work focused on the development of the first draft of the curriculum prototype (philosophy, scope and sequence, units, and lessons, with accompanying stories) which was verified with the NACTAC. In year two, the curriculum work of the first six months (October 1993 - March 94) included more detailed development of the lessons and accompanying teaching materials, reviewing these with the NACTAC and others within the justice system, beginning a series of revisions based upon feedback, identifying pilot schools and gaining their permission to pilot the curriculum. The last six months of year two, (April 1994- September 1994) was spent with curriculum piloting, revisions, and final preparation for print ready copy. In-service teacher workshops at the pilot schools included some preparation for storytelling, which was further developed as a section in each grade level *Teacher's Guide*. The pilot was completed in at least four schools between April - June 1994. The print material was revised, graphics and photos selected, and a storytelling video was developed (see Appendix A for curriculum information). The curriculum was published and launched on September 29, 1994.

My responsibilities as a curriculum consultant for this project included overseeing the development of the philosophical approach, the scope and sequence, and assisting with the planning and development of the storywork approach. My involvement became more extensive from December 1992 until June 1993. I spent four days a month on the project during this time period because I was on a reduced work load from the University of British Columbia. I met regularly with the curriculum staff and Executive Director for planning sessions, to review drafts of the curriculum components, and to assist with



problem solving. My original purpose for participating in this project was as a Board member, contributing my service as necessary. At the beginning of the project, I discussed possible connections between the curriculum work and my thesis with the Executive Director and curriculum staff. They agreed to help me, and left it to me to specify how. We were quickly submerged in the curriculum work and I did not pursue my research connection because I did not want it to get in the way of the curriculum work. There was so much work to do with planning the curriculum approach and establishing agreements with First Nations organizations and community storytellers, that adding my research agenda to these processes had the potential for not getting community support.<sup>3</sup> I believed the right time and right moment would come. It did, after the curriculum was developed and published. Our process of establishing working relationships with community storytellers, transforming orally told and archival stories into curriculum, and developing story pedagogy that was culturally based had some pertinent lessons for others planning to develop similar curriculum.

A major aspect of the work of The Law Courts Education Society has been to establish partnerships with various groups of people. The metaphor of building bridges was used in the *First Nations Journeys of Justice Curriculum* to create links for partnerships:

The proposed project is grounded in the belief that a bridge can be built to develop common understandings between First Nations and mainstream

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<sup>3</sup> This curriculum project did not originate from a particular First Nations community. Much effort went into getting support and establishing collaborative arrangements with various First Nations throughout the province. Since it was a province-wide curriculum, geographic cultural representation was carefully planned for. Adding my “outsider” research component would have added extra work for the curriculum team and then required more time to develop support and trust toward my research dimension. The curriculum staff engaged in research for the curriculum which included a literature search and interviews with storytellers.

Canadian peoples, but that the footings for that bridge on the First Nations side must rest on solid cultural wisdom. The proposed curriculum would aim at strengthening cultural values and building self-esteem as bedrock for broader educational developments. This objective will be accomplished in part through involving the community in the development of the curricula, and through attention paid to the 'interconnectedness' of all aspects of the learning process (LCES Funding Proposal, 1991, p.8).

### ***Creating Opportunities For Community Involvement***

The curriculum approach was built upon the principles of local control and community involvement advocated by the 1992 national *Indian Control of Indian Education Policy*, adopted by the federal government, and which has influenced First Nations education throughout Canada.<sup>4</sup> From 1992 -1994, a curriculum team of five people worked with approximately 100 storytellers, educators, cultural centres, and tribal councils, justice/court personnel, and funders to document and develop a justice curriculum which combined First Nations traditional and life experience stories with information about the Canadian justice/court system, for kindergarten to grade seven. Twelve First Nations organizations, bands, and tribal councils throughout B.C., wrote letters of support and indicated a willingness to participate in this curriculum project during the fundraising period. At least 60 First Nations people either shared their stories or were consulted about storywork. The staff members met with individuals and groups throughout the province.

### **Bridging A Chasm**

The curriculum team developed the philosophical approach based on an examination of the source of laws, the policy of *Indian Control of Indian Education*, and the concept of

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<sup>4</sup> For more discussion on the effects of the Indian Control of Indian Education Policy see Kirkness and Bowman (1992) and Battiste and Barman (1995).

wholism. We were determined to start the curriculum from First Nations perspectives and then look for parallels from the Canadian justice system. In examining the source of laws from both sides, it would appear that a chasm exists:

Why do they seem to be so far apart?....Rather than having justice as part of the internal structure of the community, as in First Nations societies, communities in northern European culture created external structures to carry out the work that needed to be done in the area of justice. Thus, the system of justice is *external* to the community, rather than *internal*. This is the model that was imported to Canada (LCES Teacher's Guide, 1994, pp.14-15).

The external notion of justice is explained as follows: “[T]he Canadian legal system has been separated from the rest of normal, everyday living, and much of how it works cannot be understood by the average person...we need a lawyer to represent us in a court of law, someone who understands how the system works” (ibid, p.14). In contrast, in some First Nations societies, traditional law is internal, known and embedded in cultural ways through stories and ceremonies such as feasting/potlatching where “rights” to territories or names may be given, exercised, and witnessed by the guests. Even though many First Nations follow their own cultural traditions as well as the laws of Canada, there is growing dissatisfaction with the justice/court system when First Nations traditional knowledge is denied as evidence:

Western concepts of objectivity and fact make oral histories suspect and unreliable in the court's eyes. As demonstrated in the recent judgment of former British Columbia Supreme Court Chief Justice Allan McEachern (1991) in *Delgam Uukw v. HRMTQ*, Canadian legal institutions are fundamentally Eurocentric, allowing for little difference in cultural worldviews (Pryce, 1992, p.35).

Finding similarities between the concepts of justice common to First Nations and the Canadian justice system was one approach used in the *First Nations Journeys of Justice Curriculum* in attempting to bridge the chasm. Four major concepts were agreed upon: being safe, being responsible, being fair, and getting along. Arriving at a consensus on these four common justice concepts did not occur until the curriculum was almost ready to be published.

The curriculum team and NACTAC members first identified ten justice concepts that had important applications to First Nations: sharing, reciprocity, cooperation, respect, rights, the importance of caregivers, harmony, interdependence, honour, and balance. The group wanted the stories to exemplify these concepts. In fact these concepts were verified during the meetings as individuals would often tell traditional or life experience stories related to what they believed justice was traditionally, and what it should be. The ten concepts were embedded in the stories subsequently selected for the curriculum and were developed in the lesson activities. But some of the non-First Nations justice educators felt strongly about collapsing the categories of concepts, explicitly showing their sequential development throughout the grade level units, and showing how they were incorporated in a “practical and useable” curriculum format (LCES Teacher’s Guide, 1994, p.1).

During the June-August 1994 revision process, the four concepts noted above were agreed upon, after much discussion, by the curriculum staff and the NACTAC. These ten concepts were noted on each page of the scope and sequence, so that they would not be totally forgotten. First Nations artists designed logos which not only depicted the four concepts, but their meaning also encompassed the original ten concepts (also see

Appendix B for logos and descriptions of the four concepts). Identifying and introducing common concepts of justice between First Nations and the Canadian justice/court system was the workable<sup>5</sup> starting place for elementary level school curriculum. The principle of community involvement was also the workable starting place for the development of story pedagogy.

### ***Going To The People And Their Stories***

In the staff planning sessions, trickster, origin, historical, naming, territorial, and life experience stories were identified as some story types needed for particular unit themes. Also stories which had First Nations teachings related to working together, ensuring safety and security as a basic need and right, relationships with nature, and settling conflict were discussed with community storytellers (LCES Curriculum Prototype, Scope and Sequence, April to June 1993 Activity Report, p.16-36). The important aspect of selecting stories was that the storytellers would be the ones to first identify the story they felt was appropriate and that they wanted used in the curriculum. The staff wanted a framework for discussing the purpose and area of need for stories to facilitate the work of identifying stories that the storytellers could share. A constant constraint plaguing the project was one of time limitations. Three of the curriculum team worked intensively and individually with storytellers and educators from at least ten cultural Nations to acquire appropriate stories for the curriculum. Each person agreed to work in specific regional areas of the province. Names of storytellers or people who worked in cultural education

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<sup>5</sup> The term "workable" is used cautiously. The differences between Aboriginal concepts of justice and those used in the Canadian courts will not be resolved through this introductory curriculum for children.

were suggested by NACTAC members and by staff. Each of the three staff members contacted the storytellers or their liaison helpers or their tribal councils/organizations to identify local protocol procedures and make arrangements for a visit during June 1993. Letters were sent requesting participants' permission. Sometimes the staff member visited a community and attended an Elders' meeting arranged by a local contact person to request participation. After an explanation of the curriculum project, many individual storytellers gave their consent to participate. This was one important step in gaining acceptance to the world of the storytellers, but there were various obstacles to overcome in getting support and establishing a working relationship with storytellers.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Gaining Acceptance: The Trials***

Even though a link to Elders was made through a community educator, they often questioned the staff member who was an outsider to the community. This staff member felt that her motives and the intentions of the LCES were being assessed:

The next day was going to be easy because it was all set out through the Elders' coordinator. He was very instrumental in helping me out, he explained to me who I'd be talking to, and the Elders had [already] talked amongst themselves, there's a few of them, so in terms of cultural protocol, I was talking to people and allowing them to tell me...[these] are [the] Elders you may talk to. However, when I came to this Elders' meeting there were other members of the community that were there and I had to be accountable to them.

It was a good experience for me because it was like saying 'I'm Blackfoot [from Alberta], I work for the Law courts, this information is for the people in British Columbia and not for the people out there, on the other side of the mountain [where I'm from].' So it was like, I was

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<sup>6</sup> Some of the "quotes" presented in this chapter are lengthy, and are really experiential stories of the curriculum staff.

being...questioned critically by the people which was a good experience for me. [The Coordinator] said I had handled that very well.

Jo-ann: You have to prove yourself.

[curriculum worker]: Yes, prove myself, and thinking many times, I wanted to turn and flee and maybe just go hopping out the window; not have to show my face but I survived that, that was a good experience (Interview, July 3, 1995).

In another regional area, the arrangements were made with a community liaison person and the staff member made the trip to the community to find the liaison person not there and the Elders' group refusing to see the staff member. The following experience exemplifies problems of gaining trust and cooperation:

I went up to (a coastal community) and I had made arrangements through a cultural education worker...a friend of mine....They have an Elders' group up there and she was going to introduce me to the Elders' group and ask their permission to hear some stories and perhaps use some of them. I flew there and rented a car...at the last minute she wasn't there, she was out of town. She had left word that I should ask another teacher up there, to take me over to the Elders and I had thought everything had been pre-arranged so we went to the Elders and explained what the project was and they said, 'No, we don't want to talk to her.'....So I sort of panicked, I didn't know what to do (Interview, July 11, 1995).

Did the Elders say "no" because they did not know or trust this person? My work with the Sto:lo and Coast Salish Elders indicates that the researcher needed to have an accepted community liaison link her to the Elders; the Coqualeetza Cultural Centre staff were my strong community links. The limited time scheduled for working with community Elders and storytellers prevented any form of relationship building during this visit. However, the curriculum worker had lived in the community and had established friendships with another community person who helped her:

I lived in this community for three months so I knew quite a few people there. I didn't feel like a total stranger, as least I knew some people there, so it was more comfortable. What I did was I asked some friends if they knew of anybody who might be willing to talk to me and one friend of mine said he knew a couple of... Elders, who would probably be willing to talk to me....My friend...said: 'Would you be willing to talk to her? They said, 'Sure.'

I went in and they ...didn't tell me what people refer to as legends or myths. They told me more about their own life experiences, how things were when they were kids growing up, how things were handled in the community, when there wasn't a concept of crime. It's more like anti-social behaviour, if someone was not acting properly, how that would be handled in the community. So rather than telling me stories they told me more life experience stories which are still stories (ibid).

This person's experience also reminds me of the way that Simon Baker, Vincent Stogan, Ellen White, and the Sto:lo Elders teach others about culture through personal life experience stories. They know the person asking the questions does not have the knowledge needed to understand the topic of inquiry. It might seem that they are not directly answering or cooperating, even though they have agreed to help the person who asks. But they are answering and directing the learning process by providing life experience stories which contain values, background or contextual information, and issues one must know in order to make meaning through storywork. Creating time to listen and having patience to learn what storytellers are sharing and teaching are fundamental to establishing respectful relationships.

### ***Establishing Relationships***

Noella Little Mustache speaks about the tensions of time pressure for getting stories in contrast to being patient, listening, and establishing a beginning friendship with Elder storytellers. She mentions trust or faith in waiting for the "right time" for getting the



story. Her words resonate with my need to wait for the right moment with the right person. I've heard many Elders also say these words. It does not mean to have blind faith that the right person and right story will just come to you. You have to be ready and culturally "worthy"; you have to understand the fundamental values of respect, reverence, responsibility, and reciprocity in relation to First Nations orality.

I guess the most important [responsibility] I felt was when you came into the community you would like to come away with a story. I remember the boss saying something like, 'You know you got so many days up there, are you going to get our story?' So I'm looking at this as a task and I'm phoning and I'm phoning and I'm looking at constructing my days, I'm also looking at being alone in an area that I'm not familiar with but I'm also trusting myself and saying that if it is meant to be I will meet someone who is willing to share, if it's not meant to be then I have to accept that because that's the way things are at home, the way of life. And there's a right time for everything. There is a right time period.

I guess the key responsibility was honouring the Elder and being focused.... I found that the critical part was talking to them at their place. The other responsibility was a follow-up with the Elders, it's like the Elders did not [stay] a stranger to me, they became my friend. And I felt they shared part of me. I passed something onto the project but I also felt some of those teachings stayed with me. And it was a gift.

Noella felt the tensions again between time constraints and fitting into the storyteller's pace of life (context). However, there did not seem to be any tension experienced by the storyteller, who directed the place and pace of discussion. This same Elder storyteller also reinforces the importance of prayer before the work begins.

I just came at lunch time and there was a gentleman cooking...chili and fried bread, so I was invited. [M, the storyteller] was involved with her students, they were making birch bark baskets, her grandchildren were coming and going. When it came time to be interviewed I waited for [M] until she was ready. I waited. I had all my bags sitting there and my tape recorder and I would have liked to have said to her, 'We should start at this time' but I had to wait for her, 'til she was ready. We started the

interview but then after awhile she said, 'Let's go to this other building' her extended family was coming and going.

We went to the other building and that's when she said, 'I should pray before we start.' ....[M]ost of the Elders that I interviewed started with a prayer and ended with a prayer and it kept me feeling that I was at the right place at the right time. [T]here was that feeling that the Creator brought us here together to give thanks [for what] we have eaten and also [to] give thanks that all First Nations people are still here. I felt very special. They themselves were gifted and I was in that sacred environment. So [M] sat there after the prayer and she was busy sewing. She sewed and she talked.

### ***Giving Direction***

Sometimes the conversation between the storyteller and curriculum worker introduced philosophical teachings that were subsequently used for the unit lessons:

We talked a lot about residential schools and then she [the storyteller] said, 'I need to talk about the circle of life.' She stated that everything was the circle of life and said this has to be the foundation of your curriculum. She didn't say curriculum, but the work you have been talking about. And this circle of life is where she talks about the salmon. The life cycle of the salmon, she used that as a symbol, that the salmon when they go out, like us going out in life, learning and that life cycle will have to end...and young children are born....We finish, we've had our purpose in life but other people will carry that on. [Her] story of the sockeye gave me a lot of caring for the family, a lot of responsibility that we have...there's a path in which people have to follow. She talked about the male salmon helping the female and the eggs [being] made and there's a partnership, there's cooperation, and it's like she was saying that in our world we also have to have that (Transcript, July 3, 1995).

This type of direction was very helpful to the curriculum researchers, since they often were not familiar with the cultural ways of the individual storytellers. Much of this contextual information was included in the curriculum lessons. The cooperation and direction received from the many First Nations groups and individuals attests to their

commitment to improve educational curricula with their cultural knowledge. The principle of respectful partnerships established by the LCES helped create the opportunity for people to work together.

Anne Goodfellow shares other dilemmas about grammatical correctness, problems when a storyteller decides a story is not ready to be published and denies its inclusion, and tensions over collective ownership of stories. There is no simple solution.

....[T]his is always a dilemma with me is, how do you present an oral story in a written form? These stories were all collected in English, which for...a lot of Elders, English is not their mother tongue. When they are speaking, their English is not good grammatically, my English is not good grammatically when I am speaking either, but even more so because it's not their mother tongue. One of the dilemmas that I always have is, how much do I correct in the written form? What I usually do is write it up exactly as it [was] given to me and then show it to the person who has given it to me and I explain that we can either leave it like this—if this is what you want or if you like, we can tidy it up, it's up to you. I think that's a choice that should be given to the individual storyteller and that was interesting because most of the older storytellers said... 'Just leave it the way it is, don't fix it up because this is my story and this is the way I told it,' and they were quite happy to leave it with grammatical mistakes.

With [B, a storyteller], it was exactly the opposite, ...I sent him the copy of exactly how he told it. He said, 'This is horrible, this isn't good grammar, I don't want it written like this.' So I said, well you know some of the other people wanted it written like this because that was how they told it. He said, 'No, no I want it fixed up.' So he gave me permission to fix them up (Transcript, July 11, 1995).

Fixing up a story to look “better” on paper may come from the influences of school based literacy as noted in the comments above. Fixing up a story may also change the “tone” of the story, as some Elders say. The principle of doing what the storyteller wants with his/her story may raise concerns about changing the form of the oral tradition. However,

we felt that it was important to “walk our talk.” We found that the storytellers took much care and were explicit about the representation of their stories. If they felt that the story was not ready<sup>7</sup> to be put into textual form and published, or more importantly, that it should not be used in school curriculum, then they withdrew it.

I got permission to use most of the stories but in the end, there were ...a couple of stories that after he had told them to me he wasn't comfortable with it. He said, ‘No, they are not ready. I don't want you to use them.’ And, so they weren't used. So that's another thing, just because somebody tells you a story and even though they have signed a form and you got them on tape you still have to check the final form [to see] if it's okay to publish it as it is (ibid).

Each dilemma had to be worked out as it arose. There were many that we had not anticipated. Ownership of stories and authority to tell stories are complex matters with not only individual/family/community considerations but political ones as well.

We also got a call from one of the tribal councils because we hadn't checked with them first and that's one thing that I learned is that even though individuals own stories, you also have to go through the proper protocol, with band council, tribal councils, whatever the political organization is because some of the stories are owned collectively and not just by individuals, so there are lots of things that you have to think about in...doing stories (Anne Goodfellow, Transcript, July 11, 1995).

Establishing a collaborative working relationship with community storytellers takes time and skill to understand and agree on cultural and political protocol, which of course varies amongst First Nations. Maintaining a respectful and trusting relationship requires patience, open communication, the will to respond, and ability to negotiate satisfactory solutions as implied in Anne's experiences. To help teachers and others begin to form

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<sup>7</sup> Not being “ready” may include not having all the appropriate permissions from those who have authority to let a story be published, if the story is a collective one.

respectful relationships with First Nations community members, a video and Teacher's Guide introduced some considerations and examples of story pedagogy.

### ***Introducing Storytelling Through Video***

The *Introduction to Storytelling* video shows three storytellers who contributed to the curriculum, telling stories and talking with me about aspects of storywork. Teachers may use some of the questions posed, information shared, and issues raised as beginning points for dialogue with First Nations storytellers and/or community members. The purposes of this video were: (1) to provide more information about particular stories used in the curriculum, (2) to share considerations about teaching approaches and cultural protocol for First Nations stories, and (3) to act as a catalyst for teachers and community members wanting to engage in First Nations storywork (Storyguide, pp.37-38).<sup>8</sup>

Ellen White, Jeff McNeil-Bobb, and Frank Brown talked with me about their stories, their philosophy about storywork, made suggestions about using these stories in the classroom, and told a story or two. Our conversations were put into written transcript format, I edited them, and sent them to each person to change and approve before the final video edits were completed. This video along with each grade level teacher's guide should give the teacher introductory information about the nature of First Nations stories, beginning pedagogy for storywork, and ideas for collaborative work with local community educators/storytellers. Ellen White's pedagogical ideas are presented in Chapter Seven. Frank Brown's life experience story and views will be highlighted in a

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<sup>8</sup> The Law Courts Education Society gave me permission to use extensive quotes from the Storytelling Video and Teachers' Guides.

later chapter section, leaving space for Jeff McNeil-Bobb's views here. Jeff is from the Sto:lo Nation and has worked as a teacher, artist, curriculum developer, cultural/language coordinator, and band councillor. I have known Jeff for 12 years, first as a NITEP student then as a teacher at the Seabird Island Band School at Agassiz, B.C. Jeff was also a member of the NACTAC. I chose to portray his philosophical views about the nature of stories and an example of his use of story metaphor to present the questionable issue of explicating meaning to children, to show that there are differences of opinion about aspects of storywork.

When I asked where the story he contributed came from, he recalled learning some stories from his grandfather which were told as story "segments." Jeff put these segments into one story for the curriculum project. This use of story demonstrates the way that a younger generation of storytellers may change the traditional way of using stories to suit a different learning context. Of particular interest, is his statement about gaining understandings in his adult years:

...there was always parts of the day when I would be hurt, woeful, and be curled up somewhere. And he [my grandfather] would come over and ask, 'What is wrong?' Generally out of those things, something [a story] would come out. Back then, each one of them was in a segment of its own, but in reflection, I'm now just beginning to understand some things he said.

Stories told to young children, in circumstances such as Jeff's, or to some of the Sto:lo Elders who listened to stories at bedtime may have had the purposes of soothing emotions or teaching about behaviour, at the time of storytelling. The same stories heard over and over again became embedded in one's being, staying there until reflection in one's later

years brings adult understandings and sometimes enables one to become a storyteller.

Making meaning from a particular story can happen at various phases of human development; the meaning may change over time. Stories, then, have a way of “living,” of being perpetuated by the listener/learner’s way of making meaning and also from storytellers who have an important responsibility in the way they tell stories. Ellen White said, “Our lives are stories....Storytellers have to be very responsible. They are setting the pace of breathing. A story is, and has, breath. Storytellers learn to let that happen”<sup>9</sup> (LCES Teacher’s Guide, pp.49-50).

Jeff shares his belief about what a story is. There is a resonance of thought about the relationship of breath and story which Ellen White spoke about.

To me a story is life. It’s life; it’s part of breathing. You know you are breathing in and out...stories [are] going in and out...stories [are] buzzing all around. We can take one. There is certain things you can do with it. Some people, once they know the process, they’ll start filling up their pockets and fill up their bags and eventually they can’t move and they become like water and filter into the ground. Or you can listen to them and share that experience or you can tell it. Or you can experience it for awhile and then just let it go again. Stories are like that. They are all over.

Jeff believes that listeners should make their own meaning without any guidance from the storyteller. I’ve found that some storytellers have this approach and others will give some direction. Perhaps it becomes individual choice, perhaps cultural protocol and rules may apply, and sometimes the context of the listeners’ and the storytelling situation guide the discussion. He tells a story to make his point.

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<sup>9</sup> I believe Ellen is talking about the power of story to “be the teacher,” a teaching she discussed in chapter four. A synergistic action happens between the storyteller and story, but it is the storyteller who gives breath, life to the story.

If we create a little scenario here. You are walking down this path, it's a dirt path. It's got a little stick lying there in the middle. Now there is the type of people that would go and kick the stick out of the way. Then there's the people who would just step over it. There's another type of people that will walk around the stick. Or another type of person that will pick up the stick and put it on the side of the road so nobody will kick it or step on it. So it's all the idea that the stick was a story, and we went back to it. There [are] people that will kick the stories, and there [are] people who will walk around it. They see that it is there. But they don't want to experience it so they walk around it. And there [are] some that will walk by and don't care and just squash it to the dirt. There [are] others who will gently pick it up and put it to the side because they know and appreciate what it is.

And if we take that stick and give it to a child, or the child comes by, he'll pick it up and it will be a poker; it will be a pointer; it will be an airplane; it will be all kinds of things. Then an adult comes by and says 'What are you doing with that stick?' And once they name it as a stick, it loses the gist of what was going through the child's imagination. I guess that's what happens with quite a few stories too.

From listening to and reading what storytellers say about making meaning from story, the traditional ways favour no or very little direct guidance from the storyteller. The effects of colonization, assimilation, and acculturation, predominantly through schooling have left many people unable to story-listen and make story-meaning, unless directly guided. The talks of the Sto:lo Elders in Chapter Five and Little Wagon's story in Chapter Two illustrate this inability.

Many First Nations use their personal life experiences as teaching stories in a manner similar to that used for traditional stories. These storytellers help to carry on the oral traditional values of educational reciprocity. Frank Brown, of the Heiltsuk Nation, Waglisla (Bella Bella) B.C., produced a video about his life experience story, *The Voyage of Rediscovery*, for educational purposes.



## ***Learning From Life Experience Stories***

In grade three, *The Frank Brown Story*, is simply written to state that he got into trouble as a youth for robbery and assault, was banished to a deserted island by a judge who followed the community's recommendation for this action, and there learned to look within himself, and to care for himself. The love of extended family and community members is a strong theme. The notion of looking within resonates with Ellen White's teaching about going within, going to the core of oneself. Frank Brown gave the LCES permission to use segments of the video, *The Voyage To Rediscovery*, and talked with me about the value of life experience story. Our talk was recorded for the *Teacher's Storytelling Video*. In grade six, *The Frank Brown Story* is presented in more detail and the lesson includes his video. The lesson reinforces responsibility for one's actions and introduces reasoning embedded in traditional forms of First Nations justice, which often works better than the penalties imposed by the court system.

Frank was approached by a Native American video producer to tell his story through this medium. Frank turned him down at first because he was uncomfortable with the idea but later agreed because of its educational benefit. However, he ensured control over the video representation of his story because he felt accountable to his community to accurately reflect the seamless connection he has to it and because he felt strongly about First Nations people owning their stories and portraying them respectfully:

You hear Elders say, 'I want to share this [life story] with you so that you don't have to go through what I went through. I [agreed to have my story portrayed through video] under [the] condition that I would have a say of

how my story be told because I'm accountable to my people, I look to use an analogy of taking a picture of a wave,...a wave is a part of an ocean and I'm just one wave, but one wave is a reflection of all the waves in the ocean because they are at the same height and the same width going across the ocean depending on the tides and wind. It was really important for me to be...an accurate reflection of where I came from. Because I don't detach myself from my community and my responsibility to my people to represent not only myself, but my community accurately (LCES Storytelling Video, 1994).

Being on the island, alone for eight months when he was a teenager, Frank learned to take responsibility for his basic physical survival (although some food was brought to him), to accept himself by acknowledging then confronting his past, his self-pity, his anger, and later accepting accomplishment with humility. Ten years later, he was able to conceptualize the cycle of thinking and action that he underwent: identifying a problem, acknowledging it, confronting aspects of it, and working through the problem to gain a sense of accomplishment combined with reflection, which can start the cycle anew. He also created a mask dance with these four phases and held a washing off feast with his family and community to publicly share his learning. Frank sometimes conducts workshops for youth about the teachings of his life experience story. He shares his story with compassion and from the value of reciprocity:

...you just have to believe in yourself and always ask for help from the Creator and from people that are there to help....That's why I'm sharing...even though I was the little bugger that I was, there was somebody that cared for me. And they said this kid has potential, that's why I'm sharing,...it's my way of giving something back to my society, to society in general. Because there was compassion for me, I want to show compassion...the stories are very important....I don't want kids to go through what I went through, because [it] wasn't very nice. I would like them to have a better opportunity to think it through....Being locked up is not fun, being alone isn't fun (ibid).

Frank Brown's life experience story became a teaching one for him and now others. His way of making meaning from it can benefit youth because of the many lessons/teachings it contains. Story combined with mask dance, song, and a community witnessing feast, are contained in a video, and now curriculum. These educational materials serve to document history and present a lesson in traditional justice which is internal to Frank's community. Frank's story also shows the educational/social value of a life experience story. The LCES curriculum staff developed some pedagogical approaches to help teachers and students—the majority of whom wouldn't know how to—begin to story-listen and make story-meaning with both traditional and life experience stories.

### ***Teaching Through Story: Some Common Approaches***

Throughout the unit lessons, specific teaching/learning activities are presented for each story, which reflect some traditional approaches described by Elders in previous chapters and which also relate to justice concepts. However, some teaching activities can be used with any story, and are called “common approaches” (LCES Teacher's Guide, Storyguide Section, pp.38-39). They include telling stories with no explanation, using a talking circle for discussion, role playing and having fun with the story, and story repetition. Telling stories with no discussion is explained:

When you have finished the first part of the story, tell the children that they will hear the rest of it later. Also tell them that you will not be discussing the story right away. Explain that in First Nations cultures, long ago, storytellers often told stories and the listeners would not ask questions or talk about the story. They would think about the story and what it meant to them. Often stories were told at night, and children would listen while they fell asleep. Some Elders say that we would think about the story in our dreams. So, you will be discussing it later when they have had time to

think about it, and ‘sleep on it’ (LCES Grade One Teacher’s Guide, 1994, p.71).

It would be a rare occurrence to have pedagogy without questions/answers between the teacher and students. The talking circle concept used by many First Nations today, is a cultural way to encompass a teacher/student discussion format familiar to classroom teachers.

A talking circle may be used to discuss aspects or to share individual understandings of the story. Sitting in a circle is symbolic of the notion that all are equal and that what is said is respected. Some basic questions may be asked in relation to the concepts of the unit lesson, but the purpose of these questions is not to check comprehension. It is expected that children and adults may not understand all of a story. That is all right. With discussion and active engagement in the story’s aspects, understandings may increase (LCES Teacher’s Guide, Storyguide Section, 1994, p.38).

Each lesson lists the type of questions the teacher can ask. They serve as guidelines for discussion, not to be adhered to pedantically. Throughout the grade levels lots of role playing is recommended. Traditionally, some stories were theatrically presented at large gatherings and often song and dance accompanied the stories. Empathy with the characters and their situations, and personally relating to stories is facilitated through various forms of role play. Sometimes the teacher directs the role play, other times the students choose parts to act out, in later grades they collectively write scripted role plays as a continuation of a story. Many of the stories were used in more than one grade level. The concepts for these stories are sequentially developed so that the students gain an increased understanding of a concept, such as responsibility, over a few grade levels.

Ellen White's story, *The Creator and the Flea*<sup>10</sup>, is used to show learning by story repetition.

### ***Repeating A Story***

This story [*The Creator and the Flea*] is part of the Law of the Universe, a much longer story. In stories, the place of beginning can change, depending on the purpose of the story. A story never really ends. Flea had to know all of himself, to know he had a part to play. That is a Law of the Universe (LCES Kindergarten Teacher's Guide, 1994, p. 68).

Ellen White agreed to lend her story, *The Creator and the Flea*, to the LCES for use as a foundational story to introduce and begin developing the cultural concept of wholism, by learning about aspects of the physical realm. Ellen told this story during a discussion with the curriculum staff and gave direction for the type of teaching to be developed in the lessons: "The story tells us to connect with ourselves, to challenge ourselves, to love ourselves, and to understand every part of our body. In this way, the body will return this love....That's the lesson from the Creator" (LCES Storytelling Video).

The story *The Creator and the Flea* is used in four grade levels: kindergarten, grades one, two, and four. In kindergarten, the story begins a unit and is told in segments<sup>11</sup>, over two lessons. The story activities which include guided discussion, rhyme, role play, and

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<sup>10</sup> *The Creator and Flea* story is placed at the end of this chapter because it is used to exemplify story pedagogy. It is not an Appendix. Some stories begin as community ones, not owned by anyone. Families may take on the responsibility to tell these stories. Over time, the stories become attributed to particular individuals in a family. Ellen White's family gave her the responsibility to continue telling this story version. Ellen White uses the publishing term of "copyright" to show that she has cultural responsibility for this story.

<sup>11</sup> Other stories which are lengthy are told in segments, over two or more lessons, depending on the age level of the students and length of the story. A number of storytellers have mentioned that they heard stories told in this manner when they were young. I think that stories told to any age group of listeners not accustomed to hearing First Nations stories should be short, or told in segments. A segment could be like a complete short story. I've found that longer, more involved stories require an experienced story-listening mind. The curriculum can only introduce beginning story-listening skills.

drawing/painting, take a total of six lessons to complete. With Flea, the children are guided to learn about, take care of, and appreciate their physical self. Individual responsibility for one's own learning is then reinforced as the main story teaching for grade one. Similar types of teaching activities used in kindergarten are used in this grade level and completed in four lessons. They also share "self-discoveries" about the physical things they could not do in kindergarten but can now that they are in grade one. They participate more with storytelling by joining in the telling of the story with the teacher. In grade two the story is "used as a basis for making 'Me Dolls'...They will 'put themselves together,' just as Flea does in the story. With this activity, the students will get to know the important functions of their body parts, and will create someone [themselves] worthy of care and respect" (p.86). The students are guided through discussion to suggest ways that they can take care of their bodies, their selves, so they are healthy and safe. In the third lesson, their thinking is then extended to examine inter-relationships with caregivers in their lives. The Creator and the Snail are used as examples of caregivers to the Flea. In grade four, the concept of taking responsibility for oneself is again repeated through the story and used to examine ownership of one's feelings and actions. The story is a bridge to introducing conflict resolution. Imagery exercises, guided discussion, and role play are the teaching activities for two lessons.

The story pedagogy suggested in the LCES elementary school level curriculum is at an introductory level. The premise that the curriculum staff worked with is that the teachers and students know nothing or very little about story-listening and making story-meaning. The curriculum developers tried to incorporate traditional aspects of storywork, such as

learning in segments, allowing opportunity for the listener to make her/his own meaning, having fun with story, and providing opportunities for the listener to engage in and with the story through role play and discussion. Even though these stories were used for learning with young children, they can have application for adults. To show this, two curriculum workers talked about stories which had significant personal impact.

### ***Applying Storywork To Adults***

This first example shows the deep felt and well thought out reflective understandings related to wholism/wellness, personal responsibility, self-respect, patience, and personal empowerment that one of the curriculum staff received from the *Creator and the Flea*.

This person interacted with the story in the manner described earlier by Greg Sarris:

*The Creator and the Flea* is a wonderful healing story, it's very much needed everywhere. When I first heard it—I was able to relate to some of it, [but] it was my second contact [when] I heard Ellen give the story at UBC, boy oh boy, it...really touched my heart....I said to myself, will I ever be that Flea? Throughout the project I was the Flea learning about myself working with people...that story is like my guidance, maybe my philosophy in life right now because I very much believe that there is a Creator out there....[I'm] working towards becoming whole, it takes time, it won't be just overnight, but there are other things that I also have to work through and those are some of the healing things.

I feel that anyone can relate to this story at whatever stage of life they're at. I feel that there is a common thread for everyone to [find] in this story... whether it's healing,...or a hardship they've gone through, or even the joy of accomplishing something in life....[W]hatever we're going through, we value afterwards, so you come away as a stronger person....[This story] could be an outline for your life....for me it's one of overcoming obstacles, being my own worst enemy; ...like the Flea was his own worst enemy. But overcoming that and feeling good, is like empowerment. I also felt that the *Creator and the Flea* gave me...a vision in life, [where] you also have to have good thoughts, have good relationships, have good experiences in life because those are the things that are going to keep you going. Not to

dwell on the negative things because that's what the flea was doing and the poor flea was killing himself and he would have died.

[I]n Ellen's [oral telling of the ] story, she says, 'and don't look back,' meaning that...the Flea should not get himself back in this situation, the Flea should have learned already and I look back at it and say, 'Gosh, that Flea is really me,' ...when am I going to get through these feelings and I think,...I really have to be patient. I guess I am looking for immediate answers and I'm very impatient like our friend the flea.

I guess [the Flea] could live in each and everyone of us. There's that part of us that...could easily fall to the other side and not bother about being whole, not bother about being well, but turn out to be selfish and not follow what I would call the First Nations way, which is to share, to have respect for yourself, which is where it's going to start, and then goes outwards. Listening, [having] humility, giving thanks, and always working towards that wellness or being appreciative of what is around you.<sup>12</sup>

Another person also talked about a story that had a strong emotional impact which he/she is not able to understand yet. The storyteller's way of telling was also visually and aurally powerful. I can relate to the unexpected impact a story has. It somehow speaks to one's inner being.

....It was the one about Kwakwobolas....I remember when he [the storyteller] first told it. When I was transcribing it...every time I read that story I would cry....[I]t's about a young boy who's abused by his family and he goes out into the woods...[H]e discovers all these things about life through this dream he had; here I am getting tears in my eyes just thinking about it now. But I don't know what it is, it's just a powerful story. It's about life and about individual learning....[T]his boy was almost an outcast from his family and society and he learned all these things through dreams. Then he went back to share it with other people. [That] was the reason [this story] was so powerful for me....I have also seen the dance that goes along with [the story]....I didn't know the story before [but] when I heard the story I realized what all these parts of the dance were. It's a very powerful story for me. Maybe I can relate it to my own life or something.

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<sup>12</sup> The transcript date is not given to respect the staff members' anonymity.



....Maybe it was the way it was told too. It's so visual. I can visualize it in my mind so much. I think that's the power of it too. The way the [story was] told, even the tone of voice...was very low and deep, sort of serious and pensive. It seemed very powerful to me....I haven't figured it out but it has this strong effect on me.

Some traditional stories have such a powerful impact upon people that they become a philosophical guide for change and those who are ready unfold story meanings in relation to their personal lives. Sometimes the traditional story becomes part of one's life experience story, to be shared with others when appropriate, as noted in the first example. Sometimes the power of story is felt strongly, waiting for the listener to engage in its meaning, as in the second example. These two staff members came to the project with limited experience in relation to First Nations storywork as curriculum. Guided by the challenge to be respectful to stories and to the people, they and the other members of the curriculum project strived to establish some ethical principles.

### ***Establishing Ethical Principles***

We talked a lot about the ethics of working with First Nations storytellers. In B.C., there are 38 distinct First Nations language dialects and 197 bands (BC Hydro, Aboriginal Relations, "Facts On Aboriginal People). Despite the large numbers of First Nation cultural communities that we worked with, our main concern was to establish principles for working respectfully and responsibly with each First Nation, community, and storyteller. The following principles emerged and gained clarity and form during the curriculum phases:

## **Permission**

1. The permission of either the Tribal Council, Cultural Centre, or First Nations organization involved in education in the cultural territories we entered was asked for through phone calls, letters, and personal visits. Amongst many First Nations, a traditional practice of respect was to ask permission to enter someone's territory. This tradition is still practiced in varying degrees and in contexts such as large meetings and cultural gatherings.

## **Protocol**

2. The staff were to be sensitive to cultural protocol with each person they worked with. Some engaged in spiritual practice such as prayer before beginning the work. Sometimes a community organization had a liaison responsibility with particular Elder storytellers and had formal procedures to follow such as the Sto:lo Coqualeetza Elders. Noella Little Mustache, the curriculum coordinator, talked about being scrutinized by the Coqualeetza staff before being allowed to talk to the Elders. The purpose of this scrutiny was to see if the request was appropriate for the Elders' group because they get numerous requests from individuals for cultural information and participation in educational projects. This procedure is one way of screening out those who may be a mismatch to the purposes of the Elders' group. The staff get a feel for the sincerity and ethics of the person or organization making the request, but the Elders ultimately decide upon the scope of their involvement.

I worked with [two] Sto:lo Elders and [I felt] they could both see right through me. I talked with [their Coordinator] a lot about [the project]. It's like you have to get checked out by others before you are allowed near the

Elders' place, if you are not checked out...you're not allowed near the Elders' place (Transcript, July 3, 1995).

### **Verification**

3. Guidelines were established about working with storytellers such as providing honoraria to them, giving a copy of the tape and transcript to the individuals, and verifying the text and story lesson plan with them. Giving honoraria to Elders can create problems to the individual concerned and to the Elders' group. The Sto:lo tradition is to share knowledge, without the expectation of being paid because cultural knowledge comes from the Ancestors and is usually part of the collective knowledge of the Nation. A perception of inequity arises if Elders are not paid or paid very little for their expertise in comparison to staff and especially "outsider" consultants. The Coqualeetza Elders group and the Sto:lo Nation offices have worked out an agreeable method for honoraria amounts and gifts. The Elders are "thanked" not "paid" for their cultural sharing.

Problems also arose when the verification process was not consistently carried out. A NACTAC member pointed out errors about the cultural information in her Nation's stories. If these stories were printed with the errors, the LCES would have been publicly humiliated and obligated to make amends by paying for the errors at the launch. Concerns were also brought up from storytellers who said that some of the textual language of the stories was too "fancy" and changed the "tone" of the story. They felt that their stories had to have "plain language" yet be open enough for "students [to] expand their minds...and be creative" (LCES Meeting Minutes, June 24, 1994). After this meeting, the curriculum staff tried to ensure verification of the textual representation with each

storyteller and asked her/him to show approval of the story's text by signing each page. Signing each page may seem like an extreme measure, but the LCES wanted to respond to the concerns of the Advisory Committee members who felt strongly about having the storyteller and LCES be accountable for the accuracy of the story's textual representation. But getting signed permission brought forward another matter of distrust for some of the curriculum staff.

Anne Goodfellow summarizes the LCES curriculum protocol used with storytellers and emphasizes the importance of developing appropriate contexts for the learning strategies in consultation with the storyteller. She also mentions the issue of distrust that informed consent forms may raise. Working out protocols, and these issues are critical aspects of the relationship with the storytellers.

....[The] first time we checked with the storytellers about their stories it was [to see] if the stories were okay; we did it in stages. 'How is this; is this how you want your story presented?' Then in the second stage we sent them the materials related to their particular story and [showed] this is how your story is going to be used in the curriculum and these are the types of concepts that we are trying to put across to the children. Then we would get their permission to use it like that. And no one said 'no.' They were all used appropriately according to the storytelling. But [there] is another part of the process that has to be followed because you can't...take a story and use it out of context and say, 'well you gave me permission to use it, but, [the storyteller may say] I didn't give you permission to use it that way.' So that's another thing you have to remember, the context that you are going to be using the stories in [is very critical]....They need to be used in an appropriate manner.

One of the other things too, is sometimes people feel [uncomfortable signing the consent] form [for the interview] ...some people don't really like to do that, they become suspicious when they have to sign a form. They feel like they would be signing away their rights to their own stories and you have to be very clear, even though it is written on the form you have to be very clear with them that you're only going to be using their

story with their permission and that they will get copies of everything....It has to be handled very tactfully so that people understand exactly what they are signing (Transcript, July 11, 1995).

### **Copyright**

4. The storyteller maintained copyright to his/her story. The story is "loaned" to the Law Courts Education Society for this curriculum project. This principle was officially adopted at the June 24, 1994 NACTAC meeting when Ellen White brought a letter she had written recommending the storyteller maintain copyright of her/his story, and that the storyteller be able to use the story for other purposes. We had difficulties with one of her stories that she wanted used in the curriculum. A publishing company planned to publish one of her stories that she wanted the LCES to use and placed various conditions upon its use, even though Ellen held copyright to the story. Eventually, agreeable arrangements were worked out between Ellen, the publishing company, and LCES. The concept of lending the story for curriculum use resonated with members' cultural practices of giving others permission to use their stories, songs, and dances. In return, the owners expect acknowledgment of their cultural property, which is a form of reciprocity. This acknowledgment is based on respect for territorial and cultural origin. Copyright is a problematic term to use because it is governed by the market-driven business of publishing. First Nations who publish stories are caught in the complexity of copyright issues regarding cultural intellectual property. I think that sometimes storytellers use copyright to protect the story from being appropriated by outsiders or those who do not respect cultural protocol for knowledge. The LCES honoured the storytellers' cultural authority regarding their stories and did not have the ability to deal with any other

copyright issues. There were other major issues about using published and archival stories, keeping the spirit of the story alive, and questioning if and how non-Native teachers can ethically tell First Nations stories, that needed attention.

## ***Raising Issues***

### **1. Using Published And Archival Stories**

Some stories were used from printed sources, archival and other. We sought permission from the authors and publishers. Many of the First Nations communities have published their stories for educational use (e.g., Sto:lo, Okanagan, Tsimshian, Coast Salish, Shuswap). The use of published material may alleviate some of the concern from teachers about the appropriation issue of First Nations stories, and help dispell the concern that there is no material available to use. If First Nations people were involved with the publication of the book, it should show this through authorship, copyright, or introductory remarks which describe the extent of participation. First Nations involvement does not guarantee accurate and respectful representations. However, it does guarantee that at least First Nations had some power to direct the textual representation of their stories and their cultural knowledge. Storytellers who approach their work and story representation in other media with respect toward the story, with responsibility to share it accurately and in a culturally appropriate manner, with the teachings of cultural reciprocity, and with reverence may provide others with quality storywork. Their stories are the ones that teachers should look for and use.

Archival material, especially stories written by outsider professionals such as linguists and anthropologists, has raised concerns of misinterpretation and appropriation. After careful consideration, we chose to include some archival source stories to "tickle" people's memories and because time limitations prevented the implementation of the storywork process described earlier. Many stories have been "put to sleep" in people's memories. Talking about stories and presenting text versions helped to reawaken some story memories. One of the storytellers, Beau Dick, found such a story about his ancestral name in a book. The story also told about the power of his name which he was not aware of.

Personally, I think that this is a really important story of the way my ancestor was. It's interesting because I found that story in a book. When I saw it, I was really excited about it because that's my name. After I read it, I went to my uncle and told him about it. He also remembered some things about the story of Ga'akstalas, but he couldn't remember the whole story (LCES Grade Six Teacher's Guide, 1994, p.147).

First Nations community educators and storytellers might work together to bring particular stories that have been lost from people's memories, or taken from them, back to life.

## **2. Keeping The Spirit Of The Story Alive**

Noella, the project coordinator, goes on to talk about her feelings now that the curriculum is finished and in published format. The cogent need to keep the power—the "spirit"—of the story alive surfaces because for her the printed text seems to take the life out of the story.

Jo-ann: Are you happy with how [M's] story is used and put in the Teacher's guide?

N: No, the story has...lost something. I feel a story has a spirit. I [felt this when I] sat down with [the Elders]. [It was like] I was the first one to feel that tear or that joy. I just feel on paper that [the story] is so flat. It's so flat and it doesn't have any life to it. [I]t doesn't have the spirit and you need that spirit in order for it to have an effect. There are wonderful teachers out there [but] they have to be guided, but I also feel that there are people in the community who could lead them and share another special story for them. It's like [needing to bring] the curriculum to life (Transcript, July 3, 1995).

Being with and hearing the Elder tell a story gave Noella a strong appreciation and reverence for the story. The reverence and responsibility the Elder had toward the work of storytelling was also passed on to Noella:

I'd want to give reverence to the story like the way it was passed on to me. I came away with a feeling that I was in a sacred place. [N]ow it's my responsibility to pass that on to other people, but with the same reverence (ibid).

When questioned further about the textual representation of a particular story, Noella feels the storyteller is pleased with the text because it can help fulfill the storyteller's purpose for and responsibility of passing on her knowledge.

Jo-ann: Do you think [M] is happy with how her story is [textually presented] in the curriculum?

N: I would say she is because she said it's to be shared; it's for the children. And above all, the meaning that comes out of it, she wants that passed on. It validates all her teaching and learning as well because it was shared with other people; now it's going to keep going. It's giving life to all the people behind her (ibid).

The critical question of how to either keep the story spirit alive or make it live from the printed page remains. People keep the spirit of the story alive by telling it to others and



by interacting through/with the story. People inter-relating with each other through story bring the story to life as they relate story meaning to their lives. The written representation of a story may keep it from being completely lost through the passage of time, but the story is not the same as when it is orally told. The story on the page cannot replace the magic and power of the inter-personal interaction between the storyteller and listeners. A skilled storyteller telling stories to listeners is the best way to keep the spirit of the stories alive. Developing school curriculum with stories poses the next serious question.

### **3. [How] Can Non-First Nations Teachers Ethically Tell First Nations Stories?**

The need for teachers' contextual information about First Nations stories, suggestions for establishing working relationships with the community storytellers, and suggestions for story pedagogy was continually reinforced at the curriculum team discussions, the NACTAC meetings, and during the curriculum piloting experiences. The above question applies to all teachers (non-First Nations and First Nations). Subsequently, the introductory *Storyguide: Beginning The Journey* section for the *Teacher's Guidebook* and a *Teacher's Storytelling Video* were developed to give examples of pedagogy for the unit learned. The *Storyguide* introduced information about types of First Nations stories; an explanation of the term storywork and its approach; a few common approaches to using stories in the curriculum; some learning characteristics of storytelling such as listening and repetition; student learning skills that are enhanced through storytelling such as memory, research, reading, oral communication, writing, social skills, and imagination; and suggestions to the teacher for developing their storytelling skills and confidence

(pp.35-58). The *Teacher's Storytelling Video* introduced important aspects of storywork such as inquiring about cultural protocol, how three people learned to become storytellers, and making story-meaning and the role of metaphor. The conversational aspect of the video was to give teachers and community members ideas for beginning dialogue with each other about storywork. The storyguide, video, and grade level teacher's guides contain cultural teachings from storytellers about story philosophy, principles, and pedagogy. Anne Goodfellow shares her perspective of how she and the curriculum group approached this question, based on the principle of local school/community decision:

...[S]ome people feel very strongly that non-First Nations teachers shouldn't be telling these stories in a classroom, and that is fine. [That decision] should be made on a school-to-school basis. If a band school doesn't want or feel comfortable having their non-First Nations [teachers tell stories], then they could have a designated person come in and [tell stories] (Transcript, July 11, 1995).

First Nations communities have local education authorities and some are establishing committees that make decisions about methods of documenting cultural knowledge, which aspects of cultural knowledge are to be implemented in schooling, and selecting personnell who will teach or develop curriculum. Making these kinds of decisions is difficult and may be influenced by pressures from family, political groups, or religious affiliations. Ultimately, the community people know who has the knowledge and skills to tell and teach First Nations stories in the band school.

Anne reinforces the need to have contextual appropriateness for the story pedagogy.

When we received permission to use these stories it was with the understanding that they're going to be used in schools and not just First Nations schools, ...we have permission to use these stories for educational purposes and as long as they are used in an appropriate manner, then it is up to the individual schools to decide. They could get the Elders from the community to come in and tell the stories and then the teacher could do the exercises around that (ibid).

What is appropriate and who determines cultural appropriateness are questions that continue to surface. As the curriculum work proceeded, I kept thinking about these questions and another that Suzanne de Castell, a thesis committee member, asked me: Should non-Native teachers tell First Nations stories? How can they? As I revised this chapter, I wondered if the *Storyguide*, *Teachers' lessons*, *Storytelling Video*, and the planned teacher in-service workshops would really help teachers, particularly non-Native teachers, begin to use the stories in a culturally appropriate and respectful way. At least, these materials developed for teachers give some fundamental ethical principles and suggest procedures for working with First Nations community members. But they are only a humble beginning.

A lack of cultural sensitivity and not understanding how to make meaning/gain knowledge from First Nations stories create problems of appropriation and disrespect. On February 16, 1996, I attended an educational conference workshop where a First Nations community had collaborated with a public school district to develop a teaching unit based on some of their stories. A non-Native teacher and a First Nations educator took turns sharing their teaching material and experiences. During the session, an enthusiastic non-Native woman rhetorically asked if she could tell a First Nations story that she had heard recently. My fieldnote journal notes my gut wrenching reaction.

She didn't know anything about First Nations stories, but said she wanted to learn more. Actually, her way of telling the story was entertaining. But my stomach churned, listening to her, and watching her. Suzanne's question hit home: How could a non-Native teacher [ethically] tell Native stories? What bothered me was that she didn't know any cultural protocol: Whose story was it? Who gave her permission to tell this story? What First Nations culture did this story come from? She reminded me of a Coyote showing off some new found knowledge without understanding or respecting its significance. It seemed like her storytelling was more for her pleasure than for the benefit of others. She was appropriating this story!

If non-Native teachers and First Nations teachers are to use/tell First Nations stories ethically, then they must begin a cultural sensitivity learning process which includes gaining knowledge about storytelling protocol and learning how to make meaning/knowledge from First Nations stories. This learning process must be guided by local First Nations educators who possess the appropriate cultural knowledge and who are vigilant about keeping sensitive and sacred knowledge where they belong. Ideally, good First Nations storytellers should be hired to tell stories and collaboratively work with the classroom teachers on story pedagogy. The question, *how will the culture and the people be hurt by this work*, is both ethical and epistemological in nature. It needs to be asked over and over again as people engage in First Nations storywork. Conversely, the question, *how will the culture and people be helped by this work*, adds a proactive and positive approach to this difficult task. Others may question the inability of the public school system to accept the principles of respect and reverence that I have put forward, and the inability of non-First Nations to really understand First Nations ways of knowing through story. Public schools are limited in how they can address First Nations stories and culture and we need to accept that fact. However, First Nations people have worked very hard to

find a place for our culture in the school curriculum and they will continue to work hard to make that place better, for all children, and for First Nations children in particular.

The *First Nations Journeys of Justice Curriculum* is one attempt to re-introduce First Nations oral traditions into schooling contexts with better educational intentions than the earlier simplistic use of stories found in basal readers. The former provides learning opportunities that emphasize using imagination, thinking that extends beyond basic reading skills/comprehension questions, and learning concepts from stories that are complex. Just as First Nations have learned to use literacy as a “tool” for communicating and perpetuating oral tradition, First Nations are also using schooling as a tool for the same purposes. First Nations are now demanding more involvement and control regarding all aspects of First Nations education. The public school districts in B.C. receive “targeted” funding from the provincial government specifically for First Nations education, a condition of the funding is proof of local First Nations community partnerships with local school districts. With more local involvement, the study of First Nations cultures, particularly through stories, may begin an improved process of story appreciation and story learning. However, First Nations communities should demand that First Nations people be hired to work with school districts on curriculum matters.

### ***Giving Back: A Summary***

Storytelling honours and respects the individual and the group. Many Elders teach that one should not simply accept the outward meaning of a story as an absolute given. A story often has many levels of meaning to it that are revealed to the listener at different stages of life, when the time is right (LCES Teacher’s Guide, 1994, p. 40).

The curriculum developers, First Nations community storytellers, and educators who worked together to complete the *First Nations Journeys Of Justice Curriculum*, talked about the principles of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and reverence in relation to how they thought and felt about stories and how they approached their tasks of storywork. The distinctiveness of each principle fades somewhat as each inter-relates with another. At other times their differences create a beautiful synergy and they take on a distinct form—like a design on a cedar basket.

The principle of respectful relationships was developed and carried out by the Law Courts Education Society's curriculum staff in consultation with the Native Advisory and Teachers' Advisory Committees. Respect was shown through a number of ways: (1) the curriculum staff either worked with local community liaison people to contact storytellers or when more appropriate they asked storytellers directly for their consent to participate in the project; (2) the curriculum staff then travelled to the home territories of the storytellers to tape stories, conversations, and to ask advice about the contextual use of their stories; (3) the storytellers whose stories were selected were given written transcripts, a copy of the taped session, and draft copies of the story and accompany lesson to edit as they wished; and (4) the storytellers approved the printed text of the story and maintained copyright to their stories. Some chose to withdraw their stories. Storytellers also demonstrated respect to the curriculum staff and to the children who will be exposed to their stories by sharing cultural knowledge to enhance meaning and carefully portraying a story to the child's level of understanding. Practising respect in this manner is also a cultural responsibility.

Responsibility included ensuring accuracy of content and cultural appropriateness of pedagogy. Some traditional story approaches to learning such as contextual listening, repetition, presenting story in segments, leaving story for individual thinking and connection were developed throughout the unit lessons. Consistently following through with the ethical processes described earlier was a constant challenge. The large numbers of people involved, geographical diversity, time limitations, and cultural differences created various problems. The community storytellers also took on traditional teaching responsibilities toward their stories which meant that the curriculum staff had to be sensitive and responsive to their directions.

Storytellers showed reverence through prayer, songs, and the ethical ways they approached the work with the curriculum staff. Prayer or song helps to create a meeting place for the mind, body, and spirit to interact. Silence creates a respectful space for reverence. If one does not understand or agree with the concept of reverence, then she/he may just pass by this “stick” and not touch it.

Practising respect and responsibility in relationships with people and toward storywork led to a traditional concept of reciprocity. Amongst many First Nations cultures, one is taught to pass on what she/he has learned to those who are interested. This passing on of knowledge is a way of perpetuating it. Those who worked with the LCES group did so because they felt responsible for keeping their stories alive for the future generations. A major issue regarding reciprocity is that changes to cultural ways of making meaning through story may have epistemological implications. Because learners may know

nothing about First Nations stories, a certain amount of explication regarding cultural context and the story is necessary. Where does one draw the line between explication to lessen confusion and disrespecting the story and learner by telling them what to think? Elder Tillie Gutierrez of the Sto:lo Nation said: “You are helping them [children] seek out meaning and reason that lies within all things, to sense their own power and to develop the will to do what is right. If a young person has a problem, often times the elder gives them a story. The story does not give them all the answers. It shows them the way” (LCES Teacher’s Guide, 1994, p.8).

The community storytellers tried to show the curriculum staff the way through their stories. The curriculum staff shared their experiential stories and views with me; now I share them with you, although I have selected aspects of their talk for representation. I tried to be respectful in the portrayal of the LCES’s storywork experiences by documenting them accurately and in sufficient detail. I emphasized the need for developing respectful relationships with First Nations storytellers. These types of relationships often become friendships. Going out to the field to “talk story” takes time, patience, openness, and the will to keep talking with one another in order to learn how to story-listen and make story-meaning; none of this is unproblematic.

## **THE CREATOR AND THE FLEA**

AS TOLD BY ELLEN WHITE  
NANAIMO ELDER



*This story is about the Creator and the Flea, and the lesson we receive from them.*

The story begins. The Creator was so great, he was a very special person. He could take a human form, with long flowing hair and holding a long staff. He had five souls. If he was needed somewhere else, all he had to do was clutch his chest and bring his right hand forward, and there in his hand would be a soft little ball of fluff, like feathers, and he would blow it away. That was his extra soul, so he could appear whenever he was needed.

This one time he was attending a gathering in the hills with all his other people, but they were animals. The larger animals were helping the smaller ones. And they were going to gather food for the coming event, for everyone who needed food.

While he was speaking, turning his head about, he heard crying: "Huh, huh," and whimpering: "Sob, sob." It was sad, very very sad. It was his right ear that was hearing it. For you see, his two ears could hear different things. His right ear could tune into things a long way away, good for long distance hearing. His left ear heard things up real close. So he turned a little bit to tune his right ear in. Very clearly there he heard that very sad sobbing, just so sad.

So he said, "I am still needed here, but I must appear there also, where the sadness comes from." And he clutched his chest, and he drew his hand out, and he blew, and there was this little fluff. It was gone, reappearing miles away on the hillside, and there was water way down below.

And all these animals were running. They were going hunting for food for the evening meal. The larger ones were helping the smaller ones, the smaller ones begging for rides, and the bigger ones saying, "Come ride on my back. I am big enough. Come little brother, little sister." The bigger ones were directing their little brothers and sisters, the animals that were going into the water, such as seal, lady seal and otter. Otter was very good at diving deep for the sea urchins. Some were going for the mussels that clung to the rocks and were bringing them up. If any little pieces broke they would eat them, yes, they cannot waste any. But all the rest of the food they gathered was taken to the gathering place, where it was all shared out equally. Some animals brought along roots that they had dug for their vegetables, and some were getting meat.

The Creator was very happy to find that they were all still using one common sound, one dialect, one language, you might say, and yet they were also using the unsounded communication. They were looking at each other and sending messages to each other through the air. And the air was so smart, it carried their thoughts from one brain to another. They were nodding, laughing, talking, but these little white lights of communication were travelling and flashing back and forth.

But when the Creator turned around a little bit, and tuned in the sadness, it came in very, very clearly, very close to him: "Sob, sob, hhh-sob, sob." So he followed the sound, and when he got there, he saw Snail Lady sitting there in front of this pitiful sight.

Snail Lady was saying, "Oh, my dear brother, I love you so very much. I am big enough. I want to carry you. Why don't you get on my back?" She was talking to this pitiful little Flea.

He was so small, but he was dragging these little legs. He replied, in a scared, sorry little voice, "Stay away from me! Don't you come close to me. Every time you come close to me, your slime gets all over these things I am dragging, just look at them. And look at my feet! They are bleeding again, and the bones are showing."

But he was touching his knees. He thought they were his feet. It was his knees that were bleeding and the bones were actually sticking out. Those long things he was carrying along on the ground were his legs, and his feet. But he wasn't using them. He didn't know they belonged to him, and he said, "I even tried to get rid of them, but I can't." The poor thing just kept dragging these things along.

The Creator went closer to Snail Lady and Flea and said, "Oh my son, what have I done, what haven't I done?" looking straight at little Flea. "We must try and work together so that you can become whole. My son, you don't know all of you."

But little Flea squealed, "I know me, but who are they?" he said, looking at his legs and feet. The Creator said, "That's all right, my son. We will learn as we go along, we will learn. Each part of you belongs to one side. And all the parts when put together are yours."

Very gently the Creator sent Snail Lady away saying, "Go follow the others, my daughter. Tell them your little brother will be there with them soon."

But Flea replied, "Oh no, I will not. I am going to stay here. I want to die, that is what I want to do. I want to stay here and die." So he looked at the Creator and whined, "You say you are my father, but you are just standing there. Why don't you take me to that water, and hold me under until I am dead, because I want to die!" And he kept repeating, "I want to die, I want to die!"

But the Creator stood firm, and clearly told Flea, "My son, I don't take life, I create life. I help life be whole. We must start now. We'll start by doing something about you voice. We'll use that bush over there."

And in a pitiful little voice, Flea asked, "What's wrong with my voice? This is the way I speak all the time. There's nothing wrong with it!"

"No, my son," said the Creator, "that's your feeling 'poor me' voice, your 'I want to die' voice, that's what it is. And your eyes, they need working on too."

"These are my eyes," complained Flea. "They're all right. I can see."

"No, those are your crying eyes. You have cried so much, that you can't see as well as you could."

Flea looked up at the Creator, who looked so large to him. "You keep calling me your son, and you're not my father. You're too big and ugly. If I had a father, he wouldn't look like you."

And the Creator said to him, "I am your father, from far away. I am the father that helps to build, and I bring the message of the Universe that you are going to be very, very strong, and you are going to be a teacher to others. Now, crawl over to that bush, and pick some of the little buds and leaves. Chew on them and you'll rub the good juices on your eyes."

So Flea started to crawl over to the bush. Then he stopped. "Why don't you get it for me? You're just standing over there ordering me about. What are you good for anyway?" "If I got them, then it would be for me. But it isn't for me, my son, it is for you."

So Flea crawled over there, dragging those long legs, talking to himself saying, "Now he comes here ordering me, telling me to go over here, and here I am. I'm just dying. Why doesn't he do it?" He's chattering and thinking all the way over.

But the Creator knows everything little Flea is thinking about. When Flea got to the bush, he picked buds and leaves and began chewing. Suddenly, the saliva liquid in his mouth started flowing because of the saltiness and bitterness of the little bush. Then, just as the Creator told him, he chewed a little bit and spat the juices into his hands. Then he rubbed his hands over his eyes, and his eyes started feeling instantly so much better.

"Now, my son," said the Creator, "put some in your ears." Flea had as much pus in his ears as he had in his eyes. It was just dripping from all the sand, and everything going in there and infecting it. And all the wetness from his crying had gone into his little ears. So he put some of the medicine in there, and in a moment his ears felt better.

"Father, it feels better."

"That is good, my son. We have to work together. We don't want to stop the good energy flowing now, we won't break it. Now rub your hands together." And little Flea rubbed and rubbed his hands together, up and down, around and around, until his hands were sparkling with energy. "Now," said the Creator, "go over to that plantain and carefully pick some." So, still talking to himself, complaining, Flea dragged himself over. He picked some plantain, but he even moaned about that poor plant.

"Look at this thing! It's so ugly and dirty, and all covered in sand and everything, bugs crawling ..."

"Shake it then, shake it well."

So Flea did that, and surprise, off dropped the sand, and even the bugs scattered away. Then he put the whole plant in his mouth, so much that his little cheeks were just puffed out. And he chewed and chewed again, swallowing some. But he had a lot of juice in his mouth.

"Spit it on your hands now," suggested the Creator. So all this mangled pulp-like mush, he spat it on his hands and rubbed and rubbed.

"Put it on your bones. Those are your little knees, not your feet. Those long things you've been dragging are your legs. Way over there are your feet. Because you are so small, if you used them the way they are meant to be used, you would be hopping up and down, up and down, and you'd never be left behind. You'd be gone with your relatives."

So Flea started chewing, spat it on his hands, both little hands equally, and he started rubbing that plantain medicine on his sore knees. And it felt sooo good.

"It's stopped bleeding!" he exclaimed. His voice was already so much better, and stronger. "Father, look! The blood has stopped! It looks so good now!"

Next the Creator said, "I want you to speak to them, my son. Yes, those are your legs. Stick them straight out and way over there." So the Flea sat up with his legs stretched straight out on the ground. "Now close your eyes, and look at them. Look at them!"

"I can't even see them."

"You will," said the Creator. "You will, when you really want to."

Then Flea started to get to know his little feet. He looked at his knees, then his legs, looking all the way down to his little feet. He started to get to know them. He touched his heels and his little toes and he could feel them. "I can feel them, Father, I can feel them." He got really excited.

"Good, so speak to them."

Flea kept rubbing his legs, and then his knees and hands, making more and more energy. He closed his eyes and started to speak to his feet. "I want you to be so strong. I want you to hold me up. Please, hold me up. I don't want to be crawling all the time. I want to walk. Be part of me, please, be part of me." So he tried to stand up and he could all right, but after just a little while a-toppling over he goes. "I can't do it, Father," Flea whispered.

"You will," came back the reply.

"But I can feel my legs, I can," said Flea, "and my feet too."

"Yes, my son," said the Creator softly. "Try it again. I think you're not speaking to them quite right."

So Flea started again, energizing all the time. "I want you to be a part of me. Please, be part of me." He really spoke clearly to his feet and legs. Then all of a sudden, with real energy he sang out, "Not just part of me, Father, me, all of me, me, me, me!"

And the instant he said that, it brought him back to the beginning, when the Creator had said, "You don't know all of you." But now Flea was whole, just like he had completed a whole circle of discovering himself. He was whole now. He jumped up. "I am me, Father, me, I am all of me." And he jumped up and started to bounce. "Thank you, Father, thank you." Flea was so grateful.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Printed with permission from Ellen White and the Law Courts Education Society.



## CHAPTER SEVEN:COMING BACK

The complexity of planning and developing aspects of an Aboriginal story-based curriculum was examined in the previous chapter. Implementing this type of curriculum may present educational challenges to the teacher and the Aboriginal community as shown by the next two curriculum experiences told by Greg Sarris (1993) and Lorna Azak (1992).<sup>1</sup> The teachers in these settings would have benefitted from some guidance and direction from a skilled storyteller-educator like Ellen White. Her story-teachings are shared in this last chapter to serve as a summary of the storywork principles of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, wholism, inter-relatedness, and synergy. I end my thesis and chapter by coming back to one last Coyote story and to a Sto:lo way of “giving back and giving away.”

Greg Sarris (1993) shares a classroom story of a well meaning non-Indian teacher, Molly Bishop who tried to incorporate Indian values into her teaching because a reservation schoolboard member recommended it. Molly Bishop wanted to use culturally relevant materials and chose the story *Slug Woman*, to use with her kindergarten—grade eight Indian students. She found this story in a printed pamphlet, produced by non-Indian

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<sup>1</sup> These two curriculum experiences will highlight some implications for curriculum and instruction about students' attitudes towards traditional stories and the tensions between mainstream schooling pedagogy and oral tradition pedagogy. This section relates to educational implications for those who are looking for a discussion about implications.

Educators working for a local Indian education centre. I apologetically summarize the Slug Woman story.<sup>2</sup>

Slug Woman, a short, small, long-haired woman wanders around carrying a baby basket adorned with abalone shells, in the front of her body. No one is sure if there is a baby inside. A young couple has a baby son. The young man leaves home to go hunting, breaking an ancient law forbidding young men to go out until after the fourth dawn, after the birth of a newborn. He does not believe in this tradition. He has an encounter with Slug Woman, and ends up in a hollow tree with her. He begins to feel afraid and tries to escape. The young man runs away, but Slug Woman runs as fast as him. When he reaches home, he cannot stay because Slug Woman says that he belongs to her now. She brings the young man back to the hollow tree, whereupon he becomes very sick and begins to burn inside. She says: "When you don't believe...these things happen to you. This is why you can't go home." The young man dies.

The baby son grows up and overhears a story about his father. He tries to search for some clues about his father and finds the hollow tree and an abalone shell from Slug Woman's basket. The mother tells her son about his father's death and warns him: "Remember this well...as the sickness may be visited upon you when your wife has a baby. Don't go wandering around in the woods and do like your father did. Don't hunt deer, don't gather slugs and don't fish." The son believed this law and obeyed it. "His children grew up to

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<sup>2</sup> The story is not represented in its entirety, as Sarris (1993) published it because he criticizes the textual presentation as not being true to a Kasha Pomo way of telling *Slug Woman* stories. It would have been better if he had included an authentic version. However, he was not examining the validity of the story, but making a point about unwitting pedagogical use of a story. A story summary is given here to introduce the story and to have a context in which to place the discussion that follows.

be good. They had children who obeyed the laws of the Indian way. The family lived at Timer's Edge for many generations" (pp.181-83).

The teacher had a dismal response from the students after they read the story and in her telephone conversation to Greg Sarris said: "Most of the students hated the story....We couldn't even discuss it." They said: "There's no such thing as Slug Woman....That's all devil worship....I don't want to read about no savages....It's just like a cartoon. Not real. Something like Peanuts" (p.173).

At first Sarris recounts feeling anger toward the students for not respecting the oral tradition. But as he thought about their responses in relation to their cultural, historical, and institutional schooling contexts, he could understand their reactions. He questioned the textual story representation which was very different from the oral accounts he and these students heard. The language of the story was "flat" and told in a voice of an anonymous storyteller, very much like the voice/language of basal readers: "The story was about them [the students' culture] in a way that was not them" (p.192). He also questioned the influence of the teacher's lack of cultural knowledge and her reading pedagogy, which gave her authority over the students. Sarris infers that the students may have been angry and were rebelling against her authority:

Presented in the classroom context, the story tells the students what an Indian is (i.e., a person in a loincloth who eats slugs and has rules about the birth of babies and hunting) and that if they are not like this Indian they 'will be punished.' The story's authority is associated with Bishop, so perhaps in a variety of ways the students may have been challenging and denouncing Bishop at the same time they were masking their connections with Slug Woman. No, we won't obey you. No, we won't be savages. No,

we know nothing about Slug Woman. And that was the end of Slug Woman in the classroom. That was the end of the Slug Woman story (p.193).

Clearly the students should not be blamed for their negative responses to (mis)perceived “culturally relevant” curriculum materials. Perhaps the students were silenced, or angered, or embarrassed like Sarris and I and countless other Aboriginal students were when our cultures were presented by “outsider” authority figures in ways that were stereotypical, disrespectful, or that were “others” perceptions of “Indian.” These students’ responses indicate that we need to bring back storytelling in ways that respectfully and responsibly resonate with the cultural community of the students. For Sarris and his relatives, *Slug Woman* is an important story and is alive: “For my aunts and me the story about Slug Woman had significance. For us Slug Woman is alive. She is seen and talked about in the stories we tell to understand the events of our lives” (p.174).

In contrast to this negative classroom experience regarding students’ responses to an American Indian story, a B.C. First Nations graduate student, Lorna Azak (1992) had more positive results with a First Nations literature unit with her class of 26 grade five Nisga’a First Nation students.<sup>3</sup> Lorna was teaching this class while completing a Master’s education project. She used a variety of First Nations stories written by First Nations and non-First Nations authors. A local Nisga’a storyteller also came to her classroom to tell stories on one occasion. Students completed pre and post tests, wrote journal responses to the stories, and engaged in conventional learning activities such as completing

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<sup>3</sup> The Nisga’a Nation is located in northern British Columbia, north of the city of Terrace. The Nisga’a school district was the first and to date only British Columbia public school district run by First Nations.

language charts, class discussions, and art. The three main questions that guided chart and discussion activities included: (1) “Our ideas about the story, (2) What we learned, and (3) ....Illustrations” (p.37). The post unit responses indicated that the students learned “lessons or morals of the stories, respect for animals, elders, and other people, and how some things came to be” (p.41). The students listed the following criteria of a good story to listen to:

- is when the teller changes his voice in all different tones
- is told with expression and action [12 noted this]
- is if he might change the story and see what we say
- is if he says N’eesda [which means ‘carry on we are listening], and puts more detail in it
- is if it sounds like it is real
- is if the storyteller has lots of excitement and speaks loud (p.44).

The students questioned the supernatural or “realist” elements in First Nations stories in written form (similar to Molly Bishop’s class), more frequently than with orally told stories. Azak suggests that hearing stories from a well respected storyteller results in making the orally told story more credible, more real and that children in her class preferred the “natural and human factor of storytelling” (p.56). Azak’s example reinforces the need to have local First Nations storytellers in the classroom. Other preferred learning activities included listening to the teacher read stories, writing about the stories

in their journals, and drawing story characters, the Nisga'a crests, and petroglyphs. In contrast, students didn't like vocabulary building exercises and dictionary work (p.45).

Lorna Azak's concerns about the students' responses to First Nations stories centered around their unfamiliarity with making meaning from stories and understanding that "stories in the oral tradition have different levels of meaning and purposes" (p.56). She admits that "this distinction, unfortunately was not an extensive focus of this literature unit" (p.56). Upon reflection, Azak places the responsibility upon herself, as the teacher to increase her understanding of the nature and purposes of First Nations stories, and in particular Nisga'a stories, for teaching and learning. Some of the teaching/learning approaches that Lorna Azak used are ones that I have previously criticized. She also mentions the tensions she experienced between mainstream schooling pedagogy and First Nations story approaches.

I decided that I still have very much to learn about our stories, and that most importantly, our stories are very complex and cannot be treated lightly, and are perhaps not easy to teach with the same methods as most childrens' literature....the challenge we face as teachers in the public school system, that of trying to maintain a balance between First Nations teaching methods, and methods that we are also constantly reminded to use by education authorities. I was reminded that the skills taught in basic reading lessons, when used in conjunction with First Nations stories, should not overpower the stories so that the skills become the important aspect of the lesson, rather than the teachings in the stories (p.77).

Elder storytellers, like Ellen White would have been helpful mentors to Lorna Azak and Molly Bishop, to guide their understanding about the power of stories and to help them learn cultural ways to make meaning from stories. Ellen's methods of learning stories and

learning to go into the “core” of a story are valuable story teachings and involves an inter-related approach.

### ***Learning Stories: An Inter-Related Approach***

My talks with Ellen White reiterated the process of intimately knowing the story including knowing the story’s content, but also extending to inter-relating with the story to make meaning. When Ellen was asked how she learned to tell stories she recalled the use of repetition<sup>4</sup> where she had to repeat the story during food gathering activities. The children told stories “back” to the teachers to not only master the content of the story, but to show their understanding of it:

Well...sometimes they were on that story for...a whole tide, and a whole tide is about ten days...It’s a whole tide and every time we come in from digging clams,...we are still on the same story. We tired of it and they would always say: “Okay, tell it to me back. If you can tell it to me back as clearly; if I can understand what you are saying,... then you know the story. If you don’t, then it means that you don’t have the understanding (July 9, 1993 transcript).

Drawing parts of the story created a link to the childrens’ visualization and imagination skills. It was a beginning step to making meaning from stories:

They used to tell us to make a picture [and]...a picture frame in our minds and see right in there....That’s traditional, we draw in the sand, Granny always used to draw in the sand...they [the students] can visualize, [they] have a very keen imagination...you [are] tickling the imagination (October 25, 1993 transcript).

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<sup>4</sup> This form of repetition is different from the “needless” repetition discussed by Frank Malloway in Chapter Five. He talked about repeating words in one’s speech, to a gathering of people. Needless repetition according to Frank, does not add clarity or strength to one’s talk; it turns listeners “off.”

In response to the question of how teachers can learn stories, Ellen recommends more than just reading and memorizing the story. She believes that they first need to know the story using the method as she described above, then get immersed in the story: "If they just read it, they're just going to read it from page one to page two...without any input from them....They [should] start to read it, read a page at a time and [come to know] the story and [visualize] it, look between the lines, and go into the story themselves" (ibid). She gives an example of working with a teacher: "He had to learn how to go into the story. He had to let go of reading word by word. He had to draw a picture like that frame and do the whole sentence all at one time, instead of just going word by word" (ibid). Her description of visualizing parts of the story and having the listener get involved with the story by "going into the story" is similar to Sarris' notion of story/story-listener inter-relatedness, but takes it further.

By visualizing, the storyteller is making the listener or learner use their imagination. "You're making them work...to become one: [the] story and your thought and the visualization....this is [the same as] the picture in the sand granny used to draw. It was very important, [for us to] see" (ibid). In response the curriculum worker I was with said, "I've always thought when I work with stories and I try and tell teachers that the story isn't telling the children what to think or feel, but it's giving them the space to think and feel, I'm hearing you saying some of that." Ellen responds: "You're making them work for what they are doing" (ibid).



Ellen emphasizes again in response to teacher preparation that the first phase is to go within oneself: “[I]t’s also the first phase of training or going inside your own self. It says, ‘If you don’t go inside your own self, you will never learn what you want to be learning...you [must] open yourself and go inside and communicate with yourself’” (July 27, 1993 transcript). To go within oneself, to get self-understandings, one (including storytellers and children) must become humble: “...it’s teaching the child then to be humble. To be humble is when you get right into the core of what you’re trying to get across to them. That was part of the training of zeroing in. You have to be humble to get in there” (October 25, 1993 transcript). I have heard Elders from the Coast Salish Nations say that to be humble, one must practise respect and reverence.

Ellen also believes that it is important to coach the teacher, that is, work with her/him individually which is similar to her traditional training. Today, more than ever, teachers need traditionally trained storytellers to help guide them to learning stories and using them with respectful pedagogy.

### ***Teaching Children Through Storywork: “We’re going to lift all the little corners of it.”***

This is why I like this work that we’re going to try and zero in to make them see, and have them know that if they visualize a lot, their inquisitiveness starts overworking, imaginations and stuff like that, because it’s what Indian stories are - to awaken the imagination - to awaken the depth of your very soul (Ellen White, July 27, 1993 transcript).

Ellen uses a blanket metaphor to symbolize time to think, talk, and make meaning from the story. The blanket is a signal to the students that they are going to go “within

themselves” to think. She suggests telling the story a few times before having the children talk about it:

...they have to know that one day we’re going to...look at it [the story]. We’re going to lift all the little corners of it....To bring in their interest [say]...we’re going to talk about the story. We’re going to lift this end, and lift it and peek under there to see what is going on in there,...how about the crying underneath there [in reference to part of a story] (July 27, 1993 transcript).

If children need help in thinking about the story, then questions may help them. Ellen introduces another way of engaging childrens’ imagination:

always ask the students as we are going along, ‘Do you think this could be useful in our thoughts? Can we use some of it...as it is? Does it expand our thinking? Does it expand our magical thoughts? Because each and every one of us hunts magical all the time in our thoughts (July 9, 1993 transcript).

If a child’s response seems wrong or way off track, Ellen says it is all right to tell them and then to get them on track. She uses the circle analogy: “You got them right in a circle like, and they don’t usually stray” (October 25, 1993 transcript). The circle is the story context which creates a healthy atmosphere for inter-related and synergistic sharing of ideas and thinking

In response to my question about how children can learn to make meaning from stories Ellen’s reply is similar to that of Vincent Stogan and Ann Lindley who talked about giving the learners just enough to ensure understanding and to pique curiosity to learn more. This is also a developmental approach. However, she introduces the issue of student vulnerability:

This is where we call it- shallow stories. We go to the shallow stories and the stories that we can understand today....We were dealing with something that could never possibly happen in our time. But yet it still has a very good teaching, that we can use for youth today. So we give them just enough of a block [of a story] to understand.

[W]hen you are young you are very vulnerable, when you are young you are very imaginative, you imagine things so much-you fantasize- and I think that's why the old people gave them just a short block of story at a time (July 9, 1993 transcript).

When Ellen talked about the vulnerability of children, I remembered hearing the Sto:lo Elders say the same thing when the Sto:lo Sitel curriculum team continually and unsuccessfully tried to get stories for a plant unit for the grade four level. At first they said they could not remember any, then much later they said that they could not give us any because the ones that had good plant teachings were not appropriate for children to hear. They were inappropriate because they thought the information and messages of the story would harm them mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. To prepare students to listen to a story and to ease this student vulnerability issue, Ellen first sang a song then introduced a story to a senior high school summer youth group in the following way:

Stories were very important to the Native people. Stories go back perhaps thousands of years ago. We always ask why were these stories made and what we received with, we had to be taught. It was the only way that the old people can teach us. The story we are about to hear is part of these stories that are told to little bit older people.

Remember again too, there are always explanations, the lecture, in the beginning of the story instead of at the end. And we say: 'Why do they use animals?'....They said, 'If I was to mention a name and point at one of you I might be injuring you [and] the whole universe' (July 28, 1993 transcript).

The following interaction between Ellen and me reinforces the responsibility of the storyteller-teacher to protect the children and ensure that they can comprehend a story that is told to them:

....I think that it is the teacher's business, shall we say, to really watch what, how much they give to the students. When we tell [a story] to little kids it is just one very small section....It becomes a very light and short story....They said: 'You can't scare them.'

There are times when I am going a little bit [further than I should] and I can always tell. I start to get choked or [feel] something in my throat...That's the time to carry on in a different phase. You will know how to do that.

Jo-ann: Because you pick up from the people that that is as far as you can go.

Ellen: Right! As far as you are going to go. They said it is your body energy that is telling you that. Your trained body energy...because if you keep carrying on you [would really] scare...the student.

Jo-ann: That makes the storyteller's job really important because they are really the teacher [and should not cause harm to the student].

Ellen: Absolutely! (July 9, 1993 transcript).

In one session Ellen also said: "The story was told in a way so that the story became a teacher" (July 27, 1993 transcript). Having the story take on the role of the teacher resonates with my learning about the power of some stories. They can help one learn, heal, take action, and then reflect upon that action. However, if these stories are learned within contexts where the principles of respect, responsibility, reiciprocity, and reverence are not practised, then their power diminishes, or goes "to sleep" until awakened by those

who can use the story-power appropriately. The importance of teaching the younger generation the “right” or “proper” way of First Nations storywork is echoed in Ellen’s words:

It isn’t going to end and die at the student; this is what you’re wishing for, you’re hoping for. You’re hoping that student is going to...turn around and give it to somebody else, give it in a proper way, a proper phrase, proper instructions, and a proper way of embedding deep within their minds-how to do this- how to make that other person feel.

It’ll also feel that nothing of the...power of this story is...lost. Or else it’s going to be just a story. *The power of the story is gone if you are not teaching it the right way. It will be just a nice little story, like the white man calls a fairy tale, a myth, and that’s all it’s going to be* (emphasis added, July 27, 1993 transcript).

Looking to First Nations traditional principles will help preserve the cultural power of stories and ensure that story pedagogy is educationally sound and beneficial. Coyote has one more opportunity to learn this.

### ***“Coming Back To Coyote”***

Coyote still has his mismatched eyes, and he is wandering around. He is still feeling sorry for himself. Coyote has not learned to work the two new eyes together. He is travelling alone, feeling so sorry for himself, moaning away, and inside his own thoughts. He is not watching where he is going. And he is coming to a steep canyon. He keeps walking—not watching where he is going, and steps over the edge. The canyon is so deep, that when he hits the bottom, his body is splattered all over the canyon walls and ground!

A little while later, that Rabbit comes along and sees Coyote’s pieces. Rabbit shakes his head and decides that he can help Coyote one more time. He jumps over Coyote’s pieces four times and after the fourth time, Coyote becomes whole again. He thanks Rabbit for the help, and continues on his journey.

A version of this Interior Salish “community” story was told by Robert Matthew, of the Secwepemc Nation. Robert said that this story is a shorter re-telling of a version that is much longer. He believes that adaptations are allowed with this type of community story because it does not belong to any particular family or specific community. In talking about the power of story, Robert said: “The storyteller gives some ‘cues’ about elements of life, connection to land and community, to the storylistener. If you’re ready, you’ll get it. If not, then it will be just a story” (personal communication). Another time Robert told me that he thought the Rabbit was like an Indian doctor who used culture to heal, to help make people healthy in a wholistic way—spiritually, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. First Nations’ history of colonization has left many of our peoples and our cultures weak and fragmented. Cultural knowledge, traditions, and healing have lessened the detrimental effects of colonization. Cultural knowledge and traditions have also helped First Nations resist assimilation. I believe that First Nations stories are at the core of our cultures. They have the power to make us think, feel, and be good human beings. They have the power to bring storied life back to us.

Thomas King (1987) believes that: “Contemporary Native literature abounds with characters who are crushed and broken by circumstances and disasters, but very few of them perish. Whatever the damage, contemporary characters, like their traditional trickster relations, rise from their own wreckage to begin again” (p.8). Contemporary First Nations storytellers and Elder storytellers are like the rabbit helping Trickster and us become whole again, through the work of story. Janice Acoose (1993) reinforces this same point: “Many Indigenous writers maintain Trickster survives incredibly challenging experiences

only to live and begin again. Just as the traditional Trickster culture hero/fixer-upper survived great odds, contemporary Indigenous writers [and storytellers] are writing [and telling] their cultures back into stability and thereby assuring survival” (p.39).

What happened to Coyote’s eyes in his renewed transformation? At one time, listeners would not ask this question if they had traditional story teachings. They would know that another story would come their way, if and when they needed to know some answer to this question. Storylisteners would also know that only they could answer this question, and maybe they might realize that the question to be examined at this time is: “How does Coyote learn to use his eyes and make them work together?” Another time, the question may change to: “Will Coyote ever get back his original eyes?” In a recent conversation (March 11, 1997) with Robert Matthew, he said that as Coyote continues on his journey with the mismatched eyes, he overhears some birds telling each other about a party they are going to. At this party, Crow is going to let them play with Coyote’s eyes. Coyote begins to scheme his way to the party to try and get back his original eyes.

Lorna Azak’s reaction to the story about Coyote “coming back” shows the inter-related and synergistic process between herself as the teacher/learner and the story. She does not ask what Coyote’s eyes looked like. She is not constrained by trying to make literal meaning. She places herself in the story. Her meaning also resonates with the principle of reciprocity:

This story relates well to the feelings of many teachers who try to use First Nations literature, but when they realize how difficult it is, or realize that they may have approached it from the wrong angle, and who may begin to feel sorry for themselves, and wander around until they hit a wall and fall

to pieces. What we need to remember is that there is a wise friend out there who will help up put things back into perspective, if we listen to what they have to say, and learn from it....This story seemed so simple, yet so direct and profound....What struck me the most was how truly personal a First Nations story can be...a good story can reach into your heart, mind and soul, and really make you think hard about yourself in relationship to the world (pp.78-79).

My thesis has presented story possibilities to the question: “How does Coyote learn to use his eyes and make them work together?” The beginning chapters introduced Tricksters’ tensions about perceptions between story implicitness and academic explicitness. Traditional and life experience stories were shared to show the process of learning to make meaning from them. Some stories showed their structure and “power.” Life experience stories about learning from Elders in a research context and learning through storywork are my ways of giving back.

The principles of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, wholism, inter-relatedness, and synergy helped me get to the “core” of making meaning with and through stories. These principles may be a beginning theory of Sto:lo and Coast Salish storywork. I suggest that these principles must be understood and practised if Sto:lo and perhaps other First Nations stories are to be meaningful used in an educational context.<sup>5</sup> To end my thesis and this chapter, I needed to “come back” to the traditional teachings of the Elders

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<sup>5</sup> I do not want to generalize to all First Nations. I present these principles for other First Nations people to examine to see if they can be of any use to them for storywork.



## ***Coming Back To The Elders: A Give-Away***

To be an elder, you first have to be accepted, listened to, and not laughed at. You have to be a good speaker.... You always know where it's [knowledge] going to be in your memory, in your mind.... They always mention a basket (Elder Ellen White, 1994, p.107).

The dream<sup>6</sup> of going to the Elders and listening to "what they said" has come to life over the past four years through my research journey into the world of First Nations storytelling. I did not know at that time what they were telling me, but now I know.

During the research process I went to the Elders. Some were Elders from the Sto:lo and Coast Salish Nations that I knew; others I came to know. All I came to love and respect. A respectful, reciprocal, responsible, and reverent relationship was established with each Elder and even though time and geography creates distance, the close relationship stays intact. I take responsibility to keep coming back to the Elders<sup>7</sup>, just as Greg Sarris (1994) did in his learning with Elder Mabel McKay. She was a Pomo basketweaver and medicine woman who wove baskets according to Dreams she had. Mabel McKay's relatives told Greg Sarris that she had told them he would enter their lives:

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>7</sup> In the Fall of 1996, I discussed the seven storywork principles with the Coqualeetza Elders and staff. They generally agreed with the principles, but had some concerns about the English terms: reciprocity and synergy. Some had the notion that reciprocity only meant something like "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours," a term which they attribute to mainstream economics. Ann Lindley told me to tell it (the principles) to her "in grade two." The group's comments made me think about the English terms and the difficulty of the connotated meaning they bring from other contexts. As we began to talk about these principles in the context of storywork, the Elders were asked to think of Halq'emeylem ways of naming these terms. The validity of the terms would then be examined through the Halq'emeylem language. The characteristics of these terms also are considered part of the naming process. An example is the term "reverence." Amelia Douglas suggested "Xa:ls xexe" which means showing immense respect towards the Spiritual. Because of my time limitations for completing my Ph.D program, I cannot complete this validation task for my thesis. The validation task will continue and will form another story to be shared another time.

Mabel said you would come here. Seven or ten years ago. A while ago. When you weren't around here. Before you knew us. She described you, told us you would come and to take you in. It was her prophecy, her Dream. That's why Anita and I looked at you so closely when we first met you. Is he the one? we asked each other. Then I asked Aunt Mabel and she said yes (p.164).

Sarris then realizes why Mabel kept telling him the same stories over and over again when he was preparing to write a book about her life story. The inter-relationship between him and Mabel created a synergy of story threads that became a basket:

Things came together. It wasn't just her story she had wanted me to know. While trying to help her, while trying to trace her story, I traced my own. I had pretty much sensed this. But it was more than that even. It was a blessing, a miracle. Hers was a life that gave, a life only in the Dream. I had never known her any other way. How else could I write her book? How else but from the Dream, what I knew from her? Her story, the story, our story. Like the tiny basket in my shirt pocket, different threads, sedge and redbud, woven over one willow rod into a design that went round and round, endless (pp.164-165).

Before Mabel McKay passed away, Greg Sarris wanted to know why she had chosen him. Her reply reinforced the value of coming back in order to maintain a teaching/learning relationship: "Why'd you do so much for me? Why me?" She looked me in the eye and said, plain as day, *'Because you kept coming back'* ( emphasis added, p.165). Mabel also directed Greg Sarris' learning in her own way, despite his initial need to use an academic theme approach, which she readily dismissed:

Mabel, people want to know about things in your life in a way they can understand. You know, how you got to be who you are. There has to be a theme.

'I don't know about no theme.'

I squirmed in my seat....'A theme is a point that connects all the dots, ties up all the stories...'

‘That’s funny. Tying up all the stories. Why somebody want to do that?’

‘When you write a book there has to be a story or idea, a theme...’

‘Well, theme I don’t know nothing about. That’s somebody else’s rule. You just do the best way you know how. What you know from me’ (p.5).

Sarris (1993) tells what and how he learned from Mabel McKay. He and I have also learned to appreciate her way and not “somebody else’s rule”: “Don’t ask me what it means the story....Life will teach you about it in the way it teaches you about life” (p.194).

The stories presented in my thesis have taught me more about life and through the experience of doing story research and storywork, I have learned more about making meaning from story. I resisted doing an expositive thesis summary of the seven storywork principles. Each chapter has contained stories, others’ views/experiences, and my views/experiences about them. Each principle has a separateness which is like a long flat piece of cedar bark used for weaving a basket. As each piece is woven together, it may lose its separateness and become the in-between space that creates the background for a beautiful design. As the basketmaker continues, she weaves the same pieces together, transforming them into distinctive designs. In the Sto:lo Nation and Coast Salish Nations, people used to know who created the baskets through the designs. Each basketmaker had designs that were her signature and each design had symbolic meaning. Also, baskets had specific functions such as storing items; serving as water and berry containers, and sometimes used as a cooking container. I take Elder Ellen White’s lead by using the metaphor of a basket and I present a “storybasket” in which to place my thesis learning.

The storybasket that I and Coyote have learned to make comes from living stories and making meaning from them based on interactions with others, in particular Elders. My first storybasket that started from a Dream is not perfect. There are flaws. The next one may be easier or better because I have learned some principles and methods that I did not know when I started this one. I need to keep coming back to the Sto:lo and Coast Salish Elders to learn more and to have them check my “storybasket” to see if I am doing it in the “right” way. In Sto:lo tradition, a basketmaker gives her first basket away to someone who may find it useful. I give this storybasket to you.

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## **APPENDICES**



### SISIUTL: THE SCALES OF JUSTICE

by Gordon Hill, Kwakwaka'wakw

*The Sisiutl (a Kwak'waka word roughly pronounced SEE-see-yoolth) is a mythological figure of great power. It is a two-headed sea serpent, traditionally depicted with two heads extending from a central body and head. Sisiutl was said to guard the entrances to the homes of supernatural beings, and was so used as a motif painted on the fronts of bighouses for protection.*

The Sisiutl is a fitting symbol for the concept of justice, and in particular the scales of justice which have been incorporated into this design. The feather, the symbol central to the circle, is also another important symbol of truth and justice. Sisiutl is always presented in balance, the two extending heads of equal length and size; the scales of justice are also balanced, representing equality. Equality also means balance, and one of the main teachings that First Nations have provided to the world is that without balance, there is no harmony for the earth, for its peoples, or for society. The Sisiutl is also a very powerful creature, and must be treated with respect. This is symbolic of the power of justice, and the respect that must be shown for justice. Finally, the body of Sisiutl is covered in scales for its protection; justice is also meant to serve and protect society.

## **PHILOSOPHICAL RATIONALE**

### **WHY A FIRST NATIONS JUSTICE CURRICULUM?**

In order to survive in the twentieth century, we must really come to grips with the White man's culture and with White man's ways. We must stop lamenting the past. The White man has many good things. Borrow. Master and apply his technologies. Discover and define the harmonies between the two general Cultures, between the basic values of the Indian Way and those of Western Civilization—and, thereby forge a new and stronger sense of identity. To be fully Indian today, we must become bilingual and bicultural. We have never had to do this before. But, in so doing, we will survive as Indian People, true to our past. We have always survived. Our history tells us so.

*(Louis Crier, Cree, Alberta.)*

The teacher, even though having adult roles and responsibilities, is also a student. Indeed, for an enquiry process to work the teacher needs to see his or her responsibility as being a co-learner. A certain humbleness, like water, is a useful thing; a sense of exploration into possibly new and unfamiliar territory, a willingness to see things in a new light, to make new connections. These qualities are all essential responses to the words of Elder Louis Crier and the other Elders and leaders you are about to hear. In this opening we have attempted to recreate the thoughts, feelings and spirit that have taken us through the research for this curriculum.

In the spirit of the focus on oral traditions in this curriculum, we suggest you read the following dialogue aloud and find yourself involved in this journey.

#### **DIALOGUE WITH THE ANCESTORS**

The young people, all teachers and curriculum developers, walked with the wise ones, the wise ones of many voices and many faces. Their work had taken them on a journey with a purpose, one that required much searching, again and again, re-searching. They were looking for questions, looking for answers.

My people's memory reaches into the beginning of all things. If the very old will remember the very young will listen.

*(Chief Dan George, Burrard, North Vancouver.)*

The wise ones knew from many years of listening what lay in the young people's hearts. Yet it was important to hear the thoughts out loud, for the wind to hear.

"We are struggling to develop what we call a curriculum, a tool for teaching the young about the laws of what often seems like two worlds."



For thousands of years I have spoken the language of the land and listened to its many voices. I took what I needed and found there was plenty for everyone. The rivers were clear and thick with life, the air was pure and gave way to the thrashing of countless wings. On land a profusion of creatures abounded. I walked tall and proud knowing the resourcefulness of my people, feeling the resourcefulness of all beings. I measured the day by the sun's journey across the sky. The passing of the year was told by the return of the salmon or the birds pairing off to nest. Between the first camp fire and the last of each day I searched for food, made shelter, clothing, weapons, and always found time for prayer.

(Chief Dan George.)

"So, First Nations peoples lived as part of all creation, in harmony with the land, air and waters. They learned lessons from nature. How were these lessons passed on through time, from generation to generation?" the young people asked.

*Our peoples lived with the guidance of chiefs. We knew to whom we belonged, we knew all our relations. We knew our names, we lived our power.*

The young teachers stopped and gazed into a pool of water. Reflections greeted them. "We have heard you say many things."

*That is good.*

"Each person must know where they belong, their place in the world. And it is through encounters, actual living experiences, with the land, with animals

and with people that..." They stopped and saw again the faces in the pool, many faces behind and many faces younger, some still unborn, within: "...that one finds oneself."

*For many years our Nations grew strong. Like these cedars their roots were strong and true and rooted in the earth.*

In the course of my lifetime I have lived in two distinct cultures. I was born into a culture that lived in communal houses. My grandfather's house was eighty feet long. In houses like these, throughout the tribe, people learned to live with one another; learned to respect the rights of one another. And children shared the thoughts of the adult world and found themselves surrounded by aunts and cousins who loved them and did not threaten them. My father was born in such a house and learned from infancy how to love people and be at home with them.

(Chief Dan George.)

"This means then, that people looked after one another and needed each other to survive. They knew who they were and what was expected of them. Each person had a role and a responsibility." They thought about how important that was in their work together.

*Each person had a way of knowing their place within the circle of life. Each person learned that he or she had many gifts from the Creator and that one must make the most of these gifts for the good of the whole Nation. We learn from the Creator that a community is only as strong as its weakest member.*

## Philosophical Rationale

"You speak of a wheel of life and of the whole Nation. We are trying to develop a holistic curriculum."

*Yes. Each act of creation has many parts to it. We know this. The Creator put us all here together on one earth, not on many tiny earths, just one. And in each thing that we do there are many thoughts and feelings. And this is very important; there can be many choices about our actions.*

"So, we have freedom to choose what we do."

*This is why as humans we must live by laws, not laws to make us less but laws that help us serve our higher purpose. We marvel at how the creatures live together, how the earth has a balance. Each creature lives out its life's purpose in accord with the Creator's will. There is little choice for a tree or a bear. They must live and grow within the laws of nature. So must we, but we have to learn these laws for ourselves. We hold within us the gifts of all nature. We can be like a tree and root ourselves to the ground, and we can soar in our thought and feelings like the mightiest of eagles. But if we are only eagle-like we are of no use in our roles on earth, and if we are only rooted then we cannot fly to our highest challenges. We must develop all our gifts. That is our true nature.*

"This is what we mean by holism then. Seeing the whole wheel of life withing ourselves."

*And seeing ourselves within the whole wheel of life; recognizing kinship with the land, animals, people and spirit.*

"That sounds like quite a task, a lot of hard work."

*Yes, it is a lifetime's work, and beyond a lifetime. You see, everything works within circles, even time. Past and future can meet in each present moment. That is why we honour our ancestors in many ways, for there is never truly a death, only a change of energy. This we know. To us the number four is very important. The four seasons, four directions, four families of nature, four nations of the salmon people, four races of humankind. And the four elements of human wholeness; the human doing, feeling, thinking, and being.*

The young teachers puzzled about this in the context of creating a law curriculum. They asked: "But are laws not creations only of mental thought? In our Canadian legal system, laws may just seem to be thought up and written down. How can laws and law-making be spiritual, physical or emotional?"

Each of these aspects contributes to the wholeness of the next. If you are happy and healthy in your physical self, you can love yourself. People were taught to keep in shape, eat the right foods, and respect their bodies, not hurting them in any way. The people knew that this gave the best chance for the rest of your wheel to work. Because the native people knew this, every one of their rituals, custom and traditions complemented each other and were enhanced by this holistic approach to life.

*(Chief Councillor Leonard George, Burrard, North Vancouver.)*

"Where did these practices originate and how were they developed?"

Directions for these practices came from the Creator and from the human leaders and teachers, and the practices were all simple. The simplicity prevented a myriad of complications within the body and spirit. Activities included running, fasting, meditation, singing, dancing, sweatlodge participation, pipe ceremonies, and cold water baths. One tried to stay in balance with the environment by rising when the sun came up, working and playing in the day, and resting when the sun went down.

(Leonard George.)

The teachers thought out loud: "And so these prescribed practices gave an order to individual and community life, and of course even today we speak of law and order together. So it seems that the first need for understanding and practising laws is for a healthy body. We know as teachers how our whole ability to learn rests upon a healthy body. It is most evident in young children that their physical nature takes them into experiences to think and feel and reflect upon."

The tried and true rituals of the past assisted in maintaining health. They helped us to express our pain, sorrow, anger, or whatever. When we sing, we cannot help but sing with what we are

feeling. It will be expressed and, once expressed, it will not burden us any longer and we will be relieved of that negative. We are not meant to hold all our feelings inside; we have a great need to express in order to stay whole. (Leonard George.)

The young teachers remembered back to times, each in their own way, when they had participated in rituals and activities in which they had had balanced feelings, and the body felt strong and healthy. Those were the times that the powers of thinking were strongest. And they knew, as teachers and parents, that there was a certain path of development that children take. They first learn through movement and through the body, and most pain and joy is felt bodily. Then, children begin to recognize hurt and happy feelings, and in later childhood they can more easily separate themselves from their own feelings and think about others, about consequences, and about situations outside their own experiences.

*If one is healthy physically and emotionally one also tends to be in good health mentally. The mind is unlimited in potential.*

The holy people also taught that there are three levels of thinking and communicating. There is the conscious level, where we use our will deliberately to direct our thoughts and actions. There is the unconscious level, where we are aware of what we are doing but perhaps not aware that we chose to do it. The third level is the subconscious—this is the level few people ever become familiar with because it requires intense meditation

## Philosophical Rationale

and listening over long periods of time before you start to consciously receive the messages from this level. The holy people said the answers to life are in the second and third levels of our minds, and they spent the majority of their lives trying to reach those levels because it is believed that this is where God talks to us.

(Leonard George.)

"So, this then means that the mind, body and emotions were all in the service of this level of mystery, of the spirit. And if the laws come from the knowledge of the Creator, then a spiritual aspect to the curriculum is very important."

Without spirituality there really isn't anything else. To me, spirituality means believing in who you are, what you are, and practising everything that you've been taught by your elders—how to fish, how to hunt, how to preserve those fish, how to pick the berries, use the berries and traditional foods. That's all part of spirituality, because if you don't have spirituality then you don't have those things. Without spirituality what do you have? You are an empty shell. You're alive, but you're—almost like a vegetable. You're moving, your heart is ticking, but you're not really doing anything that is part of you. But if you have that spirituality, then you understand why you do the things you do every day.

(Past Chief Councillor Ruby Dunstan, Nla'ka'pamux, Lytton.)

The young teachers suddenly felt very thankful. This walk with the voices of the ancestors, and those who understood, had brought them closer to understanding the way forward and the meaning of this curriculum. Their insight into the reasons for the work provided the will to produce the best possible work.

And this is of course what you are doing for the children. You are helping them seek out meaning and reason that lies within all things, to sense their own power and to develop the will to do what is right. If a young person has a problem, often times the elder gives them a story. The story does not give them all the answers. It shows them the way. A story has many levels to think about. Each person who hears a story feels and thinks for themselves. In the old days stories were told many times over. That's how the people learned to listen. The stories are often teachings that tell about the way to live. The stories teach how to survive as human beings and how to respect, share and care for one another.

(Thoughts of Tillie Gutierrez, Sto:lo, Chilliwack.)

The curriculum developers smiled happily. "We are hoping that our work, in some small way, will help people not only to understand themselves, but also understand and live harmoniously in the changing world they are growing into."

In a collective society the structure of the society is based on love. We have great love for our children, for our grandparents. In this society there is no tolerance for selfishness, boastfulness, deceit or vanity, but there is a generous amount of forgiveness. Holistic healing thrives on the generosity of the mind, body, spirit and emotions. These four components must all work in harmony; each is dependent on the other. Love is in the centre of this mentality. It feeds only positiveness to all four. It is ready to forgive all ills, it is ready to plant new life through forgiveness, and it is ever so patient in acquiring and maintaining balance in a person. It may take time, but healing will come if the individual is ready to embrace it. The face of the Creator is painted on every leaf, it is carved in every rock and stone. It is our privilege to look for his face.

(Thoughts of Mureda Marshall, Miqmaq, Nova Scotia.)

To young people my grandparents always said, "You'll do all right if your hands are both full to overflowing." One hand could be filled with knowledge of the White man and the other could be filled with the knowledge of your ancestors. You could study the ancestors, but without a deep feeling of communication with them it would be surface learning and surface talking. Once you have gone into yourself and have learnt very deeply, appreciate it, and relate to it very well, everything will come very easily. They always said that if you have the tools of your ancestors and you have the tools of the White man, his speech, his knowledge, his ways, his courts, his government, you'll be able to deal with a lot of things at his level. When your hands are both full with the knowledge of both sides, you'll grow up to be a great speaker, great organizer, great doer, and a helper of your people.

(Ellen White, Project Elder, Nanaimo.)

## HOLISM: PRINCIPLE INTO PRACTICE

A curriculum such as ours is commonly referred to as a *law-related* curriculum. At the heart of a holistic curriculum is the study of the individual, the individual's gradually expanding spheres into other domains, such as family, community, and nation, and the dynamics of relationships between the individual and these other domains. Both traditional and modern educational practices demand that a First Nations approach include individual and collective relationships with the natural

world. Knowledge of self, others, and nature, as this knowledge relates to law, is essentially concerned with the juxtaposition and balancing of individual *rights, roles, and responsibilities*.

If our goal is to promote healthy individuals, then we must educate the whole person. We must also study and develop understandings about the whole person. In both the process of learning and the content of that learning, we must take a holistic perspective.

### OUR PHYSICAL SELF

We are born into a physical world with the gifts of our physical senses. It is plain to see that a growing child explores the world in a 'whole body' fashion. The work of the child is play. The more a child can experience and gain understanding in a physical way, the more readily he or she can develop ways of thinking and feeling about the world. For a young child, the natural and what we might term the *supernatural*, or the *spiritual*, are not so separate. In this way we are not only concerned with physical development for its own sake, but also with what is often called *psychomotor development*. Just as the Elders state that a child learns from encounters, educators such as Piaget, Steiner and Montessori believe that the child learns by acting on, within, and from his or her environment. This phrase might serve as the key for understanding the domain of psychomotor development.

One basis of this curriculum is the understanding that children move primarily in order to explore, comprehend, and adapt to their world, thereby gradually increasing control over themselves and their environment. This is particularly relevant to law-related education, for it is through physical activity that children discover *why and how things work, or don't work*. They discover through concrete experience that *laws are embedded in their daily activities and environments*. Therefore, particularly in the primary grades, many concepts are explored through experiences in and out of the classroom, and will extend understanding into family and community activities. Understanding the rules involved in such things as cooking and eating, crafts, games, dressing appropriately, playing music, writing a

story, riding a bike, shopping, participating in cultural ceremonies and traditions, interacting with Elders, friends, family and strangers, camping, building a fire, and gathering and growing foodstuffs, are all part of understanding laws.

In addition to direct experience, many activities involve role plays and simulations. These are forms of acting out situations, characters, and emotions. In the higher grades, students will take part in both scripted and non-scripted mock trials.

### OUR EMOTIONAL SELF

As stated above by Chief Leonard George, we all have a primary human instinct to express our feelings. First Nations peoples have always had the belief that an appropriate expression of emotions adds to the quality of life for individuals and communities. This curriculum provides many opportunities for teachers to explore with their students the expression and nature of feelings. The emphasis is on the experience of emotions within real, day-to-day situations. The students will have many chances to react to situations that they may find themselves in. The importance of recognizing the impact and consequences of emotions will lead to the ability to express oneself appropriately.

The validation and integration of the students' own cultural practices, values and environments will help build their sense of self-worth and self-esteem. The curriculum also focuses on the ideas of uniqueness and differences. The concepts and practices of *caring, sharing, and respect* for self, others, and nature are fundamental to a further understanding of law-related concepts and practices. Traditional First Nations values, such as helping one

another, will be encouraged in cooperative activities.

Children are no different from adults in responding more respectfully and carefully to things they identify with, and things that appeal to their innate sense of aesthetics. Therefore, this curriculum strives to involve children in a sense of co-creation and ownership, and in providing artistic and pleasing activities.

Oral traditions play a crucial role in nurturing the emotional strength and balance of a child. Through the active process of listening, the students respond with the full spectrum of human emotions, developing empathy and understanding. This emotional involvement, with endless possibilities for characters and events, broadens their horizons. Hearing stories from their own cultures and others strengthens the respect for different heritages.

#### OUR THINKING SELF

The ability to think clearly, to assess all aspects of a situation, to weigh the pros and cons, to form judgements, and to make appropriate decisions, are just some of the mental skills needed by an individual to take an active role in society. Our ever more complex, information-based societies require a myriad of skills involving decoding, memory, extrapolation, sequencing, and a host of other mental functions.

Traditional life has always honoured clarity of thought, and the superb oratory skills displayed from time immemorial are ample evidence of this. However, this emphasis on oratory does not come from one-sided intellect. Elders often express the relationship between speech and ceremony

in a spiritual way, such as *thinking with the heart*. Indeed, there are many stories that illuminate the follies of one-track thinking.

Trickster characters such as Raven and Coyote often provide good examples of too much thinking for one's own good. Their tricky thinking often backfires!

Yet the experience of knowledge is our treasured birthright. This curriculum consciously sets out to provide students with not only the knowledge of law, but with the ongoing survival skills characteristic of their forefathers. Suggested activities provide wide scope for comparing, analyzing, reasoning, predicting, and applying students' mental faculties to both real life situations, and real life simulations.

#### OUR SPIRITUAL SELF

Implicit in First Nations laws is the acceptance of a Creator, which is acknowledged by the Assembly of First Nations as part of its protocol statement:

*We the Original peoples of this Land know the Creator put us here. The Creator gave us Laws that govern all our relationships to live in harmony with nature and mankind. The Laws of the Creator defined our rights and responsibilities.*

In this curriculum, we have chosen to designate the Creator as 'he,' using a gender-neutral pronoun. The Creator was also referred to as 'he' by Elders in the stories we collected. However, if you feel uncomfortable with this in your classroom, by all means use 'she,' or any other suitable designation you know of.

### Philosophical Rationale

First Nations peoples have always known that all life, including human life, is more than the sum of its parts. They have always acknowledged in their thinking, feeling, and doing that there is a state of being that gives meaning and order to life.

This curriculum honours our *spiritual nature*. The goal is to provide opportunities for students to, as Ruby Dunstan states, "understand why you do the things you do every day." The holistic study of the ideas and practices of law is an ideal context for students and teachers to explore important questions of life. The search for the reason and meaning that lie behind natural and cultural phenomena can be a very practical one.

A common fundamental of spiritual knowledge is the reality of *interrelatedness*, meaning that life is a web of connections. This has always been known by First Nations peoples. Traditional laws grew out of this understanding. Thus, individuals acknowledged the rights of, and their responsibility towards animals, people, the land, and kin.

It is difficult to talk about physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects and activities as separate entities, for in practice they are interrelated in the whole person, as well as within the community. This curriculum follows a child's growing through a sense of dependence, through interdependence, to the desire for independence.

The involvement of all aspects of the family and community that impact on a child's life is important to the process of learning. Therefore, we encourage a partnership approach between home, school, and the wider community.

### DEVELOPING THE SKILLS OF INTERRELATEDNESS

Contemporary teaching methods have often only focused on the facts. There has been a bias towards intellectual skills, and this has continued to foster mechanistic worldviews.

A traditional, holistic education fosters interrelatedness. Students are encouraged to *observe, listen, and practise*.

In all traditional societies, storytelling has been used to enhance these skills. Stories act as a bridge between the child's experience and abstract concepts. It is the metaphoric nature of stories that produces the response of, "Ah, it's like that!" Metaphors place the concept within the realm of concrete experience, the real world of the child. In this curriculum, metaphors can be examples from the child's life or range of knowledge. In an interrelated approach, students are encouraged to actualize their own metaphors by bringing life experiences into the classroom.

One objective is to facilitate the skilful and holistic use of story in the child's life, using a wide range of story types. A good story, told in a living way, can be a very powerful, concrete experience for the child.

A metaphorical way of teaching is holistic. It constantly focuses on recognizing and understanding patterns and general principles which give meaning to specific facts. Each new unit, concept or theme is no longer viewed as an isolated set of information, but an opportunity to make connections.



## SOURCE OF LAWS

The ownership of territory is a marriage of the Chief and the land. Each Chief has an ancestor who encountered and acknowledged the life of the land. From such encounters come power. The land, the plants, the animals and the people all have spirit—they all must be shown respect. That is the basis of our law.

*(Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Chiefs.)*

The major agencies of social control are morals, religion, and law. In the beginning of law, these are not differentiated. Even in so advanced a civilization as that of the Greek city-state, the same word is used to mean religious rites, ethical custom, the traditional course of adjusting relations, the legislation of the city, and all these looked on as a whole, as we should say, including all these agencies of social control under one term which we now translate law.

*(Roscoe Pound, contemporary philosopher of law.)*

This curriculum looks at the source of laws and how these laws become part of human society. In First Nations, many laws are derived from human interaction with the natural environment: notions of respect, value, and responsibility, for example, may be seen as deriving from First Nations resource management. The quote from the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Chiefs above provides an insight into how laws are derived from the land; the one from Roscoe Pound shows one source of Canadian laws

from a time when law in the Western sense was much more openly related to other aspects of society.

Laws from any society are based upon needs perceived by that particular society. Because of this, the reason for a law should be apparent to anyone coming from that society. If it is not apparent, either the law is out-dated and no longer relates to current understandings, or the person encountering the law does not understand the aspect of society to which the law applies. Being familiar with "The Law," whether it is derived from First Nations or the Canadian legal system, requires an understanding of the *source* of the laws, which will in turn allow an individual to grasp the *reason* for such laws.

In this curriculum, laws are not simply taught: through activities included in the different teaching units, an understanding of law will stem from experience, either real or simulated, of the application of laws. Laws need to be understood, and that understanding will come from the acknowledgement of a need for the law because of certain circumstances. For example, many B.C. First Nations use feasting and ceremony to validate rights to, among other things, hunting territories. These rights are announced to all present to validate them, so that those claiming rights will have witnesses to their ownership. In Canadian law, if one wishes to buy a house or tract of land, the house is purchased and a deed is given to the new owner, validating his or her right to own the house and the land upon which it rests. The deed is like a witness in a feast. Both of these legal transactions have a specific need—to prove ownership. These two examples

### *Philosophical Rationale*

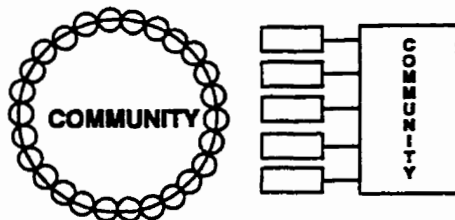
come from different legal systems. Demonstrating the similarities and distinctions between, and validity of both oral and written documentation is an important part of this understanding. The juxtaposition of these different forms of documentation strengthens the students' knowledge of both.

One must also remember that, although it appears that the curriculum makes a distinction only between First Nations and Canadian systems of law, it is very important to understand that among First Nations there are many different forms of traditional government. For example, some First Nations, especially along the British Columbia coast, had highly stratified societies with a system of hereditary chieftainship. Other societies had little or no social stratification, and some leaders might be chosen for a particular skill that they had, for example in hunting or spiritual domains. There were also various other types of traditional systems of government that fall somewhere between these two examples. Because of these differences, every society has different forms of protocol, norms, and ways of initiating social interaction. One curriculum cannot cover the entire region of British Columbia, and so each community is encouraged to investigate within its own area the forms that traditional government took. Research into these could provide the basis for major projects at the intermediate levels.

Canadian laws are also derived from a long history, being a culmination and continuous reform of laws from ancient Babylon, The Ten Commandments, Greek and Roman law, and British law. Within this long history there have been many changes.

Some laws are rooted in an era in which there was little separation between Church and State, something that we take for granted now. For example, the law against Sunday shopping, which no longer exists in British Columbia but does in many other provinces, goes back to the Bible where it is stated that the Sabbath is a day of rest. This law is based on a very old Judeo-Christian ethic.

So we can see that, although at first glance notions of justice from the point of view of First Nations and the Canadian legal systems seem miles apart, there really are many parallels between them. Why do they seem to be so far apart? One reason might be that the Canadian legal system has been separated from the rest of normal, everyday living, and much of how it works cannot be understood by the average person. As exemplified by the opening quote of Roscoe Pound, law has become so far removed from everyday living that we need a lawyer to represent us in a court of law, someone who understands how the system works. On the other hand, among First Nations traditional laws remain a part of everyday life. According to Judge Douglas Campbell, the difference between First Nations and northern European systems of justice can be illustrated graphically:



Rather than having justice as part of the internal structure of the community, as in First Nations societies, communities in northern European culture created external structures to carry out the work that needed to be done in the area of justice. Thus, the system of justice is *external* to the community, rather than *internal*. This is the model that was imported to Canada. Respect must be shown for both systems, and our task, the theme of the curriculum, is to build bridges of understanding between the two.

An attempt is made to explore these differences in the curriculum in order to bridge this perceived gulf between the two systems. This will show that, rather than being at odds with each other, the two systems can co-exist in harmony because of shared basic values of fairness, responsibility, safety, and cooperation. In a

more practical sense, the curriculum can play a part in the empowerment all people - First Nations and non-First Nations students and communities - to survive in an ever-changing world by becoming familiar with both systems, and realizing the value of and similarities between both.

I'd advise young people to complete their education in this system that we're facing now and to speak to our elders. That would make a solid foundation for them, and then they could reach out a little bit further. They would have their roots, which are solid, deep, and strong as well as a White education. I think that is what I would tell young people.

(Chief Alan Wilson, Haida, Masset.)

## INDIAN CONTROL OF INDIAN EDUCATION

We must reclaim our right to direct the education of our children. Based on two education principles recognized in Canadian society, Parental Responsibility and Local Control of Education, Indian parents seek participation and partnership with the Federal Government, whose legal responsibility for Indian education is set by the treaties and the Indian Act.

First Nations declare their jurisdiction over the education of their people. Each First Nation will define a philosophy of education that is culturally appropriate for their own people. Each First Nation will determine the resources needed for

quality education as defined by the First Nation.

First Nations education is a holistic approach that incorporates a deep respect for the natural world with the physical, moral, spiritual, and intellectual development of the individual. First Nations language and cultural values are taught and enhanced through education. The education process actively involves the parents.

(Assembly of First Nations.)

These quotes, and those that follow, are from the *Assembly of First Nations*, previously known as the *National Indian*

## Philosophical Rationale

*Brotherhood*. A document put out by this organization in 1972, the *Indian Control of Indian Education* policy paper, provided the first comprehensive educational statement by First Nations peoples from across the country to reassert their role in the education process.

### BACKGROUND TO INDIAN CONTROL OF INDIAN EDUCATION

Historically, the education system of First Nations was characterized by community involvement in showing the appropriate roles to its younger members. The responsibility for education was carried out by the extended family, clan or band which prepared young people for adulthood. This guidance allowed young people to actualize their emotional, social, physical, intellectual and spiritual competencies and potentials. In other words, the process of informal education brought the whole community together to assist in the upbringing of its young people.

Later, the actions of both the federal government and religious orders within Canada worked to disintegrate First Nations families. The goal of the religious orders was to transform First Nations people into "civilized" and "christianized" members of society. Educational institutions such as the residential schools negated the culture and language of its students: parental responsibility and local community control were non-existent.

Toward the end of the 1950s, the federal government ceased operations of some residential schools and established day-schools on some First Nations reserves. These schools were operated by various religious groups, and the school curriculum was limited to religious instruction, the basics of reading and math, and tasks for

men and women around the home. After these day-schools were built, the government provided for the integration of First Nations children into provincial schools. This forced some First Nations students to attend school off their reserves, with some living with non-First Nations families in urban areas. The federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs controlled all education matters for First Nations peoples. The integration policy did not allow for parent participation in the decision-making process.

Then, some First Nations leaders from across Canada began action to publicize their concerns about the unjust treatment of their people. Following this, a Standing Committee on Indian Affairs released a number of research findings about the state of First Nations education in Canada. Verna Kirkness provides us with a list of these findings which include the following: a high drop-out rate among students; high unemployment rates on reserves; a subtractive school curriculum which lacked content relevant to First Nations students; a lack of recognition for First Nations contributions to the history of Canada; a lack of cross-cultural training for teachers; a perceived age-grade retardation among First Nations students which was actually due to the irrelevant curriculum and the language factor; and a lack of communication between officials and parents about the transfer of their children to provincial schools.

The federal government continued to make policy for First Nations people, and in 1969 the Liberal government proposed what has been termed the "White Paper." The main focus of this document was the elimination of the special status of First Nations people. In response to this the *National Indian*

*Brotherhood* devised an education statement made in consultation with First Nations across the country, which became the *Indian Control of Indian Education* policy paper given official recognition by the federal government.

Two significant principles arise out of the document: parental responsibility and local control, which includes community involvement. The document states:

*The National Indian Brotherhood is confident that it expresses the will of the people it represents when it adopts a policy based on two fundamental principles of education in a democratic country, i.e.:*

- *parental responsibility, and*
- *local control.*

This document recognizes that in order for First Nations control of education to be feasible, there must be support and guidance from parents and others in First Nations communities.

#### PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

*We want education to provide the setting in which our children can develop the fundamental attitudes and values which have an honoured place in Indian tradition and culture. The values which we want to pass on to our children, values which make our people a great race, are not written in any book. They are found in our history, in our legends and in the culture. We believe that if an Indian child is fully aware of the important Indian values he will have reason to be proud of our race and of himself as an Indian.*

Parental involvement is deemed essential when viewing the past practice of First Nations children being taken away from their parents to be raised in the residential schools. First Nations parents have the educational goal of preparing their children for life in modern society while building on cultural identity.

Both these principles exist in Canadian society and now First Nations parents are affirming their right to partake in the educational process, including the setting of educational goals. The *Indian Control of Indian Education* policy goes further to state that only the parents of First Nations students know what values they want taught to their children. In order for parents' responsibility to be a reality in the educational process, this document maintains that the federal government has to support this partnership.

#### LOCAL CONTROL OF EDUCATION

*We do not regard the educational process as an "either or" operation. We must have the freedom to choose among many options and alternatives. Decisions on specific issues can be made only in the context of local control of education. We uphold the right of the Indian Bands to make these specific decisions and to exercise their full responsibility in providing the best possible education for our children.*

Local control of education means that First Nations communities have the right to determine the educational goals and outcomes for their children. Only in this way will First Nations communities begin to effect change in their children's education. The following are important

### *Philosophical Rationale*

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aspects of local control: making decisions in the area of teacher training, having a say in the building of school facilities, and defining the school curriculum. The responsibility for all these areas of concern requires local control that respects the culture, values, philosophy and above all the visions of a community.

Today, more than twenty years after this policy document, many First Nations are implementing their own programs and administering their own educational systems. In British Columbia, there are many band-controlled schools funded mainly by Indian and Northern Affairs. In these schools, the provincial B.C. core curriculum is followed, along with a cultural curriculum.

## **SCOPE AND SEQUENCE**

### ***Kindergarten - "Who Am I?"***

#### **Unit 1 - The Gifts of My Body**

Lesson One:	From Home to Kindergarten
Lesson Two:	All of Me: A Story Introduction
Lesson Three:	All of Me: Not Alone
Lesson Four:	The Whole Story: All of Flea, All of Me
Lesson Five:	Beginning to be Responsible: Cleaning Up
Lesson Six:	Learning All About Myself: "A Gift from the Creator"
Lesson Seven:	Discovering the Need to Know Ourselves
Lesson Eight:	I Know How!

#### **Unit 2 - Rules are for Caring**

Lesson One:	"The Grandchild Who Melted"
Lesson Two:	"Follow the Rule" Game
Lesson Three:	Caring Rules
Lesson Four:	My Home, My Family, My Rules
Lesson Five:	I Stand Up for School Rules!
Lesson Six:	Singing Our Rules
Lesson Seven:	Our Fingers Know the Rules
Lesson Eight:	Avoiding Accidents: Being Safe

#### **Unit 3 - Share, Care, and Fair: The Kindergarten of Justice**

Lesson One:	"The Mischievous Cubs"
Lesson Two:	Sharing is a Good Thing to Do
Lesson Three:	Is it Fair?
Lesson Four:	Keeping it Fair

*Scope and Sequence*

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**Grade One - "Growing and Learning"**

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**Unit 1 - Responsibility for Me**

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Lesson One:	"The Creator and the Flea": Part 1
Lesson Two:	"The Creator and the Flea": Part 2
Lesson Three:	Growing and Learning
Lesson Four:	Taking Responsibility for My Own Learning
Lesson Five:	I am a Gift from the Creator
Lesson Six:	Rediscovering Myself and Others
Lesson Seven:	Trust: A Circle of Friends
Lesson Eight:	Higher Trusting: A Real Responsibility

**Unit 2 - Why We Have Names**

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Lesson One:	The Story of My Name
Lesson Two:	Name Stories
Lesson Three:	What Would We Do Without Names?
Lesson Four:	Red Rover
Lesson Five:	To be Named is an Honour: Part 1
Lesson Six:	To be Named is an Honour: Part 2
Lesson Seven:	Respecting Names
Lesson Eight:	Everyone Gets a Birth Certificate

**Unit 3 - What Do I Need to Grow?**

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Lesson One:	A Circle of Needs and Wants
Lesson Two:	Gratitude and Respect
Lesson Three:	Learning the Lesson: Hulitun' Changes
Lesson Four:	Coming Home: Hulitun' is Happy
Lesson Five:	Rights of the Individual



## ***Grade Two - "Home, School, and Community"***

### **Unit 1 - Rules and Contracts**

Lesson One:	Beginning a New School Year
Lesson Two:	Good Rules and the Game
Lesson Three:	Simon Says
Lesson Four:	Rules Keep Things Fair
Lesson Five:	What are Good Rules?
Lesson Six:	I Think These are Good Rules
Lesson Seven:	Promises and Agreements
Lesson Eight:	Spoken and Written Agreements
Lesson Nine:	Our Contract: "We Agree to ..."

### **Unit 2 - My Unique Self**

Lesson One:	Flea Discovers Himself
Lesson Two:	"Me Dolls"
Lesson Three:	My Sensible Self
Lesson Four:	A Special Sense of the World
Lesson Five:	Making Sense: Common Sense
Lesson Six:	What's Fair?

### **Unit 3 - Caring Rules**

Lesson One:	Care Starts at Home
Lesson Two:	Showing We Care
Lesson Three:	Sharing is Like Caring
Lesson Four:	School is a Caring Place
Lesson Five:	A Caring Community
Lesson Six:	Community Helpers: The Police
Lesson Seven:	What Do the Police Do?
Lesson Eight:	Rules are for Safety

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### **Scope and Sequence**

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## **Grade Three - "Looking to the Future"**

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### **Unit 1 - Rules and Initiation**

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Lesson One:	I Know the Rules!
Lesson Two:	"Mink and the Sun"
Lesson Three:	Exploring Promises and Agreements
Lesson Four:	Can We Agree?
Lesson Five:	Making Contracts
Lesson Six:	Doing Things the Right Way
Lesson Seven:	Rites of Passage
Lesson Eight:	Laws and Nature

### **Unit 2 - Enforcing Rules and Laws**

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Lesson One:	Authority and Responsibility
Lesson Two:	Learning More About the Police
Lesson Three:	Introduction to the Young Offenders Act
Lesson Four:	Tribal Police

### **Unit 3 - Justice Careers**

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Lesson One:	Police Officers
Lesson Two:	Fisheries and Conservation Officers
Lesson Three:	Lawyers and Judges
Lesson Four:	Courtworkers
Lesson Five:	Social Workers
Lesson Six:	MPs and MLAs

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**Grade Four - "What are My Responsibilities?"**


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**Unit 1 - Introduction to Conflict Resolution**


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Lesson One:	Taking Responsibility for Me
Lesson Two:	Me and You
Lesson Three:	Compromise: The Best Solution
Lesson Four:	Coyote and Grizzly Bear: Dramatizations 1
Lesson Five:	Coming to Agreement: The Dance of Balance
Lesson Six:	Coyote and Grizzly Bear: Dramatizations 2
Lesson Seven:	Defining Conflict Resolution
Lesson Eight:	Peaceful Resolutions
Lesson Nine:	Dealing with Anger

**Unit 2 - Responsibility Circles and Law-Making**


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Lesson One:	What are Responsibility Circles?
Lesson Two:	How are Laws Made?
Lesson Three:	Classroom 'Laws'
Lesson Four:	Why do We have Rules and Laws?
Lesson Five:	Rights of the Individual: Due Process
Lesson Six:	Band Councils

**Unit 3 - Youth Councils**


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Lesson One:	Introduction to Youth Councils
Lesson Two:	Running for Office
Lesson Three:	Class Elections
Lesson Four:	Solving Conflicts
Lesson Five:	Special Projects: In Your Community

## ***Grade Six - "Journeys of Understanding"***

### **Unit 1 - Understanding the Court System**

Lesson One:	Why do We Need Courts?
Lesson Two:	Case Scenarios: Resolving Conflicts - Part 1
Lesson Three:	Case Scenarios: Resolving Conflicts - Part 2
Lesson Four:	What is Civil Law?
Lesson Five:	What is Criminal Law?
Lesson Six:	Is it Criminal or Civil?
Lesson Seven:	Courts in British Columbia
Lesson Eight:	Introduction to Mock Trials
Lesson Nine:	Mock Trial: <i>Regina vs. Raven</i>

### **Unit 2 - You and the Law**

Lesson One:	The Young Offenders Act
Lesson Two:	Roles: People, Institutions, and You
Lesson Three:	The Salmon People's Court: Introduction
Lesson Four:	The Salmon People's Court: Discussion
Lesson Five:	The Salmon People's Court: Preparation
Lesson Six:	The Salmon People's Court: Going to Trial
Lesson Seven:	Case Study: Local Solutions - The Frank Brown Story

### **Unit 3 - First Nations Legal Structures**

Lesson One:	Introduction to Elders Councils
Lesson Two:	Elders Council Drama Preparation
Lesson Three:	Dramatization of an Elders Council
Lesson Four:	What Works Best?
Lesson Five:	Are there Other Alternatives?

## ***Scope and Sequence***

### ***Grade Five - "What are the Laws of My Community and Nation?"***

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#### **Unit 1 - The Beginnings of My Community**

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Lesson One:	Introduction: Creation Story
Lesson Two:	Creation Story: Dramatization
Lesson Three:	Origins and Naming
Lesson Four:	How My Community Works Together
Lesson Five:	People in My Community
Lesson Six:	Why My Community Needs Customs, Rules, and Laws

#### **Unit 2 - Customs, Rules, and Laws**

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Lesson One:	More on Customs
Lesson Two:	How do Customs become Rules and Laws?
Lesson Three:	Customs to Common Law
Lesson Four:	Changing Law
Lesson Five:	What is Family Law?
Lesson Six:	What is Consumer Law?
Lesson Seven:	Law and Daily Life

#### **Unit 3 - Breaking the Law**

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Lesson One:	What Happens When You Break the Law?
Lesson Two:	Getting Arrested
Lesson Three:	Introduction to the Courts
Lesson Four:	After Court: Detention Centres
Lesson Five:	Alternatives to Court
Lesson Six:	First Nations Alternatives: An Introduction

## TEACHER'S GUIDE - INTRODUCTION

### THE FOUNDATIONS OF A JUSTICE CURRICULUM

From an educational perspective, the goals of a justice curriculum are twofold:

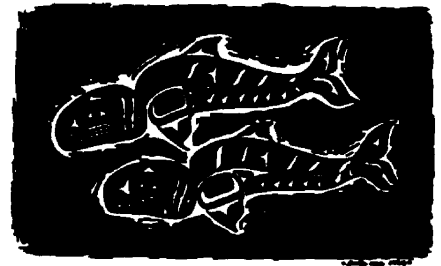
First, we must teach students concepts of justice. The concepts of justice that we have identified as being important to First Nations and non-First Nations are sharing, reciprocity, cooperation, respect, rights, the importance of caregivers, harmony, interdependence, honour, and balance.

Second, these justice concepts must be articulated in such a way that they are practical and useable by students. How do these concepts translate into people's lives? We have identified four areas within which students can apply these concepts to their real world, and these are:

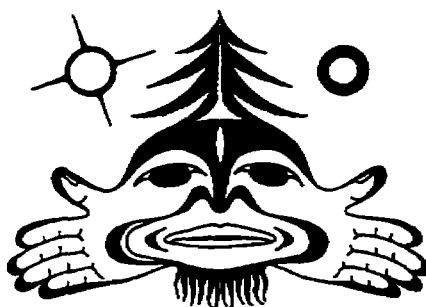
- being safe,
- being responsible,
- being fair, and
- getting along.

For example, among many First Nations the concept of sharing is directly related to the justice concept of responsibility. In a sharing community, no one goes without. It is the community's responsibility to provide for its members. Another example might be that cooperation is the basis of conflict resolution, or getting along.

All of the activities in the curriculum contain at least one element of these four fundamental justice themes. To highlight this in a visual way, a different graphic image for each of these four themes appears at the beginning of each lesson in the textbook. This way, teachers will know at a glance which justice themes that particular lesson focuses on.



For the theme of getting along, we have used an image of two salmon swimming together by Gordon Hill, a Kwakwaka'wakw artist. The salmon represents the primary food source for many First Nations of B.C. The community of the salmon reflects the communities of people who must get along together in their everyday lives. Cooperation must happen within a community in order for that community to survive.



Jeff McNeil-Bobb, a Sto:lo artist, designed the image for the theme of being safe. The sun, the moon, and the cedar tree provide everything that we need in life. The hands welcome you in, symbolizing the safety and warmth of people who care about one another.



For being responsible, the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council has provided an image of a pictograph of a bear. This is used to illustrate responsibility, because pictographs are used as a sign of respect for animals that give themselves as food. This is being responsible since it shows this respect, which ensures that the animals will keep coming back. Bernie McQuary, a Carrier Elder, tells us that one of the rules of being Carrier is to "Respect all animals at all times."

Ron Hall, an Okanagan artist, provided the image to illustrate being fair. The seven feathers in this image represent the seven Bands of the Okanagan Nation. Eagle is a messenger who represents strength and guidance. The pipes are used by Okanagan people in seeking higher powers and sacredness. The bars leading from the



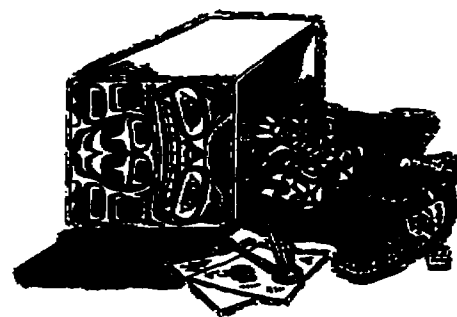
main symbols represent the different paths of life we must follow. The two human figures are the equality of male and female. All of these are important considerations in the concept of fairness. As a group of people walking the path of life, we need to recognize the different paths individuals may walk. In troubled times we encounter difficulties, and often the question of what is fair arises. In these difficulties, we may be hard on each other, in our quest for fairness. So, it is in these times that we need to reach to our higher power for strength, guidance, and wisdom to make decisions that are fair for everyone. We must not only think of ourselves, but of the feelings of others. And we must always remember, no matter what, tomorrow will bring a new day.

These images illustrate the concepts of justice that we wish to impart to students.

## CURRICULUM FORMAT

Each grade contains three separate units, which should be done in order, as concepts and stories previously introduced are often reviewed in the later units. Each unit has an overview which explains the major focus of the lessons, along with the goals of the unit and additional information required for teaching it.

Each lesson has its own objectives and core activities. Often there are *Extension Activities*, which are additional activities that further understanding of the objectives. Teachers are advised to read over the entire unit before beginning it in order to see what activities you feel may be appropriate for your class. The time given for the completion of the lesson is for the core activities only. *Extension Activities* will take additional time. You



should also be flexible in the core activities as well, since they may take more or less time than that indicated, depending on the teacher and the class.

Finally, although the lessons provide several ideas for activities, we encourage all teachers to be creative, and adapt them to suit the requirements and capabilities of your own particular class.



## APPENDIX C

The Coqualeetza Elders Group has been working with Jo-ann Archibald since 1976. We have watched her go from a classroom teacher to working with NITEP (Native Indian Teacher Education Program) to getting her Masters Degree. Through all this, she never forgets about us. She still talks to us at our level. Whenever we need her advice with the curriculum, all we have to do is ask and she comes.

We would like to thank Jo-ann for checking things out with us before she writes them down. We think a lot of Jo-ann because she has shown great respect in getting the right information. She listens carefully with an open heart and an open mind. We thank Jo-ann for her hard work and hope that the knowledge she shares with others will also be treated with respect and honoured for the truth it is.

Our hands are lifted up to you Jo-ann. We are so proud of you and your work.

### Coqualeetza Elders Council

R. Point  
Siyolewethet (Roy Point)  
President

Amelia Douglas  
Siyamiya (Amelia Douglas)

Ann Lindley  
Ann Lindley  
Vice-President

Pat Campo  
Kwostelot (Pat Campo)

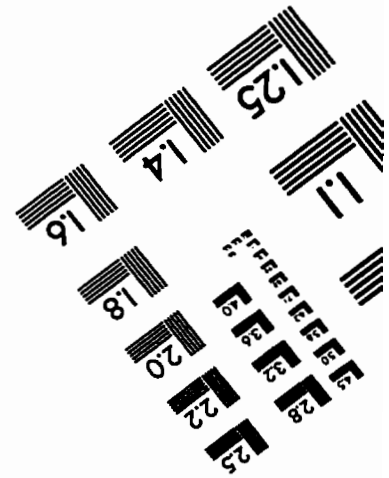
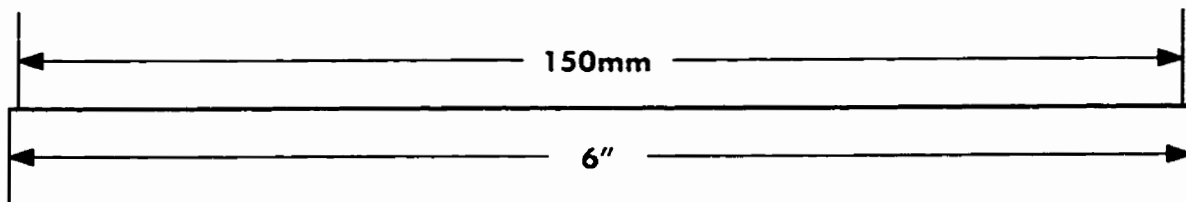
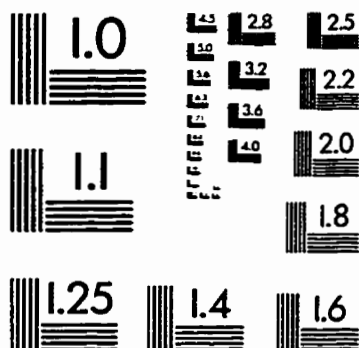
Wilfred Charlie  
Kwethomet (Wilfred Charlie)

Mary Uslick  
Skemcis (Mary Uslick)

On behalf of the Coqualeetza Elders Group

Oct. 30/96

TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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